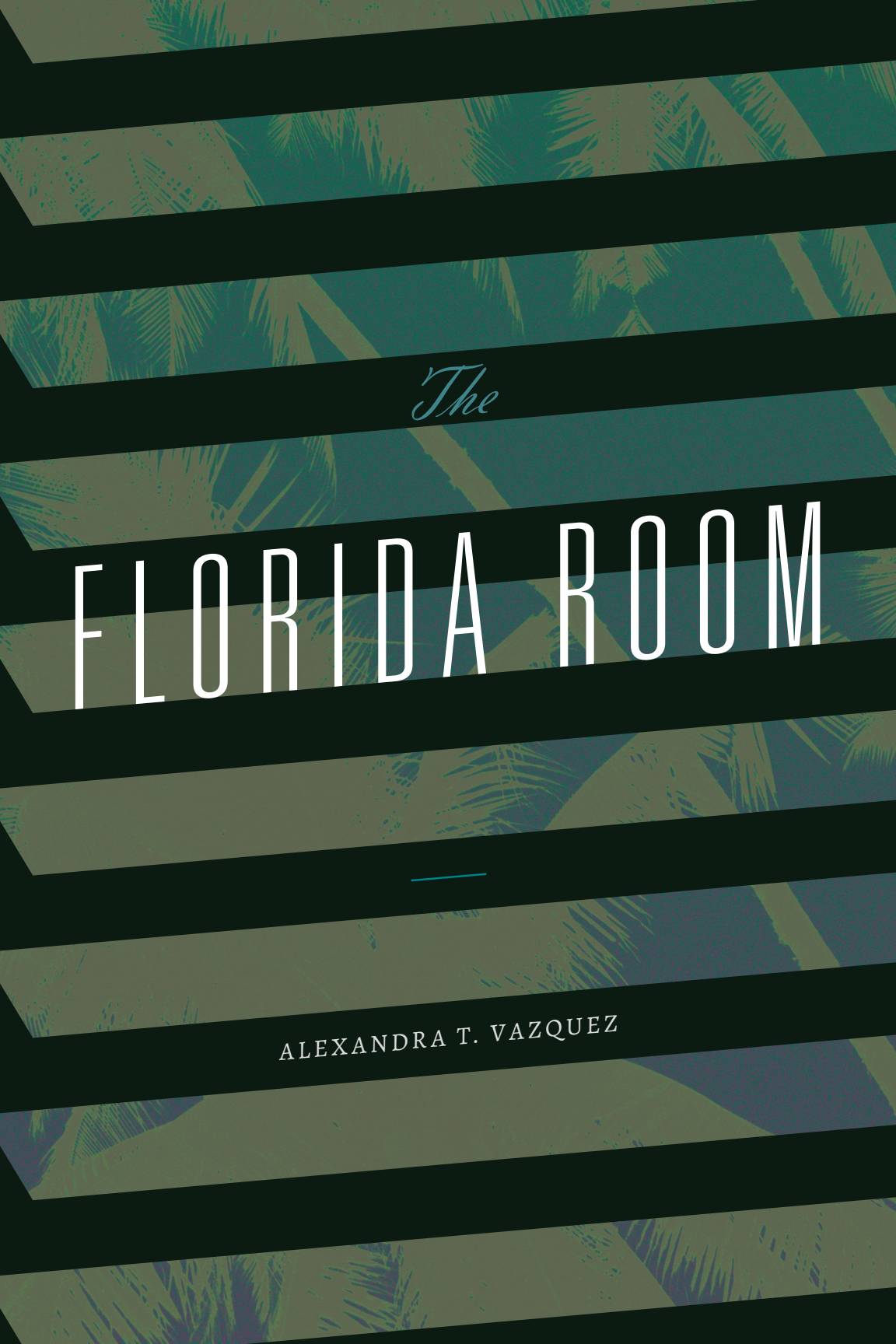




The

FLORIDA ROOM

ALEXANDRA T. VAZQUEZ

THE FLORIDA ROOM

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ALEXANDRA T. VAZQUEZ

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TO AND FROM MY SISTER TORY

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"In Lower Florida Wilds," by Juan Valadez, 2021.

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PREFACE

.....

