



The Wolfsonian–Florida International University Spins to the Rhythms of *Turn the Beat Around*

*Exhibition to debut October 28, 2022, exploring cultural exchange
and collaboration between Cuba and the U.S. from the 1930s to 1960s*

*Featured works include movie posters, album covers,
music scores, vintage photographs, film clips, and loans of
Gloria Estefan and Tito Puente’s performance jackets*

MIAMI BEACH (October 20, 2022) — Drawing largely from a recent gift of rare album covers, vintage photographs, and other items documenting Cuba’s rich music and cultural traditions, The Wolfsonian–FIU presents *Turn the Beat Around*, on view October 28, 2022 through April 30, 2023. Never timelier, *Turn the Beat Around* focuses on the exciting musical fusions that resulted during an earlier era of close diplomatic ties, easy travel, and cultural exchange.

“We are thrilled to be presenting this exhibition celebrating the Afro-Cuban roots of the rumba, conga, Latin jazz, mambo, cha-cha-cha, and salsa,” said chief librarian and exhibition curator Frank Luca. “*Turn the Beat Around* examines the visual means by which Afro-Caribbean rhythms were promoted in the U.S., forever transforming our musical landscape.”

Turn the Beat Around demonstrates how thirty years of intense cultural interplay between Cuba and the United States profoundly shaped the musical traditions of both nations. At the same time that American jazz and big band swing swept the island nation, Cuban musicians and performers in the U.S., most specifically in New York City where they were joined by Puerto Rican and Nuyorican musicians, created new styles that invested American music with a distinctive Latin tinge. Meanwhile, graphic artists in the music, movie, and tourism industries were hard at work creating the visuals used to package and promote Cuban-inspired music, simultaneously exoticizing and Americanizing their designs.

Many of the works speak to historic issues of race and gender in representing ideas of the tropics and the exotic. Women and the female body played prominent roles, as did acknowledgments of the Latin American and African geneses of jazz, rumba, and other popular music and dance genres of the first half of the twentieth century.

The new materials on view, augmenting earlier gifts also made by Vicki Gold Levi, provide the core for describing the impact of Afro-Cuban music on the American dance music scene. “I’ve been taken with Cuba for as long as I can remember—I mamboed my way through high school and never looked back!” said Vicki Gold Levi. “The Wolfsonian

has accepted so much of my collection with open arms, and I am thrilled to be publicly sharing many of the objects in *Turn the Beat Around* for the very first time.”

This donation bolsters previous gifts of Cuban material by Gold Levi to the museum, including collections donated in 2002 and a promised gift in 2016 of more than 3,000 artifacts ranging from cigar labels to sheet music covers. Selections from her gifts are included in *Turn the Beat Around*, in addition to loans of the performance jackets of Gloria Estefan and Tito Puente, and other items from the Wolfsonian collection. Florida International University is additionally home to Cuban music cultural treasures The Díaz-Ayala Cuban and Latin American Popular Music Collection and The Celia Cruz Music Score Collection, cementing FIU’s status as the leading hub of Cuban culture and study in South Florida.

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Image

Album cover, *Cha Cha with Tito Puente at Grossinger's*, 1960. Jack Burton Davis, Jr., designer. Johnny Camacho, producer. RCA Victor, New York City, record label. The Wolfsonian–FIU, Promised Gift of Vicki Gold Levi, XC2016.01.1.1261.

Exhibition Support

We gratefully acknowledge Vicki Gold Levi for her donation of objects that inspired this exhibition.

About The Wolfsonian–Florida International University

The Wolfsonian–FIU 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 more than 200,000 items from the period 1850 to 1950—the height of the Industrial Revolution to the end of the Second World War—and include fine arts, decorative arts, graphic design, industrial design, architectural drawings, rare publications, and ephemera.

The Wolfsonian is located at 1001 Washington Avenue, Miami Beach, FL. Admission is \$12 for adults; \$8 for seniors, students with ID, and children 6–18; and free for Florida residents, visitors with disabilities and their accompanying caregiver, children under 6, and students, faculty, and staff of the State University System of Florida. The museum is open Wednesday–Sunday, 10am–6pm (Fridays open late and free, 6–9pm). Contact us at 305.531.1001 or visit us online at wolfsonian.org.

The Wolfsonian receives generous and ongoing support from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation; Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs and the Cultural Affairs Council, the Miami-Dade County Mayor and Board of County Commissioners; State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs and the Florida Council on Arts and Culture; and City of Miami Beach, Cultural Affairs Program, Cultural Arts Council.

About FIU

Florida International University is a top public university that drives real talent and innovation in Miami and globally. Very high research (R1) activity and high social mobility come together at FIU to uplift and accelerate learner success in a global city by focusing in the areas of environment, health, innovation, and justice. Today, FIU has two campuses and multiple centers. FIU serves a diverse student body of more than 58,000 and 290,000 Panther alumni. U.S. News and World Report places dozens of FIU programs among the best in the nation, including international business at No. 2. Washington Monthly Magazine ranks FIU among the top 20 public universities contributing to the public good.