

## Interview with Craig Robins

**Kathy Hersh**  
**Interviewer:**

Today is August, 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2016. We're interviewing Craig Robins for the Miami Beach Visual Memoirs project in his offices, at the Miami Design Center. My name is Kathy Hersh. All right. The things that I want to find out first is, what got you started in this? Where did you come from, and what your influences were that led you to become one of the major developers here?

**Craig Robins:**

I was born on Miami Beach and grew up here. The place I was born in was formerly known as St. Francis Hospital. I re-developed it into a project called AQUA. Growing up, I would visit my great grandmother on Euclid Avenue and 10<sup>th</sup> street as a child, so I was very familiar with South Beach, of course it was much different then. There was a dog track in South Pointe. We used to climb up on the wall and watch the dog races sometimes because we were too young to get in. You would go along Ocean Drive and there would be rows of elderly retired people sitting in chairs, looking out on the ocean. It was a much different place.

**Interviewer:**

You had a natural affinity, then, for the area from your childhood.

**Robins:**

Yes. I went away to school. I lived in Barcelona for a year. I studied at the University of Barcelona and I became interested in art. When I came back to Miami and attended the University of Miami Law School, I wanted to bring artists to come and work in Miami. I thought it was an interesting idea and I knew that South Beach had inexpensive spaces, so I started to drive around and look for spaces. The first year, we went to a store in the Bentley Hotel on 5<sup>th</sup> & Ocean; on the 5<sup>th</sup> street side. The artist was complaining. He didn't like the way people were wandering off the street and walking in while he was working. He wanted something that was on the second level and, so, the next year, I started to look around and I found the perfect art studio in a building that was on 5<sup>th</sup> street & Washington Avenue.

It was owned by someone who became a very close friend and a mentor to me, Tony Goldman. Tony and I met, and I tried to buy the studio from him, but Tony said "Oh no no." He couldn't just sell me the studio, but if I wanted, I could be his 50 percent partner in the whole building. It also came with another building that was, coincidentally, also on 5<sup>th</sup> & Ocean; the other corner on 5<sup>th</sup> & Ocean. I thought he was a very smart New Yorker and I'm this guy from Miami; that he was trying to take advantage of me, but I innocently said to Tony "Tony, how much would I have to invest to own 50 percent of 5<sup>th</sup> street & Ocean Drive and 5<sup>th</sup> & Washington Avenue?" He looked at me, and he said "\$20,000." I, then, very casually, looked back at him and said "If I invest all that money, would you be willing to give me the art studio for free?"

And so, we went into business together that day, we shook hands and had a great partnership that was very meaningful to me and really helped me understand urban revitalization at a very early point. That was in 1987.

**Interviewer:**

How did he convince you? I mean \$20,000 is considered a pittance compared to what the money values are now. Did he have a vision that he shared with you?

**Robins:** Well, it was easy to convince me. Tony was a very charismatic person, but I also wanted that studio and I would've gladly paid 20,000 just for the studio. It was a lot of money but I was able to afford that. I had some savings from my father who was also an incredible mentor was also there to support me. So, for that sum of money, I could've done it. I just looked at it like "I'm getting the studio for free. Now, I've got to go rent out these stores underneath it and help make it also into a business." That's how I went into business. At the time, there was basically nothing on Ocean Drive. There were the beautiful buildings, and there was a dwindling elderly population because they were really dying off and there was not a crowd to replace them, so South Beach was in a bit of a transition.

So, Tony, Mark Soyka who did News Café, the Van Dyke and Soyka's in Miami and Leonard Horowitz the colorist. We all had our offices on the ground floor of the Park Central Hotel. It was a vacant building and that's how we all started. To just give you an indication on how different it was; the Park Central's on 6<sup>th</sup> & Ocean. If I had a meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> & Ocean, in that time, I could walk out, get into my car, drive six blocks, park right in front of wherever that meeting was, and do that meeting. There were no cars on Ocean Drive. There was no demand for parking spaces. It was a much different world. There was also a very exciting moment, because you could feel that it was all on the verge of something happening. That's really the genesis of my business career.

