

Introduction to Cathy Leff. 1:33 min. Interview: Raymond Elman. Music: Evan Elman & The People North West. Post-Production: Fabio Lopez. Recorded via Zoom: 2/28/2021, Miami.

Cathy Leff

Institution & Community Builder

By Elman + Lopez

CATHY LEFF is the acting director of the **Bakehouse Art Complex**, and Director Emerita of **The Wolfsonian-FIU**. She is a seasoned cultural professional and creative entrepreneur who specializes in conceiving, developing, and executing cultural strategies and initiatives across platforms, with a particular interest in the intersection of culture and community-building. She has been involved with Bakehouse since March 2018, working with its Board and small team to forge a more relevant, impactful, and sustainable path forward for the organization. In 2018, with other old and new Wynwood Norte stakeholders, she became a founding director of the **Wynwood Community Enhancement Association**, which led a community-driven and inclusive visioning and planning initiative for this beloved historic urban neighborhood. Recently, the City of Miami approved the creation of the **Wynwood Norte Neighborhood Revitalization District** which codified the vision, an effort in which Leff was directly involved. This designation provides Bakehouse with the zoning, land use, and density to add artist housing to its site and renovate its historic 1926 former industrial bakery building as a better version of its current use as a center of art making and community building. Bakehouse is presently a working home to approximately 100 Miami-based working artists. Its Board is now working on plans for the future of the live-work campus.

Prior to Bakehouse, Leff was director of The Wolfsonian-FIU for 18 years, an internationally renown museum and research center, negotiating its gifting to Florida International University in 1997, and helping the University secure Florida State approval and funding. From 1990 to 2014, Leff served as Executive Editor and Publisher of the award-winning Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts, noted for its interest in scholarship of the period of 1875-1945. During her tenure, she published special theme editions on Florida, Cuba, Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico.

From 1975-87, she was Assistant Director of the City of Miami's Community Development Department, where she was responsible for neighborhood economic and community development projects, oversaw its Art in Public Places Committee, and the city's cultural programs. Bakehouse was one of the City projects she worked on in the mid-1980s.

After leaving The Wolfsonian, she took on several consulting projects, including assisting another private collector determine the future of his collection; conceiving and executing an experimental fashion-culture experience for Bal Harbor Shops, consulting with Miami Design District, and working with the Harvard Graduate School of Design on the Future of the American City initiative.

Leff has traveled extensively, and is conversant in Spanish, French, Italian and is studying Japanese.

Leff is also a regular contributor to Cultured Magazine.

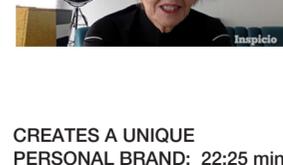
The videos below were **recorded via Zoom**, are organized by Success Factor, and run between 30 seconds and 23 minutes. Click on any video. You must be connected to the Internet to view the videos

EXPOSURE TO BROAD INFLUENCES: 2:31 min.



Where did you grow up and what is your first memory of art of any discipline?

INSIGHT & INSPIRATION: 1:12 min.



What impressed you about the 1964 World's Fair in New York City?

CREATES A UNIQUE PERSONAL BRAND: 22:25 min.



What was your focus in college, and how did you transition into a career in the arts, eventually becoming the director of The Wolfsonian?

EXPOSURE TO BROAD INFLUENCES: 2:25 min.



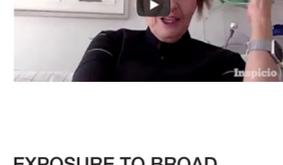
Talk about your time living in Spain when fascist dictator Francisco Franco was still in power.

COLLABORATION: 00:30 min.



You must have had a lot of interactions with Michael Spring, the director of the Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs.

CREATES A UNIQUE PERSONAL BRAND: 5:10 min.



Who were your influences and role models when you were evolving as a museum director?

EXPOSURE TO BROAD INFLUENCES: 3:12 min.



I have always thought of you as a very chic and stylish person. Did your affinity for style grow out of your association with The Wolfsonian and being around beautiful objects, or did you have such interests before you joined the Wolfsonian?

COMMUNITY VALUES: 2:07 min.



What were your experiences with the Bakehouse Art Complex before you became its leader?

CREATES A UNIQUE PERSONAL BRAND: 11:37 min.



How did you become the director of the Bakehouse and what was your action plan?

COMMUNITY VALUES: 5:01 min.



Artists with studios at the Bakehouse range from young people just out of college to mature, established artists like Sandra Ramos and Robert Chambers.

COMMUNITY VALUES: 3:26 min.



Tell us about your work with architect Michael Maltzan.

UNDERSTANDS THE BUSINESS OF ART: 0:51 sec.



How do you envision your role at The Bakehouse moving forward?

UNDERSTANDS ARTISTS' NEEDS: 6:06 min.



Tell us more about the artists currently involved with The Bakehouse.

UNDERSTANDS THE BUSINESS OF ART: 2:43 min.



How has The Bakehouse sustained itself throughout the COVID-19 pandemic?