



WOLFSONIAN

THE MUSEUM OF THINKISM

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THE WOLFSONIAN CELEBRATES FIRST 10 YEARS OF EXHIBITIONS, EDUCATION AND PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Significant Accomplishments and Calendar of Celebratory Events Mark 10th Anniversary

MIAMI BEACH, FL—[August 2005] The Wolfsonian-Florida International University will celebrate its 10th anniversary on November 11, 2005, a date famous for marking one of the 20th century's most pivotal moments—the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month in 1918. The occasion is more than a nod to the armistice that ended the First World War by a museum known for its collections of wartime and political propaganda. The museum opened its doors on Washington Avenue at exactly the same time a decade earlier.

Located in the historic Art Deco district of Miami Beach, The Wolfsonian uses objects to illustrate the persuasive power of art and design. The museum interprets its holdings contextually, telling the story of the social, political and technological changes that transformed the world.

The 100,000 artifacts that comprise The Wolfsonian's collections range from fine art, graphic design and political propaganda to furniture, rare books and ephemeral materials such as postcards and travel brochures. The holdings are primarily of North American and European origin, dating from 1885 to 1945.

Tracing its beginnings to the private collection of Mitchell Wolfson Jr., aspects of which were exhibited at the downtown Miami campus of Miami-Dade College, beginning in 1986, The Wolfsonian's full-scale public dimension was officially inaugurated on November 11, 1995, with the opening of the major touring exhibition *The Arts of Reform and Persuasion, 1885-1945*. The museum took residence in a 1927 Mediterranean Revival building, a one-time storage warehouse, which underwent renovation and expansion in 1992 to become a seven-story, 56,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art facility. In 1997 The Wolfsonian became a department of Florida International University, following Mitchell Wolfson Jr.'s landmark donation of his collection to the State of Florida.

The 10th anniversary celebration will kick off November 11 to 13, 2005, with *A Very Wolfsonian Weekend*, the museum's annual fundraising extravaganza, and will include events throughout the 2005-2006 season.

"We are very proud of our accomplishments during our first decade and we are optimistic that we are building a strong institution that will serve academic and general audiences in decades to come," said Cathy Leff, museum director. "With the help of Florida International University and our other public and private supporters, we have been able to make the collections available to the public through exhibitions, publications, scholarly research and school curricula. Because of this variety of access, we are better able to understand the significance of the unparalleled collection originally assembled by Mitchell Wolfson Jr."

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Noted museum founder Mitchell Wolfson Jr., “The fact that The Wolfsonian is a public institution whose exhibitions and programs invite the perusal, scrutiny, and engagement of so many audiences satisfies me greatly. In this decade, I have come to accept that teaching is not mainly to import factual knowledge or to dictate opinions, but that teaching, especially The Wolfsonian’s kind of teaching, is meant at first to provoke, invite, perplex, and, yes, even disturb the Wolfsonian visitor, and to encourage him or her not to accept or reject based on hearsay but to choose their own viewpoint. To think is to activate human resources in order to better understand our human condition, which is and has always been The Wolfsonian’s goal.”

Accomplishments of a Decade

The milestones of this young institution have been many. First among them was the gift of the collection and its historic home to Florida International University.

“Mitchell Wolfson Jr. raised the bar for personal philanthropy when he donated almost his entire collection, as well as our remarkable home in Miami Beach, to the state of Florida,” said Leff. “The magnitude of that gift goes well beyond its monetary value. The partnership with FIU has opened the collection to students and faculty, as well as international visitors who are drawn by the spectacular range of the holdings. As one of the largest collections of modern material culture, the museum also attracts a lot of scholarly attention.”

Much of that scholarship has led to the development of important and well-received exhibitions and publications. From presentations of the work of graphic designer and architectural theorist Karel Teige, the most important Czech proponent of the European avant-garde, to explorations of wartime propaganda to considerations of identity through portraiture, Wolfsonian curators continually mine the collection and its many constituent themes, all addressing the notion of how design shapes and reflects human experiences.

Many of the museum’s exhibitions and collection objects have traveled to institutions throughout the world including Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts, Design, and Culture in New York; Seattle Art Museum; Rhode Island School of Design in Providence; Massachusetts College of Art, Boston; and The David and Alfred Smart Gallery of Art at the University of Chicago.

In addition, other institutions also have used Wolfsonian collection objects as part of their exhibitions. Loans to major institutions have included those to the Smithsonian Institution, Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum, New York; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; the National Gallery and the National Building Museum, Washington, D.C.; Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh; Whitney Museum of Art, New York; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Victoria & Albert Museum, London; Die Neue Sammlung, Staatliches Museum für angewandte Kunst, Nürnberg; Musée d’Orsay, Paris; Fondation pour l’ Architecture, Brussels; and the Hyogo Prefectural Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo.

