



Introduction to Mitchell "Micky" Wolfson. 3:03 min. Interview: Raymond Elman. Video Editing & Production: Brea Jones. Recorded: 2/26/2020, The Wolfsonian-FIU.

# Micky Wolfson: Preservationist

By Elman + Jones

Collector, preservationist, educator and museum founder, **MITCHELL "MICKY" WOLFSON JR.** is dedicated to the research, preservation and education of the material culture of the period 1850–1950 through The Wolfsonian–FIU in Miami Beach and the Wolfsonian in Genoa, Italy. Raised in Miami Beach, Wolfson gained an early appreciation for the built environment and its relationship to cultural factors. Travel and work overseas provided him with opportunities to amass an extensive collection of British, Dutch, German, Japanese, Italian and American design. In 1986 he established The Wolfsonian Foundation, a research center and museum in Miami Beach and began publishing *The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts*, an internationally acclaimed and award-winning publication dedicated to fostering scholarship in late nineteenth and early twentieth century design arts. In 1997 he donated his collection, estimated at 80,000 objects, and the state-of-the-art museum to Florida International University (FIU). The Wolfsonian–FIU continues to be a respected research center and museum with an ambitious program of exhibitions, publications, educational programs and scholarship.

Wolfson was named Travel + Leisure Design Awards 2011 Design Champion. In 2007 he was awarded the 11th *Premio Rotondi ai salvatori dell'arte* (Rotondi Prize to Art Rescuers) for his lifelong commitment to the preservation of art and architecture, and in 2007 he received the Stewardship of Modernism award by the Russell Wright Design Center in New York. He co-authored the 2005 publication, *Miami Beach: Blueprint of an Eden*, with artist Michele Oka Doner.

A trustee for the Mitchell Wolfson Sr. Foundation and the Mitchell Wolfson Family Foundation, he is also a member of the International Council of the Museum of Modern Art. Additionally, he serves on the Executive Planning Committee of the Bard Graduate Center: Decorative Arts, Design History, Material Culture. A graduate of Princeton University, he received his master's degree in international relations from the Paul N. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University. Mr. Wolfson divides his time between Miami, Paris and Genoa.

— *Mitchell Wolfson Jr. Study Centre*

The videos below are organized by topic and run between 45 seconds and 3 minutes. Click on any video. You must be connected to the internet to view the videos.

## INSIGHT & INSPIRATION: 1:38 min.



*Where did you grow up and what was your first awareness of art of any discipline?*

## EXPOSURE TO BROAD INFLUENCES: 1:41 min.



*When you lived in North Carolina, were you exposed to the furniture industry?*

## EXPOSURE TO BROAD INFLUENCES: 0:46 sec.



*You mentioned living near Black Mountain — was that the same as Black Mountain College where groundbreaking people like John Cage and Robert Rauschenberg experimented?*

## CREATES A UNIQUE PERSONAL BRAND: 1:02 min.



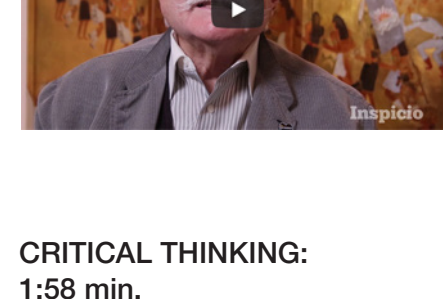
*In 1988, I interviewed Carl Solway, the premiere gallerist in Cincinnati, who sought artists who were inspired by John Cage.*

## CRITICAL THINKING: 1:11 min.



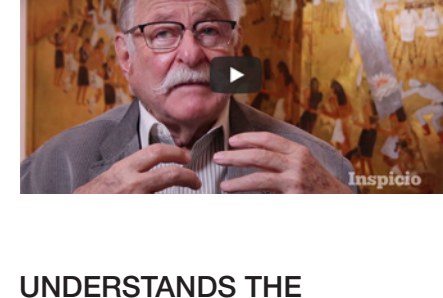
*Describe your evolution as a preservationist.*