**Interviewer:** So, in other words, you felt it was definitely going to be worth the risk.

**Robins:** Yes. I was just 24 years old. When I met Tony, I was studying for the bar exam, so I passed the bar and decided not to go into law but to go into real estate. I started my company called Dacra, which did joint venture with Goldman Properties and, so, I was in business.

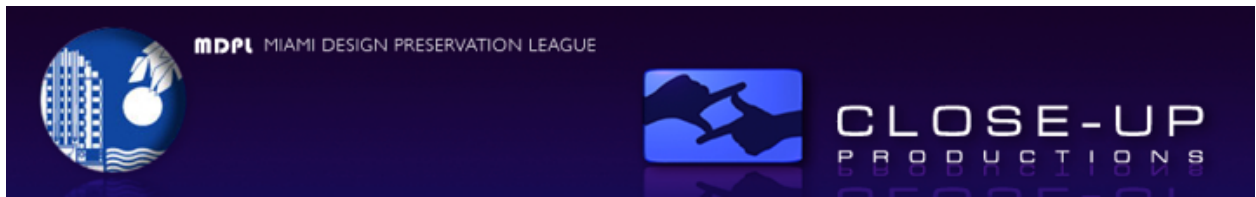
**Interviewer:** Just like that. [laughs]

**Robins:** Just like that.

**Interviewer:** Tell us a little bit about Tony [Goldman]. Being your mentor, what was he like?

**Robins:** Tony had a really incredible, positive energy. He would believe in things and he would exude that positive energy. He, also, had a great capacity to bring a community together and drive a direction, so I would say in that early part of South Beach, especially Ocean Drive, which, now, is a different kind of place, but at the time, Ocean Drive was the epicenter of all that, and Tony really showed the leadership that helped bring the community together, do the kind of public structure that was required to re-do Ocean Drive and turn it into a more hospitable and nicer place.

It was the very beginning. There was nothing though. When I started on 5<sup>th</sup> & Ocean, the only commercial business in the entire area, other than banks with savings accounts for the retirees, was a guy who had a squat in the back of our land, and he would acquire all the tin from the homeless people. That was the big commercial operation in 1987.



**Interviewer:** [laughing] The tin cans being recycled... There must've been, well, you tell me...was there a symbiosis of so many of you at the start of something being located in the Park Central Hotel?

**Robins:** Yeah. That was a very powerful moment, certainly for me and some of the key players that got South Beach going, and there were a group of developers; like-minded developers, Saul Gross who went on to become a Miami Beach commissioner, Mel Schlessler who made a really big contribution, Dennis Scholl, was another one. I think 4 out of the 5 of us were honored as the man of the year, or something, by the Chamber of Commerce a few years later. It was that kind of a thing. So, very few people. There were also some precursors that even came a little earlier who didn't succeed. Barbara Capitman's son; Andrew Capitman had an amazing vision that I think he was too early. Umm...I forget his first name, but a guy named Sanchez bought up some buildings and ended up losing them.

That was the Edison and Waldorf. So, there were some people who came a little too early and didn't have the business, necessarily, acumen to make it all work and then that next generation which included the guys I mentioned, really got South Beach going. We were very different. The political wisdom on the beach and the power structure was, kind of, more old-school. They thought that South Beach should be demolished and all this new, kind of, unattractive construction that goes up everywhere else should happen. We were unique, in that we were preservationists, aligned with Barbara Capitman and the Miami Design Preservation League. There was MDPL; the Miami Beach Development Corporation that was headed by Neisen Kasdin. Dennis Russ was the executive director.

There was a group of business people; preservationists and economic revitalization people, in a very small way that served as a catalyst to the transformation.