HEAD FOR THE BEACH

There is everything for you here. There is nothing for you here. As much can be said, and has been said, about a city like Miami in a state like Florida. The same might be said for this book. The logic of the case study requires evaluation and reward. (Why does this thing merit our attention? What sets it apart?) Its specialness separates it from the rest. If we can get out of that logic—*what's in this for me?*—there might be something else entirely given, here, in that place and in this book, that isn't bound up with taking or a summary “takeaway” from the local. What may be given is hospitality, a hardy encouragement to stay for a minute, even when it feels unfamiliar and disorienting, and especially when it resists easy import into your own story. Visits of any duration are most welcome to *The Florida Room*. To hold a reader's attention in the humidity of residential particulars is the challenge of writing about place for those who have not been there. The experience of reading will likely require more rest stops. For the initiates, it is the how and the mode of assembly of place in this book that might delay and make different the familiar and orienting. This may require other forms of refreshment. Miami, Florida, is a place that will never be clearly or fully written about. It will not offer neat arguments about something or someplace else. This is the difficult beauty and wonder of its laboratory. It is also what offers assurance: surely there is something for you here.

The Florida Room is a method, a spatial imaginary, a vestibule, an addition to the main house of writings about place. The chapters are temporary rooms for connectivity between seemingly disparate things and people, and thus make necessary movement between history, theory, biography, and—most of all—music. Music's making and magic make possible the geographic thought experiment and peopling of this book. For the ways it compresses place, time, communities, and their creative play, music allows *The Florida Room* to hear Miami as a place of and from many. We hear the

Miccosukee as founding its rock-and-roll aesthetics. There are more than a few archipelagic island groupings sounded here: the Lucayan that built it and the Caribbean, notably Cuba, Haiti, and Jamaica, that further contoured it. The mainland is here, too, especially southern Georgia, brought by those who moved in reverse of the Great Migration to “the bottom,” as it is colloquially known. Miami’s attachment to northern capitals such as New York and Philly is most palpable in music in recorded and live forms. If any consistent critique can and should be made of Miami studies, it is that it is always incomplete. Who and when is here partly reflects my generational experience and those whom I grew up with. Its datedness is an argument. Its partialness is an argument too: this place needs hundreds of theorists and storytellers, old and young. What is offered here is not an encyclopedic mission to include everywhere and everyone but an invitation to revel in its small reveal of how many versions can be told about this place.¹ In this book it may be even hard to detect how certain details tell Miami. They find subterranean company with others that have long resisted the appeal for Miami’s spectacular inclusion as a modern metropole. Their subtle narrative tread grounds fantasies by those interests, from real estate to the arts, that would deny the histories of those who made and make it a place to live and do beautiful things.

Miami is saturated with torn experiences. Its myriad painful stories of separation, survival, and infuriation strongly tell over and over, despite its more than a century-long promise to a very select few of paradise and all that goes with it. Miami is a city considered foregone and far gone.² Much like New Orleans, rising sea levels have set the terms of its engulfment. It has long been primed for environmental disaster. The rapacious investments to make the land *settle*, to force its marshy volatility solid, and to insist that narratives about the city do the same have made Miami an experience sold in three speeds: fast, slow, stuck. Fast for the fever pitch of its development, slow for those left behind. Stuck, perhaps the most difficult gear, when trying to find other ways to live in and through it. The given Miami has never been stable. Its porous foundations have it in constant movement.³ The enduring exploitation of this moving given to make a comfortable place for some has made disposable and displaceable a great many. They have been inconvenient obstacles for Miami’s total development and amnesia for well over a century. This book adamantly lives in their stories told, broken and outright, whether in song, in paint, in writing, in conversation. Miami’s environmental devastation is real, and it is urgent. Of co-terminous urgency is the telling of those lives and all that living and making

that have long been refused recognition. To dismiss Miami as forgone and far gone is to enact a double violence: a giving up on its fragile ecologies and a willful forgetting of its under-told stories. *The Florida Room* hopes to switch up the speeds of the city's telling; to stop the impulse to possess, to make fast and furious inscription of Miami's erasures, to break open the cemented resignation of no past and no future. It soaks pages heavily with the area's unremembered.

