Architecture Faculty Oral History Project

Interview with Allan Todd Shulman

Associate Professor
Director of Graduate Programs in Architecture

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Interviewed by Gilda Santana
Recorded by Gilda Santana
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Summary:
For the past 17 years, Shulman has explored the interrelationship between 20th century urban culture and architecture using the cities of Miami and Miami Beach as a laboratory. As a scholar, he has found in these modern cities ample material for investigations into regionalism, tropical architecture, and the cultural idea of tropicalism. These crucibles of urban transformation have also served as the inspiration for Shulman's formulation of a design principle that he calls "urban assemblage": the redevelopment of existing cities through the layering of artifacts of the contemporary landscape. The intersection of tropicalism with urbanization has opened multiple opportunities for funded research and publication. His academic activities also include exhibits, design competitions, charrettes, lectures, and panel discussions targeted to expanding understanding of South Florida's built environment. Shulman founded the architecture firm Shulman + Associates (S+A) in 1995

Gilda Santana: You went to UM for graduate studies after undergraduate in Cornell. What drew you to choose the School of Architecture for your graduate work?

Allan Shulman: I had gone to high school in South Florida and was interested in issues relating to the architecture and urbanism of South Florida. In 1991 I was living and working in New York City. I had decided that I wanted to do a graduate degree. I wanted to teach, and I wanted to do research while also continuing to practice. I had been traveling back and forth to South Florida to visit my family, but also on each visit I would be checking out the Miami scene. The late ‘80s, early ‘90s was a was very rich period, and things were bubbling up. One of the events that I attended regularly was the Architecture Club lectures. I came across Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk in those series and I became interested in what they were doing in their approach to American cities. It felt like a good program for me, especially since my undergraduate degree also had a certain urban focus to it, although much less activist, let’s say than what was being explored here in Miami at the time.

GS: It was a veritable laboratory then, and it still is.

AS: Yes it is.

GS: I refer to the term because you often use it in your writing and it can be traced back to John Nolen who did a lot of work in Florida in the 1920s. Miami as an urban laboratory makes more and more sense the more I think about it.

AS: And the more you experience it. I came in ’91. I’ve seen the city change a lot in that 28 years. It’s almost a different city than the one that I moved to, and it’s happened relatively consistently during that time. Everything didn’t all happen at once. Of course there are episodic moments in the flow, but overall it feels like there has been a continuous directional transformation of the city. It’s been really interesting to be part of that, and that’s why I stayed.

GS: You, that is, your work really is about the evolution of this city.

AS: That’s exactly what I wanted to be doing when I graduated. I wanted to be involved in projects that were part of retrofitting the city both at an urban scale but also at an architectural scale. As it turns out I’ve been more involved professionally at the architectural scale.

GS: In your essay, “Miami Beach Between World Fairs”, you distinguish the evolution of architectural styles in Miami from European modernism. You say, “An element of the modern visual culture of Miami was continuity with past traditions. It has been accepted that modernism replaced the Mediterranean Revival emblematic of Miami Beach’s previous era of development, however the gradual transition between styles suggests

instead that the evolution of the monumentality of the Mediterranean was, if anything, magnified by the Modern."[1]

So, my take away was that no one style emerges completely on its own, but through layers. I was wondering if Tzonis was one of your influences when you were writing that piece.

AS: No. I have read Tzonis, but I think that in my mind who I was thinking about was Paul Phillipe Cret. I did an essay on Cret back in the late 90s, early 2000s. Paul Phillipe Cret was a French immigrant and a practitioner, originally of the Beaux-Arts. He was brought to the University of Pennsylvania because he was a Beaux-Arts practitioner. But he became interested in modernism and he set himself up, from his point of view, as a counter to Le Corbusier. He considered himself an *evolutionary* modernist as opposed to a r*evolutionary* modernist, and I thought that was an interesting idea that I saw playing out in the history of this city. Although architects were relatively aware and plugged into what was happening—they read books and journals, or, they actually traveled and many of them wound up in Miami from New York and Europe, so there was a lot of cross pollination. But, I think that the cadre of architects here, was not interested in the pure avocation of one style or another. They were not interested in the theory of a style. They were interested in making the city work, making buildings that worked, and they were inspired by these new movements. Miami was a fashion conscious city—as it still is—so I think that architects very readily absorbed things that they were seeing without feeling that everything that they were doing now needed to replace everything before them. Miami is perhaps a good place to see the city in evolutionary terms because you can readily view all of the layers of the

