



WOLFSONIAN

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**'A VERY WOLFSONIAN WEEKEND' TO CELEBRATE
FLORIDA'S CONTRIBUTION TO DESIGN MARCH 2-4, 2007;
MUSEUM TO CREATE AN ANNUAL AWARD
IN HONOR OF FLORENCE KNOLL BASSETT**

MIAMI BEACH, FL (December 21, 2006) – As part of its fifth-annual gala proceedings The Wolfsonian–Florida International University, a museum of design and the decorative arts in Miami Beach, will honor five individuals and one corporation for their outstanding contributions to design and design education. Those honored have strong Florida connections, with local histories dating back more than a quarter century.

Every year the museum produces its gala, “A Very Wolfsonian Weekend,” to raise funds to support its curatorial and educational programs. For the past four years, the gala program has recognized individuals and corporations who have contributed to the appreciation of architecture and/or design and the role it has played in our everyday lives.

This year, The Wolfsonian will honor Florence “Shu” Knoll Bassett, Dan Paul, Michael Graves, Nargis and Nasir Kassamali, and Tupperware Brands Corporation.

The Wolfsonian will announce the creation of an annual non-cash award, The Florence Knoll Design Award, during a free public program on Friday, March 2, the first of which will be awarded in 2008. At the same time the museum will offer a special tribute to Knoll, and recognize the five other outstanding contributors to design and design education. The criteria and selection process for the Florence Knoll Design Award will be announced next spring.

A gala sit-down dinner in honor of the Florida Design Legends will be held Saturday, March 3 on the plaza of Bacardi's corporate headquarters, a local icon of the International Style, north of downtown Miami.

Patron tickets range from \$500-\$2,500 and are currently on sale. Those wishing to purchase tickets as charitable contributions for the 2006 tax year may do so through December 31, 2006. This year's National Chairs are Charles Cowles, Wolfsonian Advisory Board chair and the owner of the Charles Cowles Gallery in New York; Michele Oka Doner, Wolfsonian board member and a visual artist; and Iran Issa-Khan, a photographer. The gala is sponsored in part by Bacardi USA. The Honorary Chair is John Esposito, CEO and president of Bacardi USA. To purchase individual gala tickets or gala tables, please call Thea Smolinski at 305.535.2631 or thea@thewolf.fiu.edu.

On Sunday, March 4, as an expression of its appreciation to the community for its ongoing support, The Wolfsonian will offer a free family day. On view will be *Modernism in American Silver: 20th-Century Design*.

On the occasion of its tenth anniversary, in 2005, The Wolfsonian recognized the contributions of the private, public, and corporate partners most responsible for its first decade of success: Mitchell Wolfson Jr., FIU President Modesto A. Maidique, and JP Morgan Chase. In 2004 Bacardi was honored for its use of good design and architecture in promoting its brand. In 2003 architect Zaha Hadid was honored, just weeks before it was announced that she was named the winner of the Pritzker Architecture Prize.

Below are brief biographies of this year's honorees:

Florence Knoll Bassett

Florence Knoll Bassett is an American architect, furniture, and interior designer who was a pivotal figure in the development of Knoll International. She studied under Eliel Saarinen at Cranbrook Academy and studied architecture at the Columbia University School of Architecture in New York and the Architectural Association in London. In 1940 she worked at the Cambridge, Massachusetts, architectural firm of Marcel Breuer and Walter Gropius before studying architecture with Ludwig Mies van der Rohe at the Illinois Institute of Technology. She joined Knoll Associates, in New York, in 1943, as vice president and director of the Knoll Planning Unit, the company's interior design service, where she was instrumental in redirecting the furniture company toward a more modernist, Scandinavian style. In 1946 she married Hans Knoll. Following his death in 1955, she took over as the chief designer and owner of the firm.