**Interviewer:** Did you have many dealings with Barbara?

**Robins:** I had dealings with Barbara and she was an amazing woman. She had a very strong, specific kind of personality. But, I would say that for me, the turning point was these guys who had taken over Art Deco hotels, owned all those buildings on Ocean Drive and they wanted to tear down the Senator Hotel. At the time I thought, they're investing all this capital, they have all this property and they need a parking lot. What are these preservationists making a big deal about? And I remember going out there and seeing Barbara Capitman in front of the bulldozers and this whole drama. At that stage, I was like, "These people are nuts!"; these preservationists, and I remember the moment the Senator Hotel came down, I realized how horrible it was.

I realized that the preservationists were right, and from that point on, I was a die-hard preservationist; that no contributing structure should be demolished, and I really stood by that, so for me, it was my own metamorphosis where I thought, "They own ten buildings and taking one out is no big deal." Interestingly, we ended up owning all those properties. We ended up owning all the Art Deco hotel properties, the land that the Senator Hotel was on, the Moreland was around there. We owned the

Tides, the Netherland, the Carlyle, Leslie, Cavalier; all that property, the Victor Hotel and-

**Interviewer:**

Did you start buying it after the Senator went down?

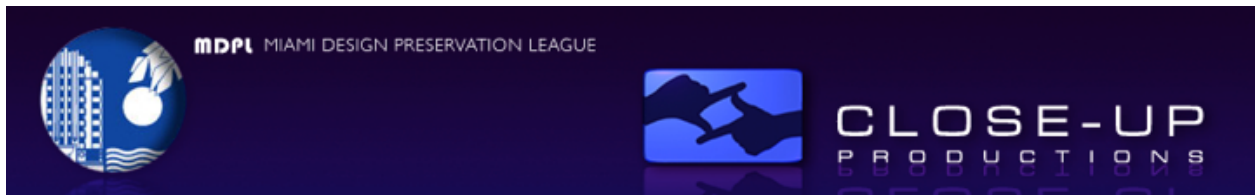
**Robins:**

Yeah. The Senator was demolished, and eventually, the successor, Lenny Pelullo [Leonard A. Pelullo], who went bankrupt, and the banks took back those properties. Then, my third amazing teacher and real contributor to me as a young business person, Chris Blackwell and I acquired all those properties together. First we acquired the Tides and then we acquired all the Art Deco hotels, the remaining ones and we also acquired the Netherland Hotel from another really important early contributor, later than the first group I was mentioning, Ken Zorelli, who did the Raleigh Hotel and was the owner of Netherland Hotel until I purchased it from him with Chris. That was the beginning of when everything got exciting on a different level.

The first stage was something that was orchestrated by me and Tony and another important contributor; a guy named Bruce Orosz. Bruce with a partner of his, Ger Vrielink, had a relationship with Otto Versand, which at the time, was the big catalog company for fashion catalogs. We made a deal where I developed the Webster Hotel into a loft for myself and it became like a model agency, a production company and ad agency and so that served like an infrastructure to pick up on something which had already started in a smaller way and get all the fashion shoots here. There were a lot of beautiful models, elderly people and crack addicts. [interviewer laughs][13:42] There were no tourists. There was no place to stay, no place to eat, but it was hot.

Because it was so cool and underground, you'd walk around and see Claes Oldenburg, Roy Lichtenstein, or Calvin Klein. There were really important artistic people and there were beautiful models and nothing else. Then, I met Chris [Blackwell], and I consider that the next big catalyst because Chris was just such a legendary figure in the world of film and music, especially music, Island Records. His validation and belief in South Beach elevated it to another level. He was the first international personality that came. For me, that was just a crucial learning experience because I was always interested in art, design, architecture and preservation. Chris taught me how to produce creativity and we collaborated on this hotel called the Marlin. It was insane.