It is not just Miami's coastal position or its strange geographic contours that unsettle any sense of stability. The differences (peopled and placed) pressed into Miami's relatively short history have paradoxically primed it for lazy assessment. It is too often celebrated for an easy, suntanned brand of multiculturalism that ignores the deep inequities that run the city. It is outright dismissed as a bad object in national events, particularly elections, which makes its myriad populations, and even the populations within those populations, into a singular mass.⁴ Miami thrives as an impossible heterogeneity that makes it an anomaly of the United States. And yet it is for many, as you will be told over and over again, a place without culture or aesthetic traditions. This repeated eradication of indigenous ingenuity and the contributions of Miami's Black and immigrant populations finds sanction in too many places. This book hopes to augment important historical studies of Miami with a plunge into its steadfast and brilliant cultural work as its basis, not as its afterthought. You will find guides for context in the notes section rather than the main body of the text because this book wants to lead with artists' stories, the things they make, the places they imagine. In Miami this is an activity that is always just beginning. The opening stanza of Lorna Goodison's poem "Deep Sea Diving" offers an invocation for both hearing and living it:

For the rare ones, the pieces only glimpsed at in dreams,
it is essential that you dive deeply.
On the surface all that you will see are objects discernable
to anybody, in colors between everyday and ordinary.
What a splendid spectrum ranges below for those
who dive deeply.⁵

The local offers its own models for critique; it doesn't need an outside apparatus. It does not require outside curators to bring it up to speed or to invite imposed rubrics in from the cold. What is already here, I ask, that wants to be *here* a little differently? How to hear the "splendid spectrum"?

Along with the Florida room as a locally articulated architectural phenomenon, the book insinuates other given models for its writing. The reading of each chapter requires willing entry into a mangrove tangle. The mangrove's shoots make it impossible to unravel neat lines of origin and influence. The details of their connectivity, somehow and miraculously, hold together and make home for a lot of life. They hold up in the fiercest of storms. Even when they are forcibly removed, the mangrove's propagules renew, somewhere else, perhaps close by their former home.⁶ Other eco-conceptual models abound in here. *The Florida Room* borrows from their forms, demands, resilience, and especially their transitions. Severo Sarduy once called the thin bands that separate songs on long-play records *playas* (beaches). For Sarduy the spaces do not signal alienation but instead carry the warmth and salinity of the shore and offer a place for "a homage to the naked body and to the beachside panoply." With Sarduy we may hear these *playas* as thriving with activity, as transformative spaces between where and when one song ends and another begins. They are full of searches for aesthetic forms, for temporary partners, and the bands "have no final outcome."⁷ Songs on the record object circle in parallel, and the beaches that link them help to make other kinds of connections between ensembles. I invite you to imagine the breaks within and between chapters as *playas*, as places for you, the reader, to bring what you need and leave what you don't.

Florida, with all its particulars, can't be told enough times. It's strangeness to the United States has long been a national given. "South America, take it away," Bugs Bunny famously said right before he animatedly sawed it off from the mainland. Some will pick up this book and hope to find "Florida"; others may want to go directly to "Miami." The writings on and around either are often kept apart, as are their authors. Here they share room. Throughout these pages, place will exceed official city limits and cross counties, sometimes for a longer ride, say to the Everglades. Places farther out and across time require other forms of transport, such as a record, radio, or drum. Because its precolonial and colonial histories do not align or are cut off from various critiques of the Americas, Florida demands other lexicons, adaptations, and, no less important, *styles* for its telling. *Write it*, as more than a few of my formative teachers used to say to encourage me to put together, in my own words and ways, what I thought was going on. The constant unrelenting education that is music, from remembered songs played on the school bus to the new worlds of cabaret performances in Miami's here and now, is my idiom. While music makes exquisite forms of camouflage, I insist on hearing the real decisions

made by musicians and all those who in one way or another had some hand in their training. And therefore, a lot of biographical detail is laced throughout this book. The biographies included here are not told in full but in glimmers that tell a fullness of living. There is a lot of movement made in them, geographic and imaginative, and they cue capacious approaches to concepts of the settled and the arrived. By listening to their migrancy and to what gets picked up and left behind while on the move, I hear techniques of making-do with the at-hand and how this making do is aesthetically mobilized by the dispossessed. Although the book depends upon oral histories of some of its players, it thrives in the complexities of their creative worlds that are often unverifiable. People's partial stories in *The Florida Room* were either shared with me directly or left behind in interviews with others. The richness of their fragments carries the stakes of births and deaths, migrations, teaching, love. At times in direct relation to my own experiencing of these things, there is thus a lot of maternity in these pages that is often, though not always, suggested through biography. To honor all them and all there in *The Florida Room* is my written refinement of a deep love of where I am from.