[1] Shulman Allan T. "Miami Beach Between World Fairs", in *The Making of Miami Beach: 1933-1942: the Architecture of Lawrence Murray Dixon.* Miami, FL: Rizzoli; Bass Museum of Art, 2000.

city. You really see them. Neighborhoods are built in ways that evoke a certain tradition or layer. There is the layer from the previous tradition, the layer of the new tradition, and the layers of the transitional zones in between those two traditions.

GS: You point to the city of Miami Beach in particular to model to make that point.

AS: Exactly. It's really clear to see in Miami Beach because there are these very distinct periods—1924 to '27, '33 to '42, and maybe 55 to 60 something. Even within those clear distinct zones, very little is purist. There seems to be an emphasis on the continuity of architecture, and the continuity of ideas and strategies. Something that was really amplified by my time in the graduate program at UM was the question of typology as being a thread that runs through various traditions. It has to do with the intelligence of making a building on a certain type of lot, or a certain type of program on a certain type of lot in a certain type of city. Miami Beach has very clear typological traditions, and the typology of the beach is stronger than the "stylology". Although the interest in style is certainly present, it's clearer than the interest in prevailing styles. I like Miami Beach as an example, because it's a city where the challenge was how to build high-density housing on a site/lot that was meant for a house in a city that was designed as a suburb. The lots are designed for single-family homes. They are narrow and deep. They do not make a good base for a bigger building. How did architects learn how to make buildings on these sites, how to fill them to a higher capacity, intensity and density without breaking all the rules, without going over property lines and set-backs? It is inspiring to see how an architect from the 20s and 30s, or 50s for that matter, let's just take Lawrence Murray Dixon who I spent a lot of time

studying. I don't think he made a bad building. He must have done hundreds of buildings that have a nobility and clarity. They are worked out. The facades work. The plans work. Proportionally they are elegant.

GS: Do you think that the way they designed was affected by the fact that they weren't bound by as many city/county regulations as there are in place today?

AS: I don't think that was it. I've read a lot of newspaper and journal articles from that period and it seems that everyone has always complained about that. That is continuous. The specifics and the processes have changed a lot, but those architects like those of today were playing within a set of rules. They conformed to the rules and took the intelligence of building that they found already there and advanced it one more step. I think what makes typology work is the same today. Typology is still at work on the beach. The buildings built today also fit into certain types that are repeated, and have continuous logic within them, and even a continuous styling. I can identify a 2007 generation building from a 2017 building. All the same mechanisms are still present even with all the extra rules and interrelationships between architects, clients, programs coming from everywhere.

GS: What was your involvement with the Master of Suburb and Town Design program and how did that education influence your interests and professional practice?

AS: 1989 was the first year. I came in in 1991. First of all, I learned a lot of really important tools in the MSTD program. Tools of typological analysis, form-based coding,

and ways of understanding the history and culture of cities in a different way that I had at Cornell despite the urban focus of the school there. I primarily came out of there with a strong architectural grounding. At UM I really began to understand the city as an organism better, especially in terms of neighborhood design; thinking about the neighborhood as a unit, thinking about how neighborhoods work, understanding tools for analyzing existing cities, street sections, drawing plans, and understanding primary, secondary and tertiary circulation systems, and urban spaces as a figure. One thing that I picked up at UM that I think is really important, and I have heard this repeated often by other faculty in other contexts, is the idea that every building is "building block" of the city. It's not that a city is city and architecture is architecture, but when you're making architecture you are fundamentally building up the city. That's a commitment as well as a fact. You have to think about how everything you're doing contributes to the making of urban space, to the making of civic quality and civic character. To paraphrase Lewis Mumford, "the true test of any building is not it's individual character, but how repeated many times it would make a city.

