



Introduction to Craig Robins: 2:31 min. Photo: Raymond Elman. Music: Carmen Cicero. Design District building photos: Richard Patterson, Robin Hill, Lala Pereira, ra-haus.

# A Video Conversation with Visionary Craig Robins

By Elman + Zummar + Zuckerman + Johnson

*Excerpt from the Dacra website:*

**C**raig Robins is an entrepreneur, real estate developer, and art collector based in Miami, Florida. As the CEO and President of Dacra, the real estate development company he founded in 1987, Robins focuses on developing creative communities that integrate art, design, and architecture to accelerate asset value creation and enrich urban life. Dacra has spearheaded some of the most successful and transformative commercial, residential, and mixed-use projects in Miami's history, including South Beach, the Lincoln Road area, Allison Island and currently, the Miami Design District. The latter is an 18-square block neighborhood dedicated to fashion, design, and art that incorporates the work of emerging and established architects, site-specific public art, and stores by the world's most significant luxury brands.

In the late 1980s through the early 1990s, Robins played an integral role in the repositioning and revitalization of Miami's South Beach through Dacra's restoration of Art Deco landmarks, and the creation of new commercial and cultural opportunities. He realized that creative public programming would rapidly foster a sense of community, and his projects were defined in part by performances, public art, and dynamic events that were inclusive of residents and visitors to the area. In parallel, Dacra also developed mixed-use projects throughout South Beach, including Lincoln Road and Espanola Way, and later acquired an 8.5 acre parcel of land on Allison Island where they created a New Urbanist residential community, AQUA, featuring contemporary art and modern architecture. The rapid appreciation of the asset value of the Miami Beach properties was attributable in part to Robins' strategy of defining Dacra's projects as destinations in the national and international conversation, a strategy he continues to employ today.

Robins began acquiring property in the once-abandoned Miami Design District almost 20 years ago, and in 2000, set about transforming the neighborhood into one of the most important global centers for cutting-edge design, fashion, food and art – a position it occupies today. In 2010, Dacra entered into a partnership with L Real Estate to further develop the Miami Design District by forming Miami Design District Associates (MDDA), a partnership between Dacra and L Real Estate, a private equity fund focused on luxury retail globally sponsored by LVMH. In 2014, a minority percentage of MDDA was sold to a joint venture between real estate companies GGP and AAC, who are adding their additional acumen and resources to the project.

In 2005, the neighborhood's rapid renewal inspired the creation of Design Miami/ and subsequently Design Miami/ Basel, design fairs that have evolved into the world's premier global forum for collectible design. Robins is the Chairman of the show, which he owns in partnership with MCH Swiss Exhibition, the producers of Art Basel. Both Design Miami/ events occur concurrently with Art Basel and are cross promoted.

An avid collector and supporter of the arts and architecture, Mr. Robins is also the Founder and Chairman of the Anaphiel Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting arts education; a member of the Board of Trustees of the Perez Art Museum Miami; an active supporter of ICA Miami; and a member of the University of Miami School of Architecture Master in Real Estate Development and Urbanism Advisory Board. Robins' long-term commitment to design earned him the 2006 Design Patron award presented at the White House by the First Lady, which recognizes an individual's patronage of design within the business and civic sectors from the Smithsonian's Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum.

Robins was born in Miami Beach in 1963. He attended the University of Barcelona in 1982, received his Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Michigan in 1984, and graduated from the University of Miami law school in 1987. Fluent in Spanish, he and his wife Jackie Soffer are the parents of six children.

The videos below are organized by topic and run between 30 seconds and 8 minutes. Click on any video. You must be connected to the Internet to view the videos.

**SEIZES OPPORTUNITIES:**  
1:09 min.



*Describe your involvement with saving South Beach.*

**INSIGHT & INSPIRATION:**  
1:15 min.



*How many people foresaw that South Beach would become what it is today?*

**CRITICAL THINKING:**  
1:11 min.



*Did your core group of South Beach developers also motivate each other to become art collectors?*

**INSIGHT & INSPIRATION:**  
3:08 min.



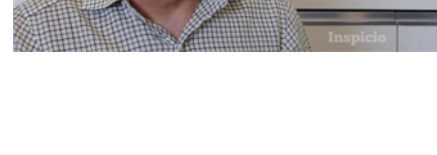
*Describe the evolution of your involvement in The Design District.*

**CRITICAL THINKING:**  
0:52 sec.



*How quickly were you able to create an attractive aura for the Design District?*

**CRITICAL THINKING:**  
5:01 min.



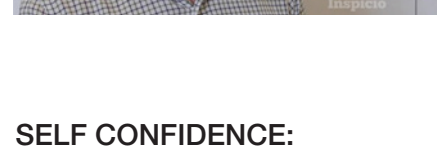
*Some people say that Miami cultural life is held back by Miami's historic tendency to tear down and rebuild every 10 years. What's your take?*

**EXPOSURE TO BROAD INFLUENCES:** 2:40 min.



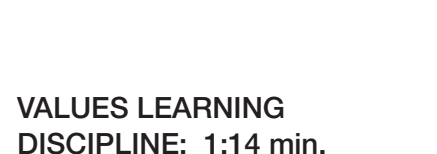
*When did you start to collect art? Who were your influences?*

**BREAKS THE RULES:**  
8:14 min.



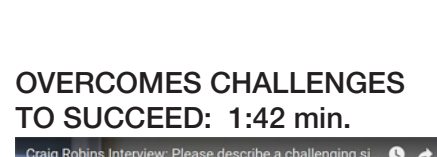
*What was the impetus for making major structural changes to the Design District beginning in 2014?*

**UNDERSTANDS THE BUSINESS OF ART:** 3:06 min.



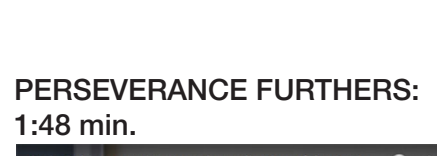
*Art Basel week now includes approximately 25 satellite art fairs. Is the quality too diluted?*

**SELF CONFIDENCE:**  
3:31 min.



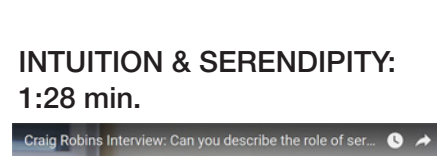
*How does the juxtaposition of the Wynwood Art District impact the Design District?*

**VALUES LEARNING DISCIPLINE:** 1:14 min.



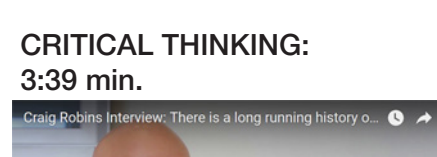
*People complain that Miami doesn't have high quality art schools. Have the major Miami art collectors ever discussed banding together to create something like the Art Students League of New York?*

**OVERCOMES CHALLENGES TO SUCCEED:** 1:42 min.



*Please describe a challenging situation with a successful outcome.*

**PERSEVERANCE FURTHERS:**  
1:48 min.



*Has the realization of the Design District been consistent with your original vision?*

**INTUITION & SERENDIPITY:**  
1:28 min.



*Can you describe the role of serendipity in your career?*

**CRITICAL THINKING:**  
3:39 min.



*There is a long-running history of successful neighborhoods growing up around artist communities until the artists can no longer afford to live there. Is there any way to break that cycle?*

**COMMUNITY VALUES**  
2:14 min.



*Does the Design District have community outreach programs?*

**CURIOSITY & PASSION:**  
**1:58 min.**



*What is your advice to young people?*