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Chapter One

THE FLORIDA ROOM

There is an actual place called the Florida room found in many of the state's homes. It is a room slightly askew of the house, usually offset a living room, that suggests another mode of *living room* specific to the infrastructure of the peninsula. The Florida room is neither officially inside nor outside, and although it feels like an addition to the main house, it is in the planned bones of the design to add more social life to the entirety. Screened in, or framed by glass jalousie windows (French for jealousy, from the Italian *geloso*), it keeps out the undesired to make way for the chosen, rain for dry, chill for sun. Even as mosquitoes are kept out, even as it exists in plain view, the room still allows for hiding out.¹ Extreme and temperate, it can be too hot, too cold, just right. It is being in the elements with some protective casing, a recognition of out there and in here that chooses neither. There is a decision made when one occupies it, an off-center choice that desires other than the overdetermined bedroom or dining room. It welcomes the makeshift, as it is often turned into that second or third bedroom needed when someone comes to visit, a quarrel demands separation, or an adolescent requires her own room, even if that space is visible to the rest of the domestic and the street. The advent of air conditioning couldn't kill off its purpose or feeling even when the rooms became permanently walled in. And when you enter it, you often must take a step down to the almost subterranean, as you would step into the ocean. You leave the sand for the water. It can go by other names. Descriptive: screened-in patio. Demonstrative: the extra room. Entrepreneurial: the home office. But it doesn't. The Florida room. It trades in gimmickry that you will likely internalize and make outwardly serious, a playful and difficult adjustment that thrives in the state.

As a title, *The Florida Room* began as an inside joke that, over time, became the outwardly serious gathering space for the following set of place-based works. The room is as actual as it is conceptual, as structural as it is imaginative. The lives in these chapters all pointed to being there, to wanting to be in the Florida room, if not quite together, then together in their need to be elsewhere than the main house. They resist union but evoke a shared dependence on this localized yet mobile place, its particular social living, a shared climate, and being inside and outside at once. *The Florida Room* lets everyone and everywhere in but does not stage or force encounters between people and things. It is a place for tender conjunction between stories that are kept apart, but its makeshift ethos also confronts the difficulty and constancy of being able to say and assemble them all at once. This is its risk in formation, of not wanting to create portable gauntlets that correct, fill in, or narrate its insides for an outside. What you will find here are people and places and music that need to heard together, even if they aren't all in the same room at the same time, era, or language. This book is steeped in painful histories; it airs some, keeps others private. Yet its myriad performances are brimming with potent sociality, making rich material for patio talk, contributing, as ever, to its open lilt while also revealing the long hangout time required to make beautiful composite together.

The entries to come all form some pulsating event, a kind of flip book. This introductory flip book depends on animation between the various scenes of and in Florida, movements slow and fast, that make adjustments of comprehension in the blink of an eye. Whether making motion with the pages from front to back or back to front, from some penultimate point, in medias res, the flip book can make stick some distinctive fragment from the rest and also hold a complete experience that hovers just above the object. The flip book relies on the help of a reader to make it move at their own pace, and invites all inclination to stop and start the coherence of the whole. The following drawings are not the gradual sort that shift one micro detail from a page corner to the next to easily lift the eye and ear through the transitions. But that is not to say they aren't deliberately placed.

The "Florida room" can be found in architectural digests or lifestyle magazines in and out of the state of Florida, with sudden floridity after World War II. It is a room that might not actually be in Florida at all but is a place exported to other climes and homes as far and as cold as New York, Indiana, and Ohio. Real estate advertisements, over time, have used the Florida room to highlight a listing's extra space, adding suggestive color with a hint of exotic transport. Even a complex across the Oxford Dictionary system

has three separate entries for Florida room (all nouns): *Oxford Reference* has it as simply “another word for sunroom.” *The Oxford English Dictionary* makes it “a room built at the back of a house and partly or wholly glazed, typically with a brick or tile floor and a drinks bar.” And finally the *Canadian Oxford Dictionary* defines it as “a sunroom, usu. only partly insulated, enclosed in glass on three sides.”² It has been the activating setting for everything in Richard Blanco’s poem “El Florida” and Tarell Alvin McCraney’s play *Head of Passes*, and it even unfurls the two-page short story “Wrong Number” by Roberto G. Fernández.³ It is a song by Steely Dan’s last remaining member, Donald Fagan (cowritten with Libby Titus), that advances its own description: “There’s a room in back / With a view of the sea / Where she sits and dreams / Does she dream of me?” It then is made to function as a site of choral return: “When the cold wind comes, I go where the dahlias bloom / I keep drifting back to your Florida Room.”⁴ A return to a make-out session and/or perhaps a euphemism for a woman’s body? “The Florida Room” was the title given for an “occasional feature” for more informal writing in the eminent *Florida Historical Quarterly* in 2003.⁵ It has been used to name a bar at the Delano Hotel on Miami Beach and who knows how many informal others. It makes a parlor game out of a research question for any Floridian I encounter, in Florida or anywhere else: what do you think of when you hear “the Florida room”? To which I have received replies both familiar and stunning: that softy rattan sofa where my aunt stayed, windows with hurricane-tape marks. Regardless of the answer, there is never much of a pause. My friend Michael Aranov, raised in a townhouse in North Miami Beach, replied to the question this way: “I’ve never felt more like an Uzbeki immigrant before.” Which brings up a central point: the Florida room, though a feature of the middle-class domestic scene, has been made beyond the glare of assimilated and impossible lifestyles out of reach for so many. It is less a sign of upward mobility than a yearning for a place, a place within a place. It is why one may be hard-pressed to hear or say the word without an accent. One finds them, or versions of them, in every neighborhood. All around Florida, and the radial outer Florida, you find people making them, regardless.

