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The Wolfsonian–FIU Library Celebrates Miami Beach Centennial With Three Successive Installations Beginning in March 2015

*Charting the impacts of the Second World War, Depression-era Art Deco development, and
the 1920s tourism boom on the city of Miami Beach*

At Ease: Miami Beach During the Second World War, March 19–June 14, 2015

Miami Beach Deco Development, June 18–September 13, 2015

Miami Beach: From Mangrove to Tourist Mecca, September 17, 2015–January 17, 2016

MIAMI BEACH (February 25, 2015) — In honor of Miami Beach’s 2015 centennial, The Wolfsonian–Florida International University will mount three successive, focused installations featuring works from its rare book and special collections library. Exploring the city’s incredible transformation in the first half of the twentieth century—shaped by forces from entrepreneurial mega developers to the infamous 1926 hurricane and the Second World War—the installations trace the story of Miami Beach’s early development. The series launches in March 2015 and will conclude in January 2016.

“The Wolfsonian–FIU Library’s holdings of South Florida memorabilia serve as one of the foremost collections documenting the region’s early history,” said chief librarian Francis Luca. “This series—featuring rare photograph albums of long-demolished Mediterranean-style hotels; colorful brochures; and vintage postcards advertising the warm climes of Miami Beach to winter-weary Northerners—is a unique opportunity to return these forgotten materials to public view and give them new life at a milestone moment for our city.”

Opening the series is *At Ease: Miami Beach During the Second World War* (March 19–June 14, 2015), drawn largely from Judith Berson-Levinson’s “Sand in Their Boots” collection and focusing on the war effort’s impact on Miami Beach. *At Ease* showcases photographs, viewbooks, magazines, and trainee yearbooks to expose the daily life and patriotic visual culture of the city during the war, when G.I.s trained and relaxed seaside and hotels served as Army Air Force barracks and military hospitals.

Miami Beach Deco Development, the second installation on view June 18–September 13, 2015, reveals the evolution of Miami Beach’s nightlife in the 1930s and emergence as a tourist destination affordable to the middle class. Postcards, brochures, and other ephemera highlight the new, smaller-scale Art Deco hotels and entertainment venues—many of which still stand today—built up during the redevelopment “boom” that followed the 1926 Miami hurricane “bust,” at the height of the Art Deco craze.

The third and final installation in the series, *Miami Beach: From Mangrove to Tourist Mecca*, documents the city’s fledgling years. Sculpted by pioneering developers such as Carl Fisher, Miami Beach blossomed during the 1920s into a winter tourist hotspot catering to the wealthy elite. Photographic albums of “lost” hotels—the Nautilus, Flamingo, King Cole, and others—show how these self-contained luxury resorts lured the rich and famous south with regattas, elephant rides, and amenities such as tennis courts, golf courses, polo fields, private bungalows, and yacht docks. This closing installation will be on view September 17, 2015–January 17, 2016.

All three installations are organized by The Wolfsonian–FIU and curated by Wolfsonian–FIU Library staff. Special talks and other programming will complement the installation series and engage visitors about Miami Beach’s early history.

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About The Wolfsonian–Florida International University

The Wolfsonian is a museum, library, and research center that uses objects to illustrate the persuasive power of art and design, to explore what it means to be modern, and to tell the story of social, historical, and technological changes that have transformed our world. The collections comprise approximately 180,000 objects from the 1850s to the 1950s—the height of the Industrial Revolution through the aftermath of the Second World War—in a variety of media including furniture; industrial-design objects; works in glass, ceramics, and metal; rare books; periodicals; ephemera; works on paper; paintings; textiles; and medals.

The Wolfsonian is located at 1001 Washington Avenue, Miami Beach, FL. Admission is \$7 for adults; \$5 for seniors, students, and children age 6–12; and free for Wolfsonian members, State University System of Florida staff and students with ID, and children under six. The museum is open Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday, 10am–6pm; Friday, 10am–9pm; Sunday, noon–6pm; and is closed on Wednesday. Contact us at 305.531.1001 or visit us online at wolfsonian.org for further information.

The Wolfsonian receives generous and ongoing support from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation; Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs and the Cultural Affairs Council, the Miami-Dade County Mayor and Board of County Commissioners; State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs and the Florida Council on Arts and Culture; and City of Miami Beach, Cultural Affairs Program, Cultural Arts Council.