South Beach was still nothing, and we developed the Marlin into a Jamaican restaurant, a recording studio on the second level. On the third and fourth level there were 12 hotel rooms. Chris had the apartment and Elite Model Management opened there. So, I was living in the Webster. I had my loft in the Webster, the rest of it was commercial, Chris was living in the Marlin and we opened the Marlin. The world changes but at that time, the big celebrities were the top models and the biggest band in the world was U2. So imagine the opening of a 12 hotel room in South Beach, Christy Turlington, Kate Moss, Naomi Campbell and U2, all came to our opening. South Beach exploded. The amount of publicity and attention, and just the charisma and influence of Chris' personality- it catapulted things to another level.



I'm sure there was never another instance where a hotel was on the cover of two big global traveler magazines at the time, Traveler Condé Nast and Travel and Leisure. But The Marlin was on the cover of both.

**Interviewer:** It, still, looks pretty good.

**Robins:** It's an amazing place. It's transformed. At that moment, that was the epicenter of South Beach. It later moved, and rightfully so, further north and you can see that continuing. Chris and I were running this hotel company called Art Deco hotels which was his brainchild because he wanted to start Island Outpost and do hotels in Miami Beach, Jamaica and Nassau. He had a really brilliant vision and-

**Interviewer:** He had a brand too.

**Robins:** Yeah. He had a brand. I was running it. I was running the business. Then we met Ian Schrager who also such a dynamic personality. Ian deserves credit for having invented the boutique hotel, and brought it to the United States and before that-

**Interviewer:** What's his last name?

**Robins:** Schrager. Ian Schrager. He was the founder, along with Steve Rubell, of Studio 54 which was a legendary New York nightclub. Then they had gotten into some trouble with Studio 54. They couldn't be in the entertainment nightclub business anymore, so they started a hotel group. Ian and I and Chris were talking about doing something together and that's how I got to know him. He was really intrigued with Miami Beach. I remember he and I were walking and I took him into the Delano Hotel which was completely boarded up, was a total dump and nothing had gone that far north at that time. Ian did such a magnificent job with Philippe Starck. That really, then, catapulted Miami Beach on the map on a different level.

It also pulled things further north where there were larger buildings, so instead of having these very small, 3 story, 40-50 room hotels, you could have a bigger facility, and Ian did a brilliant job. When the Delano opened, I remember that was like the height of Madonna, and there was a big red carpet coming down those steps in the back, and Ian had Madonna; his partner at the time of a restaurant, I think, walking down that red carpet and people were just blown away. It was bringing back, in a way, that 50's Miami Beach energy in a contemporary style and re-positioning these historical structures. It completely changed Miami. Miami when I grew up, was a sleepy town that had gone into disrepair. It was a retirement village. Tourism continued to decline. It was not an exciting place.

It was a great place to grow up, going to Beach High, in that era it was really a nice place to grow up but there was no sex appeal or sizzle to it like in the 50s. I remember when I went to school in Barcelona in 1982, I would tell people I'm from Miami and they would all say "Julio Iglesias." That was their association with Miami. Then I came back to the States but I went and visited my friends a couple years later and I said "I'm from Miami" when I would meet people and they would say "Miami Vice."

**Interviewer:** [laughs] Of course.

**Robins:** That was the image of Miami.

**Interviewer:** That played a big role, didn't it?

**Robins:** By 1987-1988, when I would go to Europe and I would say that I was from Miami, people in their minds would see Art Deco building. That was the new image of Miami and it was completely transformative. It really put Miami as a city back on the map and I think it was the catalyst to all the things that we see today. So many things happen. When we opened the Marlin, we would have these guests and they would all get so excited. Gianni Versace came and stayed at the Marlin and then he fell in love with South Beach and bought the Amsterdam Palace on Ocean Drive and made it his house. He did books and articles about how he loved South Beach and what a dream it was.

It was a situation that was growing exponentially where the energy was feeding itself, and so much of it came from people like Tony, Chris and Ian. Those were three of the power people that pushed South Beach to become what it was.