The Florida Room takes up this thing called “Florida” and all its in- and out-of-place people, the work they make there, or the work they make because of there. Let’s begin with a few histories of assembly involved in it. In Florida, historical facts have long worked hard to make its mythologies real. For example, we find mention of the Florida room as far back as 1891, when Elizabeth Dustin described an early form of it in her “Doings of Women” column in the *Los Angeles Times*. Take in her account of an

established trend, already made ripe for irony, a mere forty-six years after Florida's official statehood:

A FLORIDA ROOM

If you can't go to Florida in Lent you can perhaps have a Florida room. The notion has been taken up hereabouts, and really there have been worse fads in decoration. The possession of such an apartment is a certificate that you have been south some previous year—or that some time you are going. In a dainty Florida boudoir the wings of the flame-bright flamingoes, which fly through the green gloom of the swamps like tongues of fire, make charming bits of color, thrust behind the corner of a shelf or mirror. Soft, coarse blankets woven from the yellow fabric of the Nankin cotton, and dyed in pale, brownish tan, are hung as portieres and thrown as rugs across divans. In a cozy corner stands a tiny tea table made from a palmetto tree, its top a polished disk of the curiously marked wood, its three legs long varnished leaf stalks, their joining hidden by fans of the young leaves. It's a queer, tropical-looking bit, and if your hostess serves you on it a glass of orange-flower syrup you are apt to think, as you sit and sip, with your eyes resting on some weird sketch from the lagoons, that, after all, if she would but pull down that skin of a rattlesnake, it's not, with its trails of southern moss, in the meshes of which perch tiny, vivid-colored Florida birds in all sorts of pretty attitudes, it's not such a bad room.⁶

And so the Florida room, even and especially in this early iteration (the fake before the real), plays several roles. Here it is proof of having been there, an imported sensibility, or a promissory note that says “sometime you are going.” Its time for the outsider is a stimulating one entered during Lenten abstention. A reprieve of color and strange, a souvenir brought back after a visit. Its perfect situ for “queer, tropical looking bits,” for objects that would otherwise feel off in any other room. Here they belong and have function. What Dustin seems curious about but can't quite place could be summed up by the questions: Where does this stuff and this place come from? Whose house, whose domain, does this room cite? Perhaps it was a vacation home or an established residence of a northern refugee needing sun on their lungs. Who are the influences on this unnamed decorator? And most importantly, where do such aesthetics come from? We are given all the signals for answers to such questions: the environmental, the myriad trades and trade that happen within Florida, and what's involved when all this is taken away and presented to an outsider: “If she would but

pull down that skin of a rattlesnake . . . it's not such a bad room." But she doesn't, she leaves it, and in fact insists on that rattlesnake, unknowingly or willingly offending what we might shorthand here as northern sensibility. She ignores accusations of tacky that makes this little room the place she is so proud of, it is where she gathers her out-of-state self and company.⁷ It is a portable reliquary and also more than. The Florida room's export, beyond being a holding pen for touristic curios, suggests a planned desire for social togetherness alongside out-of-place things.