GS: I was going to ask you about another quote from Mumford that Alexander Tzonis uses in *Tropical Regionalism*: "It would be useful if we formed the habit of never using the world regional without mentally adding it to the idea of the universal, remembering the constant contact and interchange between the local scene and the wide world that lies beyond it."[2] It's a concept that you brought up, not in so many words, as you critiqued

[2] Mumford

my thesis, and I just wasn't making those connections until I read that quote, and boom! What you had been saying to me really made sense.

AS: It's a big theme that underlines everything, and it's especially easy to talk about here in Miami. We are so regional, but we are also so global and it's very fluid between the two. We don't tend to think that they're in conflict with each other. They are two sides of the same coin. 19:50

A wonderful thing about the city of Miami Beach is how free it is. There is something about the scale of it, and the fact that building types are public even when they are private. It's not as though you're intruding on someone's private homeowners association. There's always that invitation that lobbies and front spaces are part of the public realm and are meant to be shared. That idea was a triggering moment for me. I did the Miami Noli map that's in "The New City", so, in trying to figure out what makes Miami Beach a rich place ubanistically, is the fact that the semi-public space network, courtyards, lobbies, front yards, side yards, that these are shared open spaces—they are private property, but they are generally open to the public and they have an urban character to them. Sometimes they are referential to grander public moments. A lobby tries to be like a theater lobby for instance. Because of that I wanted to draw a map that showed that network of semi-public as well as public spaces. In that, I was very influenced by the well-known Noli map of Rome which I used as a tool to investigate the beach in the same way. We can see in the residential districts the very tight configuration of well-defined, semi-public spaces between buildings or just inside of them in lobbies, or stair halls and courtyards on the outside. But as you go farther east towards the beach you begin to see larger courtyards,

grand lobbies, other amenity spaces such as card rooms, restaurant spaces, bank lobbies, theaters, etc. That larger network of spaces that infiltrate from the street into the buildings that in other cities might be considered off-limits is a very important characteristic of the city.

GS: You've done a lot of preservation reports for buildings on Miami Beach. How did you get involved with that type of research?

AS: The reason I did all those reports was that part of doing preservation projects entails doing a resource analysis of the building. You have to explore the building, understand its history, its context, investigate the materiality of the building and begin to consider your project within that framework. It was in a period (around 1996) when I was really starting to write—I had just done New City—and I wanted to expand those projects into research that was more fundamental to building type itself. It happens that I was working on some really interesting buildings that had a really tremendous history. I looked into everything that I could find on the building and its immediate context, the period that it was developed, the period before, the period after it, and start to weave a story. So those historic resource reports were a in a way more than pure resource reports. They were mini-histories of building types. These days I don't have as much time to do those, and I devote my writing efforts towards other projects, but they were really fun. Through those projects I got to really understand the resources that are available such as where to find information on these buildings. It was conventionally understood that there was no information on these buildings. Take a building like the 420 Lincoln Road building. It's not as though there's

a book written about it or featured in anybody's book. But, Miami Beach was well-documented in other ways. If you started to think about who the developers were, and where they came from, and what they were doing, it would lead to other questions. Why did they choose that lot? What was on that lot before? Then you find out that it was the site for the Lincoln Hotel, which was a was a keystone site in Miami Beach right at the hinge of two big avenues. You begin to think about the building type, and wonder why all of a sudden there was a need for that specific building type, which was quite an unusual type. Who were the people who chose the materiality and the artistic work? Then you begin to dive into the photo archives and ephemera. You can find a trove of information to put together a story about the life of the city and the life of the developer, and the architect and how those intersected, so I love those projects for that. [**28:19]**

GS: Where did you find the information for that particular building?

AS: At that time, I used History Miami for quite a few pieces of the story. They have a great photo archive and a great newspaper archives. Those were the days before the archives were online. Today you find a lot of archives online. It was a very open archive and easy to work in. I used newspapers. I used the University of Miami Libraries. The Bass Museum archives because when it comes to Lawrence Murry Dixon or Morris Lapidus they have a lot of wonderful information. I also used private archives. By having done so much research on the hotels, I had met a lot of the owners and people whose families had hired these architects who still had renderings and archives, so I was able to pull things from different places. Part of the project of putting together a book like *The*

Making of Miami Beach or *Miami Modern Metropolis* has been networking with contacts who I knew were doing research in this area. In the case of Miami Modern Metropolis, which was an edited work, it was putting people together to do various things, but also mining where things were. If I wanted to something on Dadeland Mall or Bal Harbor, where am I going to get the information? Is it with the city? Is it in private hands? Who was the developer? Are they still around? Is there a foundation, an archive somewhere? This is a huge part of the research and analysis of Miami Beach and Miami.