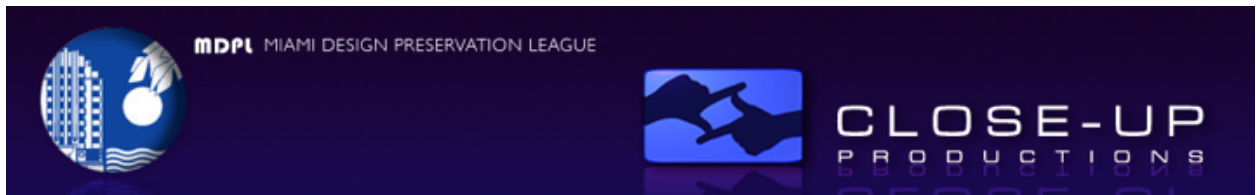
**Interviewer:** Talk about Leonard Horowitz if you would, a little bit, about his role in this.

**Robins:** Well, that was part of the genius of Tony. You can see it again with Wynwood. When Tony started, there were much more limited resources, so he couldn't fix the buildings up in the most elegant way like he did but he did have capital and the ability to fix things up. He collaborated with Leonard and they came up with this idea, Tony backed Leonard's vision to paint these buildings with pastel colors. At that time, that's all that was done. There were still pretty dumpy buildings, but they had these pastel colors and those pastel colors inspired these fashion catalogs to then make Miami the destination for the winter shoots.

That generated all kinds of attention and all kinds of publicity and intrigue and it enabled more capital intensive projects in a smaller way the Marlin and in a much bigger way the Delano to happen and so, it started to feed itself. I think Leonard deserves credit, but I always thought that that was a collaborative vision to some degree between Leonard and Tony or Tony bought in Leonard's idea and promoted it. You can see, similarly now, one of the great neighborhoods in Miami started, just again, by putting paint on walls. It's called Wynwood walls, and it was graffiti. Tony joined forces with one of the great visionaries in art Jeffrey Deitch, and did nothing more than have graffiti artists paint the walls and Wynwood has become such an amazing oasis for Miami.

**Interviewer:** It seems to me as if the creative energy has shifted to Wynwood and the Design District. Now, South Beach has been established as the cool place [laughs], although there's some controversy about that. I would like to talk about the relationship of historic preservation with growth and development. Is it some of the lessons in the past that can be applied now or is it still relevant?

**Robins:** Well, in South Beach, we had something unique that you can't really apply as easily to other places. We had the largest neighborhood of Art Deco and Mediterranean revival architecture in the world. It's not necessary that



any one building is so spectacular; it's not the Empire State Building or the Chrysler Building, although, some people might argue that the Marlin is more beautiful. These were pretty simple structures. They were masks being put onto 3 story buildings for middle-class hotels.

That's what South Beach was created by, but I can say with a high level of certainty that had the development community and the small group I mentioned- had we not aligned with the preservationists, Barbara Capitman, the MDPL, Neisen Kasdin, Denis Russ and Nancy Liebman who also became a commissioner- had we all not aligned and been activists to get legislation passed, Miami probably wouldn't be what it is today. It was those Art Deco buildings and the re-purposing of them that brought Miami back- I don't think if you built more of those ugly new buildings like you see going up everywhere in the world and all over Miami, that it would have happened. We said that we are not going to be like everyone else- we are going to be special.

And we are going to show reverence to our legacy; the legacy that was given to us and we are going to nurture that. And we did it in a very spectacular way. It was a city, all about style and creativity. It was so great that the Marriots of the world and the Hiltons could not even come to Miami Beach. It made no sense for them, so instead of becoming a boring pedestrian hotel, everybody was doing these boutique hotels. Everybody was competing to be creative. I think that's the genesis of this next wave of Miami and you look at manifestations of it now. Of course Wynwood and the Design District are examples of it, but how these great architects are all doing buildings. That comes from Miami being a city about style and art.