We later find the Florida room in a *New York Times* 1953 feature written by Betty Pepis, future author of *Interior Decoration A to Z* (1965), titled finally, officially, simply: "The 'Florida Room'" (figure 1.1). It has graduated from Dustin's outlandish receptacle to America's modernist accomplishment. Pepis begins her article and inaugurates a trend at once: "Likely to leave its mark on other parts of the country, despite climatic differences. . . ." It is "a room in which indoors and outdoors meet," she explains, and the two-page feature includes large photographic examples by famed modernist architects such as Robert Little, Wahl Snyder, James Merrick Smith, and notably, Paul Rudolph, whose words and work are quoted in the three-paragraph feature. Rudolph was for much of his career known as a foundational figure in the "Sarasota School of Architecture" or "Sarasota Modern" well before he designed his more famous works such as the Yale Art and Architecture building (during his tenure as chair of the School of Architecture beginning in 1958).⁸ Before all this, before he would become known as one of America's greatest architects (an architect's architect), was Rudolph's Florida period, where together with Ralph Twitchell, he would design and build such structures as the legendary Healy Guest House (also known as the "Cocoon House").

In her article, Pepis quotes Rudolph's lecture at the Coast Arts Center she saw just the week before. There he argued, "Any architecture in a warm climate has a peculiar responsibility because modern architecture in general is easier accomplished in a warm climate than it is in a northern climate." It is a revelation that the south, so long figured as backward or behind, is here configured as an ideal condition for modernist experiments with space. The interruption is heft with the weight of past history—we cannot *not* note his use of *peculiar*—and its already established blueprints, the plantation systems that disciplined the land for efficiency and extraction. Born in Kentucky to an itinerant Methodist minister, and eventual Harvard student of Bauhaus founder Walter Gropius, Rudolph put into his Florida period his childhood intimacy with innovative vernacular architectures of the south, and he lent warmth to modernist inquiries of the relation between

The "Florida Room"

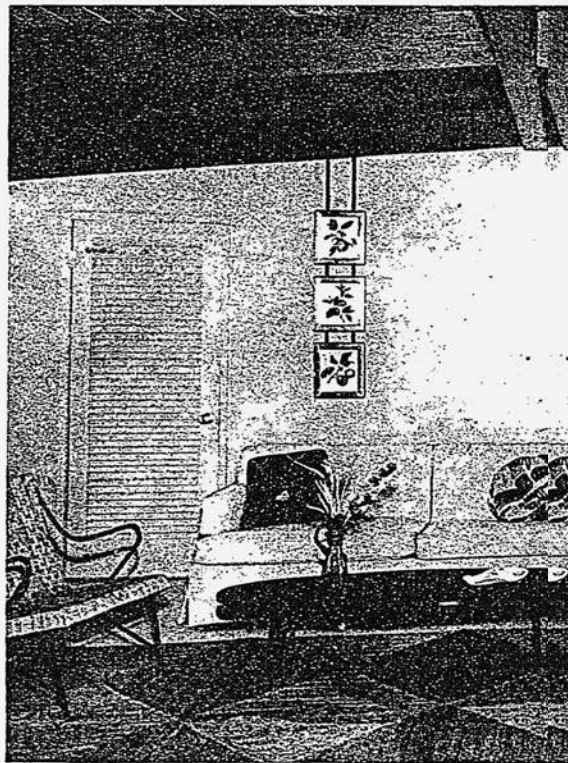
By BETTY PEPIS

CLEARWATER, Fla.

LIKELY to leave its mark on other parts of the country, despite climatic differences, is the building boom currently taking place in this state. Outstanding among contributions is the concept of what is called the "Florida room," at present being incorporated into many of the modern houses rising here by the score.

This is a room in which indoors and outdoors meet—for part of the room is inside the house, part of it is protected from the elements only by the use of screening or, occasionally, a roof. In adverse weather, and only then, the screened area is blocked off by a device like a sliding door. Several examples of rooms like this are pictured here and offer proof that such an area would be acceptable during warm months in more northerly climes.

An explanation of why so much experimentation is to be seen in this area was offered by architect Paul Rudolph speaking at a symposium on Florida residential architecture held here at the Gulf Coast Art Center last month. "Any architecture in a warm climate has a peculiar responsibility because modern architecture in general is easier accomplished in a warm climate than it is in a northern climate," Mr. Rudolph said. That Florida architects are not neglecting this opportunity to produce new forms for more pleasant living was fully evidenced by the symposium and as well by the changing appearance of the Florida landscape.



STRAW, REED AND METAL are materials adapted to furnishing the room completely opened up in pleasant weather. The bedrooms are off long central corridor.