GS: I think that the school has evolved into three very distinct phases. I see you as being a part of the development of Phase II, but you've also moved into Phase III as well. Part of you is ingrained in the existing pedagogy as it was also somewhat molded by your graduate education here. A lot of your what you do, historic preservation, tropical architecture, urban and town planning—you epitomize to an extent, where the school became at one point as well as what it continues to become. You're part of the group that I refer to as the 90s generation of faculty. You were here at a pivotal moment when it needed to go somewhere else, or it would start to congeal. Do you have a response to my impression? Am I right, or am I completely off?

AS: I think I came in at a moment near the beginning of the program where the pedagogy of the program was still changing. I consider myself lucky to have had Lizz Plater-Zyberk, Andres Duany, Douglas Duany, Jean-François Lejeune, and of course Jaime Correa. Jorge Rigau was an important connection for me from Puerto Rico. He taught a part of a studio at UM and later invited me to teach at the Polytecnica in Puerto Rico for a semester. I

really drank in all of what the program offered, but by the time that I graduated I was probably less interested in working in actual suburb or town design than I was in the implications for using those tools in existing cities. That was my focus. I think it implicated historic preservation. My research went in the direction of looking at an existing city, and that city was Miami Beach where I did my first research. In that sense, maybe I followed or created a slight off-shoot of what was happening in the program. My teaching in the urban design program was generally in the area of housing and retrofit. I was teaching the housing seminar. I taught and developed a studio course in housing for the undergraduate program and later redeveloped it as a seminar for the graduate program. After my research on Miami Beach I became very interested in housing design and in how housing in the city and urban design intersected. I didn't teach the retrofit studio, but I taught the housing studio which was generally about infill development, so it was a type of retrofit also. We were working on developing a piece of an existing city, but applying both the analytical and design tools of the New Urbanism. I also became interested in regionalism and tropical architecture during that time. It was actually through my research into building types in Miami Beach that I realized that the architects who were doing housing and hotels in South Beach, at the same time were doing houses elsewhere in Miami. They were involved in a parallel investigation of minimalist, screened enclosures and open-louvered room. I started by looking at Igor Polevitzky's Albion Hotel and the Shelbourne Hotel, which led me to do archival research on his Bird Cage House and his porch houses. I realized that there was a whole other world, in that it was a different type of building tradition than housing tradition. I'm more interested in housing than in the question of the single family home, but I was also very interested in the manifestation of a

regional architecture using tropicalist building methods. It created a parallel track for me. I had developed my own theory after writing the essay in the *New City*, "Miami Beach As Urban Assembly". The palimpsestic development of cities is a very relevant theme for American cities where successional urbanisms are quite common and things are rarely permanent. When you think of Miami Beach which was designed as a suburb of houses and it developed into a city of hotels, apartment buildings, and civic buildings, this idea that the city could be assembled and transform itself through the layering of building blocks over time into something much richer with greater resonance for the people who lived there became the most important theme. When I started *Miami Modern Metropolis* it was in that same vein of trying to understand the city as this constantly changing, amalgamating, creating organism that grows, transforms and creates its own culture.

GS: Can you discuss the sphere? How did that happen? What was the inspiration for that project?