Probably the next major catalyst once we had South Beach established and Miami was a "Fun in the Sun" place - the problem was Miami was not seen as a city of substance and certainly not a city of cultural substance. In a way it was cultural- having Barbara Hulanicki do the Marlin Hotel. These creative kind of projects were cultural, but it was really just people coming to hang out and party. That was the reputation. Then, this amazing thing happened; a friend of mine wanted to bring Art Basel to Miami Beach- Sam Keller. Art Basel was the next big turning point. It came after this early period I was mentioning; the late 80s and early 90s, but in 2002, Art Basel opened here. That was the first time where Miami really began to define itself as a global city of cultural substance.

Once that happened, we now had this amazing combination. In a micro way, we took the best art fair in the world and we merged it with one of the sexiest places in the world. In a macro way, we said "We trade on cultural currency here and we respect cultural currencies." When you see buildings going up; Rem Koolhaas, Norman Foster and Zaha Hadid, Renzo Piano; all these amazing buildings that are going up; that's part of the city saying, "we trade on cultural substance." The best art fair in the United States is located here. That's also part of it, the art collections that we have, the way that museums are growing, and in my opinion, it all comes out of this early movement in South Beach where Miami said "We're not going to copy everyone else, we are going to be our own place and we going to be special and different."

**Interviewer:** There were challenges. Like you mentioned, the conventional wisdom was to destroy the place and they were lots of people with bags of money ready to do that, so you had to go up against city hall and big money.

**Robins:** Well, it happened incrementally and less than you think. I was sort of a bridge in a sense, because I was once a senator who had turned down a die-hard preservationist and I was also in business, but my father, who is such a brilliant businessman and has really taught me a lot, was a part-owner of the Fontainebleau with Steve Muss [Stephen Muss] and the Miami Beach power structure; part of the Miami Beach power structure for sure. And so I saw both, and so, what happened was...I was actually in high school and I worked for South Shore Redevelopment which Steve Muss had done- and Steve really poured his heart into the Miami Beach in many ways and did a lot of incredible things.

The idea was to tear down everything, so Barbara Capitman did this uprising in the early 80s and forged this settlement which was from 6<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> Oceans, Collins and Washington would be preserved and that enabled them to mow down the whole South Point area which didn't have the same stock of important structures, so that was like the early genesis of it.

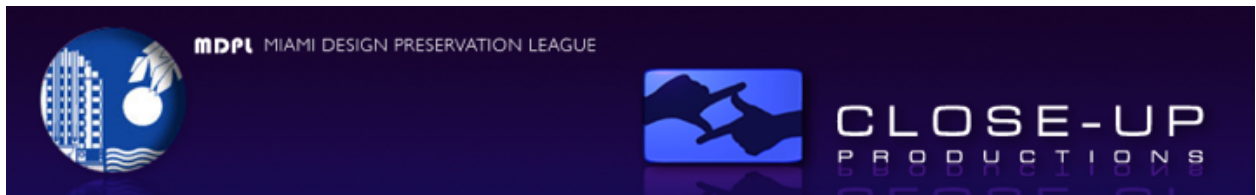
South Beach, though, was completely disregarded and fortunately is now being preserved, so none of that business establishment- and basically, the only thing that was working and all the money, even though it was limited, that was being made by the early or the late 80s, was in South Beach, so it was the only driver, and we joined; these developers I mentioned, Saul Gross, Tony Goldman, Dennis Scholl, Mel Schlessler and I, we formed a group and we began to support people- elected officials, and we did it in conjunction with MDPL and Miami Beach Development; MBDC, which now changed its name, but that was the original name. So, we were all working together and we began very early on to have political influence over our neighborhood.

I think that Barbara already got them to wash their hands a little bit, but then having real resources and development people engaging in the political process and making it a political priority, it began to change all the rules and get more investments into infrastructure. It was also, from a practical point of view, the only thing that worked. Everything else was not working and so this was what was bringing Miami Beach up and I think that older-money-mentality that you're referring to, they really had the wisdom to let us do what we wanted and leave us alone, and it worked. It worked in a big way.

**Interviewer:** We have Harold Rosen on record saying that he was wrong and [laughs] when we told that to some of the MDPL people they really wanted to loop that. [Interviewer and Robins laughing][31:51] "Put that in the lobby", "I was wrong, I was wrong."