## CREATES A UNIQUE PERSONAL BRAND: 1:16 min.



*It must be challenging and exciting for you to work with your curators to select themes and identify objects from the collection that address the themes and hang well together.*

## CRITICAL THINKING: 1:58 min.



*There is such a vast variety of work in your collection. Do you prefer any particular genres over others?*

## UNDERSTANDS THE AUDIENCE'S PERSPECTIVE: 2:11 min.



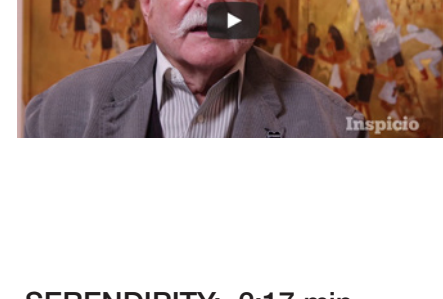
*Do you watch people as they encounter your objects at The Wolfsonian, and do you ever engage with them?*

## EXPOSURE TO BROAD INFLUENCES: 1:40 min.



*Describe your first purchase.*

## UNDERSTANDS THE BUSINESS OF ART: 1:07 min.



*After you purchased the "Rime of the Ancient Mariner," did you get excited and start buying other objects that interested you?*

## SERENDIPITY: 2:17 min.



*When did you first exhibit your acquisitions?*

## PERSEVERANCE FURTHERS: 1:55 min.



*Did you have any "Eureka Moments" when you realized the significance, quality, and quantity of your acquisitions?*

## COLLABORATION: 2:56 min.



*On a much smaller scale, one of the things that I love about FIU is that they have never said "no" to me.*

## COMMUNITY VALUES: 2:00 min.



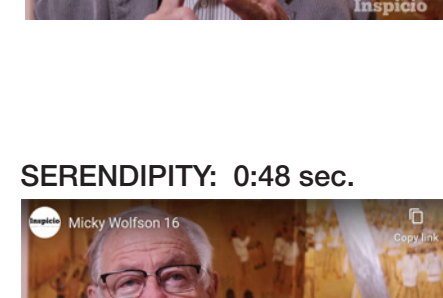
*Having lived in and out of South Florida your whole life, what are your thoughts about the cultural evolution of Miami?*

## UNDERSTANDS THE AUDIENCE'S PERSPECTIVE: 1:15 min.



*What role should a university play in the development of people in the arts?*

## SERENDIPITY: 0:48 sec.



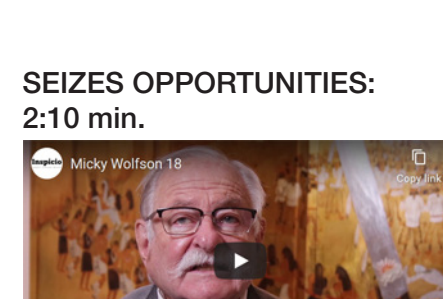
*What has been the role of serendipity in your acquisitions?*

## CRITICAL THINKING: 1:12 sec.



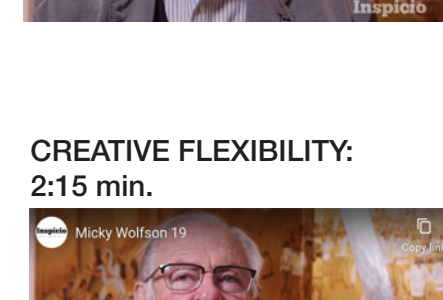
*Winston Churchill said, "History is written by victors." But the kinds of objects you acquire tell the story of humankind in a way that can't be refuted.*

## SEIZES OPPORTUNITIES: 2:10 min.



*What are your criteria for taking on a project?*

## CREATIVE FLEXIBILITY: 2:15 min.



*What new projects are you excited about?*