AS: I believe that problems are solved through design. The problem there was that the city was not interested in having buildings connected across an alley. I had a client whose project was dependent on connecting buildings across an alley. They could not expand laterally along the street because they could not acquire the adjacent property because it was a condominium, but they could acquire the hotel on the other side of the alley. We talked a lot about making these two things work together and about making the alley a better place, but we also had to acknowledge that the alley is an important piece of the infrastructure. We may dream that the alley is beautifully paved and has landscaping, but

it's still the place where the gas meters are, and the garbage trucks, and where the chefs smoke between shifts. As an urbanist I take that very seriously. The hotel needed a way to connect its two pieces across the alley. By the way, both sides of the alley contained very important rooms. The new retrofitted and expanded building that we were creating for them contained a lot of the important amenities of the overall complex so it was essential to be able to go back and forth. I think that this is another area where my training and experience at UM was important because I believe that as architects working on a building, we also have a responsibility to think about civic art, and to think about the ways that things can transform the immediate functional requirement and become something that could also belong to the realm of public space. So we began to think, "What if this thing is a bridge, but forget that it is a bridge for a moment, and think about it as a piece of public art." Now it's practically a destination for people. I didn't expect it to have such a force of attraction. We have done some videos in there because it is amazing to observe people's reactions as they are walking along who find this thing, and then stop, turn around to look at it and engage with it before continuing on their way.

GS: It is a piece for discovery.

AS: There are people who are actually looking for it. It's at the intersection of two alleys which makes it particularly interesting. It's where a longitudinal alley meets a lateral alley, so that there's the meeting of these two alleys and then there's this thing hanging in the air. It's also surprising because you don't know how it's standing there. How is it floated? What is it doing there? It's strange how people are always surprised when I tell them it's a

bridge. I've learned to just let it go. I never really talk about what's inside, because it doesn't really matter from the city point of view. It fulfills its purpose. What I'm equally proud of in that alley is the little restaurant. The owner was a really good client who saw the possibilities. We started talking about the alley not just as an alley, but as a short cut that people were using to get to the beach. There was a weird, triangular space that had been left over because the one alley is cranked (?) off of the geometry of the lot. It went down to zero on one side and up to 25 feet at the maximum width by about 130 feet of depth. So, we approached it as though it was an opportunity for another public moment instead of just a left-over space. What if the alley was a new street, or a muse of some sort? We could orient the most public function of the building, which is a restaurant—the building has a lot of public functions, galleries, libraries, etc.—If we organized the restaurant along the alley instead of the street and put a garden on the roof, what would that look like? What if that garden could be a public meeting space?

GS: Where is it exactly?

AS: It's the alley between Collins and Ocean Drive which is really an extension of Española Way, but Española Way stops at Collins, and then if you shift another 30 feet over there is an alley that was a short cut. The owner of the hotel was interested in using the hotel as a platform for philanthropy, and in particular for supporting poets. So we turned the rooftop into a poetry reading amphitheater. The guard rails that go around it contain poems by Miami poets.

GS: Have there been *Oh Miami* events held there?

AS: Yes, there are events once or twice a week on that platform. The amazing thing is that when you're in the garden you can see people in the alley, and people in the alley can see what's going on in the garden, so it creates a very public/civic moment. Then when you turn the corner you have that orb hanging in the sky. These are very Miami Beach public moments, because these moments evolve from a the most basic infrastructure into something much more civic in a layered assemblage. They are not cooked into the design of the city or into the initial planning. They came into being through the private initiative of my client and I to try to turn it into something really great.

GS: We need more philanthropy in Miami.

AS: Yeah, and also secondary forms of philanthropy like making your building do something good just because it can.

GS: You stated that you walked away with a good foundation from your undergraduate education at Cornell. What/ who were your influences, and what did you bring with you to UM?

AS: I think the pedagogical foundation of the faculty and the school's pedagogy being connected to the so-called Texas Rangers group of faculty is well-documented. Colin Rowe was running the urban design program. Oswald Matias Ungers was running the

architecture graduate program. Even though I wasn't in the graduate program those were pretty influential trajectories within the college. I think another thing that was interesting was that there were these dual fascinations within the school, which seemed contradictory on the surface but seemed all very normal within the program. One fascination was with Le Corbusier, and the other was with Palladio and the Renaissance in general. Of course, Colin Rowe was the guy that connected those things. You could do a design that meshed renaissance, figural space-making with Le Corbusier elements. The concept of "collage city" was common in projects from that period. The idea was that you could collage those two things together to make something coherent. One secondary lesson that I took out of that was the concept of the syntheticism of merging traditions. It goes back to that idea of fluid evolution and continuity between traditions that I find all around me in Miami. That was part of the context of my own pedagogy at Cornell. I would say that I graduated with a really firm grounding in the culture of architecture, the history of architecture, and in the evolving theories of architecture. I felt very well-versed. I didn't realize how well-grounded I was until I was out in the world and I could recall strategies from so many different building types, architects and periods. It was a legacy that I could tap as an architect.