Though she is well known as an interior designer and furniture designer—her wooden stacking tables from the 1940s, and desks, conference tables, and storage cabinets from the early 1950s were all featured at the Museum of Modern Art's *Good Design* exhibitions—she achieved renown for her building designs as well. Knoll designed the Connecticut General Life Insurance building in Bloomfield, Connecticut, and the interior of the CBS building in New York City. Her vision of the “new office” embraced clean spaces and open layouts. In the late 1950s, she married Harry Hood Bassett, and has lived and worked in Miami since the 1960s. Knoll was an Honorary Trustee of The Wolfsonian during the institution's early years. In 2002 she was honored by Pres. George W. Bush and first lady Laura Bush with the National Medal of Arts.

Michael Graves

American architect Michael Graves has been in the forefront of architectural design since he founded his practice in Princeton, New Jersey, in 1964. Hailed in the *New York Times* by critic Paul Goldberger as “truly the most original voice American architecture has produced in some time,” Graves has been the recipient of several of the most prestigious awards ever conferred upon architects in the United States. His firm, Michael Graves & Associates, has a highly diverse, international practice in architecture, interior design, product design, and graphic design.

A part-time Florida resident, Graves’s residential designs include multi-family buildings such as the 1500 Ocean Drive condominium in Miami Beach. Another significant segment of MGA’s practice has been the design of hotels, including the well-known Walt Disney World Swan and Dolphin hotels in Florida.

Graves refers to himself as “a general practitioner,” designing not only the interiors for the majority of his projects, but also a wide range of furnishings and artifacts, from furniture and lighting fixtures to jewelry and dinnerware, for companies such as Alessi, Steuben, Disney, Phillips Electronics, and Black & Decker. He teamed with Target Stores to bring his signature style of design to a larger public in a wide variety of product categories.

Nargis and Nasir Kassamali

Luminaire was born as a visionary environment representing the intense appreciation of design by its owners, Nargis and Nasir Kassamali. Caught in the throes of racial and political problems of 1970 East Africa, the Kassamalis emigrated to the United States in 1973. Moved by the powerful desire to influence the environment in which we live by educating and exposing people to good design, the Kassamalis opened Luminaire in March 1974 as a 600-square-foot showroom in Miami. At the time, selling contemporary products directly to the consumer was unheard of in the area.

Nasir Kassamali has long admired the works of Le Corbusier, Ludwig Mies Van de Rohe, Alvar Aalto, Arne Jacobsen, and the Bauhaus movement. He and his wife have passed on that appreciation and commitment to education through informational programs with the world’s leading designers. For the past three decades, the Kassamalis have supported pure and minimal designs, from furniture to fashion to jewelry, which—like all good designs—remain current today.

Dan Paul

Dan Paul, an attorney, is currently senior counsel at the Miami law firm of Jordan Burt. Best known in Miami as the former First Amendment lawyer for the *Miami Herald*, Paul’s clients have included the *New York Times*, NBC, and the *Wall Street Journal*. In 1957 Paul drafted the original Dade County Metropolitan Charter and also drafted the Dade County Citizens’ Bill of Rights. He has been involved in many civic projects, ranging from preserving parks to sponsoring an amendment to the City of Miami Charter requiring that all buildings be sited at least fifty feet back from the waterfront. In the late 1960s, Paul represented the National Audubon Society to prevent construction of a jetport adjoining Everglades National Park.

Tupperware Brands Corporation

Tupperware-brand products made their debut in 1946, and for the past five decades have closely followed the social roller-coaster of trends sweeping the nation—from the postwar movement to the suburbs to the 1960s feminist revolution to “cocooning” in the 1990s. The plastic containers were developed in 1945 by Earl Tupper (1907-1983) to store food and keep the contents airtight. The patented “burping seal,” which distinguishes Tupperware from its competitors, is a famous aspect of the product. Now headquartered in Orlando, Florida, Tupperware pioneered the direct marketing strategy, made famous by the Tupperware party, and also empowered women not only by offering convenience in the kitchen, but by enabling them to gain a share of the postwar business world.

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, political, and technological changes that have transformed our world. The collections comprise approximately 120,000 objects from the period of 1885 to 1945—the height of the Industrial Revolution to the end 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, 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.

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