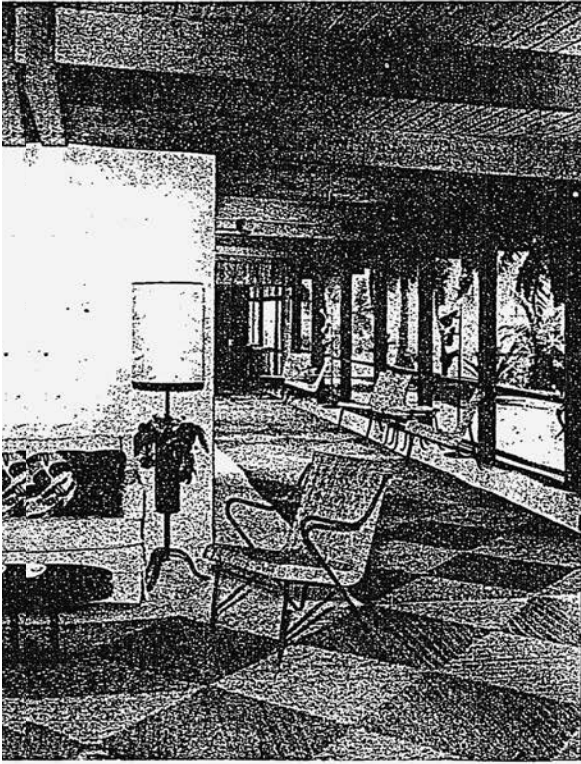
inner and outer space.⁹ Rudolph renders the south as a place for exercising responsibility for aesthetic play even if its climactic ease enabled and enables so much violence. And so it is possible to feel Rudolph's sense of space as resonant beyond the good living promised by glossy architectural digests, beyond the false whitewashing premise of mid-century.¹⁰

The examples provided by Pepis's *New York Times* article all share the qualities of outdoor rooms made with pliable materials or with materials pushed to the limits of their pliability. We are given examples of not so much the adaptability of the south to the modern but something of a vice versa: of modernism's extending from the south. The article is an invita-

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FIGURE 1.1 Betty Pepis, "The 'Florida Room,'" *New York Times*, March 15, 1953. ProQuest (12566107).



some so-called "Florida room," which can be comfort corridor in this house, designed by Robert Little.

tion to return to Rudolph's Florida period in particular, which stuns for its demonstrative attunement to surroundings.¹¹ According to Robert Brueggemann, Rudolph disliked having his designs be photographed as a curated lifestyle (the well-placed pair of slippers, a stack of magazines, preciously posed fruit bowls) suggesting the promise of privacy, leisure, possession.¹² After donating his archive to the Library of Congress and insisting upon its most open access possible, Rudolph wanted his drawings to be as specific as to render themselves, without the lifestylic extras. His innovative execution of such drawings were also left behind, openly, for others to come along and take flight from. There are many other blueprints, other extant

drawings to be felt within and prior to Rudolph's work. They hold robust, if neglected, evidence of what the south has given to the modern, and in particular, those vernacular architectures—even unseen ones—that schooled Rudolph and his contemporaries.

All aesthetics come from somewhere. They are developed and forged by people over long periods of time, via direct encounter or near misses. To move down into Florida's southernmost region, the radiant area that takes hold of the bulk of this book, we may speculate and extend far back some of the mystified undercurrents of Dustin's article and the material modernist experiments in Rudolph. Take the two-thousand-year-old "Miami Circle," remnants of an ancient structure of the Tequesta and their ancestors that stands at the mouth of the Miami River, with a pristine view of Biscayne Bay (figure 1.2). It became a press and scholarly sensation when its discovery became widely known in 1998.¹³ Its origins, age, and function continue to be debated—in fact, it has inspired an extensive critical literature. The Miami Circle includes twenty-four basins carved into limestone in a circle that measures thirty-eight feet in diameter.¹⁴ Thanks to the meticulous studies collated and written by Miami-Dade archaeologist Robert S. Carr, we learn that these basins were dug into the limestone to hold posts for a structure. Through radiocarbon dating of charcoal and the variety of ceramic shards found in the basins, Carr approximates its "calibrated age" to AD 50 (the Glades I period).¹⁵ Among the recovered objects at the Miami Circle were the complete vertebrae from a rare "requiem shark," the skull of a bottle-nosed dolphin, and a loggerhead turtle's carapace, all positioned in an east-west direction. There has been much speculation about the presence of these animal remains, whether they indicate sacrificial rituals, what Erica Hill calls "ceremonial trash," or what Ryan Wheeler and Carr posit as the possibilities of "other cultural practices" or "the ontological concept as 'other than human persons.'"¹⁶ But archaeology cannot ever tell us the whole story, as some of its practitioners themselves admit and embrace. I am less interested on the verification of their "actual" function and more drawn to how their intactness suggests them as something other than utilitarian items.¹⁷