GS: Is it part of your pedagogical approach now to pay that forward?

AS: Oh yeah. I believe that it is important that students read and enmesh themselves in the culture of architecture in a way where they are curious about the various forms that architecture can take, and how ideas can be married together in interesting ways. It is part

of my teaching. It's the way I run projects in my office, and it's part of the way I run my studios.

GS: The school is fully launched into the trajectory of technology. How do you approach the use of technology in architectural education?

AS: In terms of my own work it's easy to say how it affects me directly, because I learned the tools of architecture before computer technology infiltrated every process of architecture, and yet, I did absorb those things. I readily got into digital drawing, a little less into digital fabrication, but we're doing that in our office. I feel that we need to engage the tools. I wouldn't set myself up as a test-case because my own education predates it, so I see it from the perspective of someone who sees the arrival of these tools and tries to fit them into things that predate the digital. For me the most important thing when where talking about and working on architecture, is that we have to maintain the same expectation that it is architectonic, that it fulfills functional needs, and that the tools of architecture are about problem solving and not just self-referential. I try to emphasize that but I also encourage students to work in the technology that they feel comfortable with. I don't want to prejudge what they can or cannot do with the technology. In critique I try to apply the same critique as I would to a hand fabricated drawing. It's the results that matter. I don't feel that it's fully shaken out. I don't think that we're at a moment where the full possibilities of these new technologies are there. People are experimenting. In certain ways the use of technology has become quite obvious. One things that we're doing these days is digitally cut panels. It's a very simple basic use of technology that wasn't

commonplace five years ago. There are so many new directions. For instance, in the augmented reality studio, I was really fascinated to see how students are showing the possibilities of what is possible. It's not all resolved yet, but it is promising.

I think that the education of an architect is still the underpinning framework for for what can happen. Someone who can imagine the possibilities and can use technology to arrive there is going to make the project great. There's so much to look forward to. I'm more in the spirit of thinking about how those tools are going to work in my laboratory.

GS: Do problems inspire you to design?

AS: Yes. Absolutely. I am highly inspired by issues, problems, conflict, challenges, complications. That's one of the reasons I like working in urban districts. I actually like fact that you need to communicate with so many different people in the process. I like the challenging aspect of the codes and contemporary programs. I love hotels because they're very complex programs. If you think about the issue of how to make a contemporary boutique hotel with its expected amenity package work within a historic property, it's very complicated. It's like a jigsaw puzzle, and I really enjoy that puzzle. I'm really motivated by that kind of thing. Projects that we've worked on like the SoHo House or the Betsy have been enormously complicated assemblies of different public, semi-public and private spaces in three dimensions, like things on the roof, things in the middle of the building, extensions of the buildings...I love that part of architecture. I love the urban side of it too. That is what drew me back to Miami and to the S&T program. It's why I focused on the city when I graduated because what interests me most is the problematic of working with

existing fabric and with the overlapping and layering of ideas of what should happen in a particular district or piece of property. It works both at the architectural scale and the urban scale.

GS: You have lived and worked in urban Miami, but you recently moved from the city center. Where is home now? What does residential space mean for you now?

AS: That just changed for me because I'd been living in a really great condominium tower for 15 years, the Palm Bay Tower. It's an unusual building that sits in the Biscayne Bay on 69th Street. It's a three-sided building. The apartment is cross-ventilated and opens in both directions—a beautiful plan. I loved the small community and the lifestyle of living at a height on the 14th floor. Recently we moved to a house. I have always been curious about what it would be like to live on the ground again. My wife and I travel often and go hiking in other regions, and we always thought of Miami as the place that we lived in the air. Now we're living in a really nice part of Miami called Shorecrest. There are old oak trees, fruit trees, mangos, avocados...a loquat tree, and other things that we have to take care of but also benefit from. It's a new way of living in a tropical city. Living in the air has its advantages from the security point of view and from the ventilation point of view. You can leave your windows open all the time. Your security is downstairs in the lobby not at the front door. One of the things I regret about living a house is that I have to close up at night, and I'm not used to that.