**Robins:** Well, I guess I'm more sensitive to that because I was also wrong. I was completely wrong, but I thought why not tear down the Senator? Once I saw it happen, I would never support an important contributing structure like the Senator being torn down for any reason, so I understand it. People like Harold were trying to make things work. Remember, we invented something. Taking this neighborhood, figuring out ways to adoptively reuse these structures and turning them into the driver of this whole city.





It didn't exist, so obviously most people had to be wrong and these visionary pioneers ended up being right. That's what happens when you have any great innovation. You start off with a very small audience and if you're really really right, the audience gets bigger and bigger over time.

**Interviewer:** You said something earlier that intrigued me, that you learned how to produce creativity. I believe it was...-Chris Blackwell- Chris Blackwell. How does one produce creativity?

**Robins:** Chris really approached the development business in South Beach more like the record or film business, so if you think about what Chris did, he put out albums. He would find artists, he would get them to do something really special artistically, record them. He would work with them on what the recording would be and then he would do the album cover, he would market it, he would launch it. He was really a producer of creativity and he took that business model and applied it, so in the case of the Marlin, he got this brilliant designer, Barbara Hulanicki, to transform the property. We had a combination of content that still doesn't exist anywhere that I know of. I mean, there's a Jamaican restaurant on the ground floor.

There's a world-class studio, 12 hotel rooms, the best model agency in the world and then Chris's apartment which was like a place to entertain amazing people and hang out. We also had a roof garden. So, in this little 15,000 square foot structure, we crammed all of that, and when we opened it, the biggest celebrities of the moment in the world came to a place that was completely unknown. South Beach was not what it is today. It was like where people go to the Heaven's Waiting Room. That's what Miami Beach was, so Chris had this amazing combination of turning the hotel into an artistic expression and then packaging it and launching it in a way that it just catapulted in South Beach.

There were turning points, and that opening was a turning point where everything immediately reset on a much different level.

**Interviewer:** Well, creativity attracts creative people too, so it's kind-of infectious. [laughs]...I would like to wrap up with talking about you reflecting on your boyhood growing up when you went to Beach High. Did you go to the Cabanas at Fontainebleau because your father was involved there?

**Robins:** As a child, my grandparents; my mother's parents, would come down to the Eden Roc, and so, I remember as a young child, always at the Eden Roc, they were playing cards; my grandfather would always be playing cards. I remember- which is really shocking, I might have been 7 or 8 years old, I had scuba lessons in the pool at the Eden Roc hotel. Imagine today, [interviewer laughing] in the United States of America, a 7 year old getting scuba lessons in the swimming pool in a major hotel.

**Interviewer:** Looking back, what an amazing life you have had, with this palette that you all created, does it surprise you in some ways?

**Robins:** You know, it's a funny thing which is hard to describe. All of these things for me were visions where I would see that they were going to happen. In 1988, I remember I was with a friend of mine, standing on Ocean Drive, and I was looking at the Amsterdam Palace and I said "Don't ask me why,

but Calvin Klein is going to end up buying this and make this his house." Two years later, Gianni Versace bought it and made it his house. I would say these things but then, when they had actually happened; when the vision would physically manifest, I was still surprised, so I thought that's what South Beach should become. I backed it. You know like with Art Basel,

when Sam wanted to do Art Basel and I helped him to be able to bring it here and put that together, another unbelievable community member; Norman Braman and I went and had to fight with the convention center in order to secure dates for Art Basel, because there was another really mediocre fair that had everything blocked out. Norman and I went to bat and we just realized this was important for Miami, we didn't have an agenda, but because I had done the Design District, I had been attending a fair in Milan for years called Salone [Salone Internazionale del Mobile di Milano] which is a furniture fair and I was fascinated; I had not seen anything like it anywhere. During that, all of Milan, everywhere, celebrates design, so it's not just the convention center with the furniture fair.