The museum contributes to scholarship through its award-winning *Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts*, which is dedicated to fostering new understanding of the 1875 to 1945 period, and parallels themes contained in The Wolfsonian collection. The latest volume, number 25, released in May 2005, explores the material, social and cultural world of the large American hotel. Past issues of the journal have addressed other themes, including volumes that focused on architecture and design in Florida, Cuba, Russia/Soviet Union, Brazil, Yugoslavia and Argentina, as well as aspects of the collection such as New Deal murals and Arts and Crafts metal work, among others.

While exhibitions focus on the time frame of the collection—1885 to 1945—the museum’s educators draw links to the present-day through lectures, films and symposia for adult audiences and innovative and creative programs for schools. A 10-year partnership with the Miami-Dade County Public Schools has produced several major initiatives including *Page at a Time*, an annual program for fifth-grade classes that enables them to participate in a series of museum visits and follow-up school projects exploring the art of bookmaking. Students respond to their experience by constructing artworks that address questions surrounding conflict and resolution, culminating in a group bookmaking project. *Artful Truth—Healthy Propaganda Arts Project* was developed with funding from the Florida Department of Health, Division of Health Awareness and Tobacco, to teach fourth- through sixth-grade students how to recognize and interpret the persuasive messages conveyed by art, design and advertising, with an emphasis on the marketing of tobacco products. Currently available for download on the Internet, the *Artful Truth* curriculum has been implemented in more than 200 schools and non-profit organizations throughout Florida; some 2,400 elementary and middle schools across the state possess boxed curriculum packs.

The most recent school-based initiative is *Artful Citizenship: A Passport to Learning*, an arts-integrated social studies curriculum that uses object-based learning as its primary teaching tool. The project is designed to increase third- through fifth-grade student academic achievement and visual literacy skills, develop student character through the understanding of “good citizenship,” and improve student behavior and self-concept through active engagement with their immediate communities. *Artful Citizenship* is funded through a three-year, \$1 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education, received by The Wolfsonian in 2002.

A Year-Long Celebration

The Wolfsonian’s 10th anniversary celebration officially kicks off November 11 to 13, 2005, with *A Very Wolfsonian Weekend*, the museum’s annual fundraising weekend, sponsored this year by JPMorgan Chase. The weekend’s festivities will include a fundraising black-tie gala at the Biltmore Hotel in Coral Gables, honoring the public and private partnerships that have contributed to the success of the museum. According to Leff, “We’re going to celebrate the contributions of three important people in the life of The Wolfsonian: our founder Mitchell Wolfson Jr., FIU President Modesto A. Maidique, whose vision made the university partnership possible and who guides much of what we do, and Michael Holden, who, as a founding and current board member and senior executive at JPMorgan Chase, was responsible for establishing the relationship that we have enjoyed with the bank.” The company, then Chase Manhattan, was the museum’s first and largest corporate underwriter.

The anniversary weekend will also include a Saturday evening members’ opening of *In Pursuit of Pleasure: Schultze & Weaver and the American Hotel*, which explores hotel culture in the first half of the 20th century through the works of the architectural firm Schultze & Weaver, best known for designing New York’s Waldorf-Astoria, Sherry-Netherland and Pierre, and South Florida’s Biltmore and Breakers, among others. The celebration will continue on Sunday with an open house for the community.

Other highlights of the anniversary festivities include the exhibition *X: A Decade of Collecting*, centering on acquisitions and donations to the permanent collection during the past 10 years; a 3-day workshop with former participants of the museum’s fellowship program; and a seminar in summer 2006 on modernism and the Fascist aesthetic, in partnership with St. Johns University. The Wolfsonian will also host the biannual meeting of the Association of Research Institutes in Art History (ARIAH).

“Of course,” added Leff, “we’ll have a commemoration at the exact time of our public opening in 1995—the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month. It’s a momentous occasion for us. We’re proud of our accomplishments and of the many people who have helped make it all possible, including our public, private and corporate supporters.”

About The Wolfsonian—Florida International University

The Wolfsonian is a museum 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, political and technological changes that have transformed the world. The 100,000 artifacts that comprise the Wolfsonian’s collections range from fine art, graphic design and political propaganda to furniture, rare books and ephemeral materials such as postcards and travel brochures.

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

The Wolfsonian receives ongoing support from the State of Florida; Department of State; Division of Cultural Affairs; Florida Arts Council; Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs through the Cultural Affairs Council; the Mayor and the Miami-Dade County Board of County Commissioners; the Mayor and City Commission of the City of Miami Beach and the Miami Beach Cultural Arts Council; Crispin Porter + Bogusky; Dacra and the Miami Design District; Continental Airlines, the preferred airline of The Wolfsonian; the Arthur F. and Alice E. Adams Foundation; Artécitcity, for inspired condo living; Carnival Foundation; and RBK Productions.

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