GS: Get a dog.

AS: Yeah, we're getting a dog. We have racoons, possum, geckos, and lots of other creatures. It's changing the way that I see the city because I always saw my Miami as being the enclosure of the bay. Now being on the ground I see Miami as a different type of space. It's more horizontal running along the landscape. It's interesting to see the city from the ground level. It's great.

GS: Is there anything else that you'd like to share about Allan Shulman, the researcher, the architect, the designer?

AS: The only thing I would say because you've just mentioned those words, is that I see all of those things as being one thing. People always ask, "How do you teach, and work and write?" Those seem like three separate things which could easily occupy you, but I'm wired in a way that thrives on having it all thrown together into a big pot mixed up. It's really enriching to attend the capstone charrettes in the morning and come back to the office and change scale.

GS: Greg Castillo and Erick Valle were also around at the same time that you were.

AS: When I joined the program Jaime [Correa] and Erick [Valle] were close, maybe even business partners. They had set up the first semester of the program.

GS: Veritas pulled a story, "Urban Genes", from *Miami Today* in 2001, where you were quoted as saying, "Historic preservation is a rolling challenge that presents itself in a

different way to every generation. In a sense it's the preservation of the city's DNA. It's a valuable exercise in determining what type of a city and what type of environment we want to make for ourselves."

AS: I'm proud to have said that. I don't remember that interview but I'm working on something right now which is are guidelines for historic districts in Miami Beach, and that provides a good framework. I definitely believe that is true. That is what I think about preservation. I especially think it's important that we remember it now because we are on the verge of where we need to think about historic districts in a radically new way as we confront resiliency challenges. How elastic is the idea of a historic district? My concept of historic preservation is that it is not a fixed, rigid set of rules, but that it is a constantly evolving framework for thinking about existing buildings and what value they hold for us. What are the major elements that are important to keep? Professionally, my interest in historic preservation has not been in restoring the old post office, and paint sampling, and determining how to restore various pieces of a building within a tight framework. My interest in historic preservation is at the architectural and creative end of thinking what these building mean, and how we make new layers out of them. How do we acknowledge the fact that what we're doing to them in our contemporary period is relevant. I don't believe in the cast in amber approach. I feel that historic buildings are part of the continuity of architecture too and I am mainly interested in them as an architect because I respect them, but I also think of them as a springboard for thinking about how new things and old things interact with each other. It's an important aspect of historic preservation that I don't feel gets enough consideration generally speaking. We are about to start a Historic

Preservation program at UM. We currently offer a certificate in historic preservation. The program is in the works for 2020. We have three pillars of that program; one is the Caribbean and its traditions because of our proximity, and the needs for preservation in that region; another thing is Modernism and the preservation of the modern which is more heavily investigate now than it was 10 years ago, but it is still underserved; and the third is how preservation and community building and urban planning go together. How does the idea of making historic districts into planning tools work in the city of Miami. With this program we have a chance to bring our relevant lessons to the larger field of historic preservation in ways that aren't well covered.

GS: The way you describe your Miami is the way that Sonia Chao describes her Havana. I had the same reaction when I was there. There are parallels between the two.

AS: There are lots of connections between Miami and Havana and a lot that are yet to be uncovered and investigated. I think that as a school we've started. There's a book coming out by Victor Deupi and Jean François Lejuene on Cuban architects in exile. The connections between the two cities is a theme that should constantly deliver new insights and new projects.

GS: Havana and Miami are more closely related than Miami is to Ft. Lauderdale.

AS: Absolutely. Miami and Ft. Lauderdale are close physically, but they are worlds apart psychically. Miami has always been a different type of city, an ambitious city. So has

Havana. Miami also sees itself as an explicitly tropical city. Miami sees itself as a city that looks to the South as well as to the North.

GS: Maybe next time we meet we can talk about Interama?

END OF INTERVIEW
Gilda Santana
06.05.2019 (Date Transcribed)