You don't even need to go there, its exhibitions and parties and dinners. When Sam was bringing Art Basel here, I said "We need to replicate, but in an art-Miami way, what Salone does and get the whole city", and so, immediately at the beginning of Art Basel, even before Art Basel opened because the first year was canceled, Sam and I started doing exhibitions and events in the Design District. Rosa De La Cruz, who is a huge contributor in the Design District and a major collector, started doing shows here. It, kind of, got Art Basel to be something that it wasn't in Basel; a global cultural happening. So, yes, in a way, I had the vision for it, but I was absolutely shocked at how incredible and successful Art Basel has been, and so, I, kind of, have this balance; if I see things, I believe in them and I try to make them happen.

At the same time, when I look at them, I'm just blown away. So, yes. It's been a real blessing to grow up in this city and to be a spoke in this wheel that is manifesting and it's a real honor. It's a privilege to have a feeling like I'm a part of the community that is bettering itself and offering something to the world.

**Interviewer:** Is your father still around?

**Robins:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** And what does he think of all of this?

**Robins:** He's a proud father. [laughs] And I'm proud to be his son.

**Interviewer:** Where did he come from?

**Robins:** From New York.

**Interviewer:** After the war?

**Robins:** He moved down in the late 50s.

**Interviewer:** Late 50s...Oh, Carl, is there anything you would like to...?



- Carl:** I was just wondering if there was anything additional- Did you meet and know Barbara Capitman? I mean, you talked about coming in 87-88 and I think she died in 88, so I was just wondering if-
- Robins:** Yes. I met Barbara. She had that squeaky voice. That would be the thing to have recorded [joking]. I also knew Andrew; her son, who is quite an interesting, smart person, had a lot of vision to do...
- Interviewer:** And Margaret, who was very design-oriented?
- Robins:** ... some cool- And Margaret. So, I knew all of them, but I didn't know them well. Barbara though, was a force and I knew Barbara from before, because in high school, I had an internship at the South Beach Redevelopment Agency, and so, during all of this political warring that Barbara really showed the leadership on, she was a faction. They were the good rebels.
- Interviewer:** Her persistence, I think, was the key character component. As Andrew says, she had the vision and-
- Robins:** I was there. She was standing in front of the bulldozer as it was going up to... [laughs]
- Interviewer:** She would not give up.
- Robins:** Yeah...
- Interviewer:** She would not give up, and getting it designated by the state, kind-of doing an in-run, it helped preserve [crosstalk][41:49]
- Robins:** Yeah, I think ultimately, the power structure- You know, my recollection is, more than anything, because of her persistence, the power structure said "Let's just make a deal and get on with it", because they had these grandiose plans for South Pointe, which never really happened, and that was because there was a big economic decline. Maybe they would have happened, maybe they would have been great or maybe it would not have, but in a way, the sequence of events that unfolded, I would not change any of them, including the Senator Hotel, because I think that's what galvanized a lot of people and sometimes you need that martyr, and so, as sad as it is in retrospect, the Senator was really, I think, the turning point, not just for me but where everybody said "This can't happen anymore", and we worked hard with MDPL and MBDC to change the laws.
- The Barbara Capitman original deal was not that strong. It was only the three streets and it wasn't the whole historical district and you could still tear down buildings. Even when Versace wanted to tear down the later, much less contributing structure, it was a huge battle over that, probably rightfully so. It wasn't the Senator Hotel, but it was a big deal.
- Interviewer:** Are there any battles left to be fought?
- Robins:** You know, for me, I love Miami Beach. It's become so commercialized that it's less inspiring to me, creatively. I live on Miami Beach and very much enjoy the residential community there. There has been some amazing

properties that have opened recently. The Faena Hotel, I think, is a wonderful addition to the community. Also, the EDITION is a great addition. Ian Schrager did a new concept on Miami Beach. I think that there's still opportunities, but Miami Beach has become kind-of a mature, very commercialized place that certainly doesn't need much help from me.

[interviewer laughing]

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