What is most provocative to imagine, thanks to Carr's hypothesis, and especially in collaboration with Alison A. Elgart's findings, are that these animal interments date several hundred years apart from the other. In other words, whatever this place was, it remained a formalized and revisited site over extended periods of time. The structure, its position at the crossroads of water, and its placed acknowledgment—for whatever meaning—of

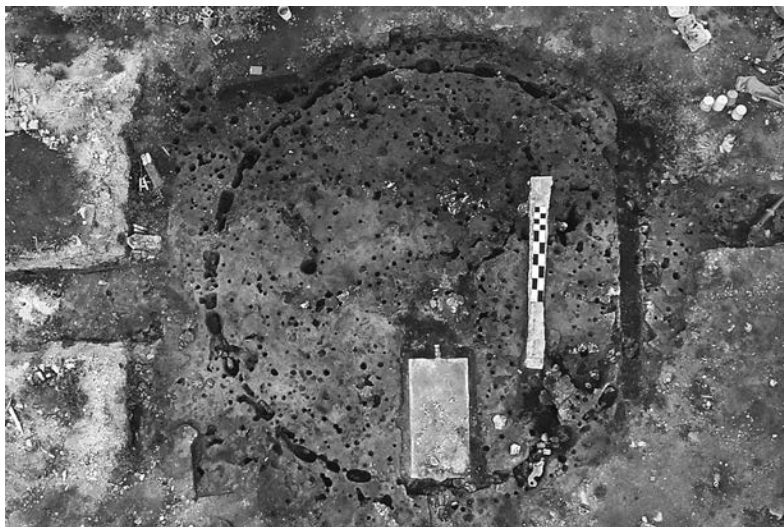


FIGURE 1.2 Aerial view of the Miami Circle. Photo courtesy of Miami-Dade County Office of Historic Preservation.

the faunic surround suggest how people have made living with meaning possible. And, of course, of great importance to the Florida room and *The Florida Room* is Carr's indication that the excavation of the Miami Circle revealed a large amount of "exotic materials." Through the work of geologist Jacqueline E. Dixon et al., we learn that these materials include basaltic rocks from all over North America (especially the Caribbean and the Piedmont region near Atlanta, Georgia), galena from Missouri, copper from Michigan, and chert from Central Florida.¹⁸ These outsides brought and tucked into this structure prefigure and pretheorize hemispheric study or inter-American scholarship; it helps to imagine something of the activities of a global South without the governing protocols of European colonialism and empire. What the Miami Circle was or is, with its millennia-long accumulation of things from elsewhere, is the kind of inquiry I extend right through to the Florida room: What is this place? And how does the gathering of enigmatic things from all over invite us to proceed radially from the local out, and from the outward in? What we learn from this ancient modern circle, from this firmly rooted and ephemeral structure, is that migrancy plays in the heart of its development and adornment. The knowledge of the east-west sunset, over time, evidenced by the Miami Circle marks the land's first stewards and their centuries of earthworks. This all reveals an ancient practical know-how, a making-do and making green with the

at-hand, but with *chosen addition* of the area's histories of migrancy. In the very bones of their infrastructure, the Tequesta and their ancestors insisted on incorporating signals of movement and the encounters had while there as both foundation and decor. So perhaps, in this moving genealogy of the Florida room, a renaming or, at the very least, a slowing down of the sign "vernacular architectures" is in urgent order. Perhaps we can call these practices prescient philosophies of living and being with that are innovative for their practicality and their beauty.¹⁹

Take the indigenous ingenuity of the chickee developed by the *i:laposhni:cha thli:*, people of Mikasuki-speaking heritage in Florida who today represent the Seminole Tribe of Florida, the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida, and Independents. They have been historically grouped under the name Seminole. The people who "Seminole" describes emerge from distinct language groups and cultures. The histories of Seminoles are at once mercurial, untold, mis-told, fragmented, or confined to settler ways of telling. The non-native often grasps for firm places, names, place-names, static group identifications, and, through the idioms of archaeology or anthropology, tries hard to make the past and present fully transparent. There is always a violent reduction of these long histories—and the lives that lived them—when short-handed for outsider context. Deeply resistive are the entrenched histories of people who have long made thriving multicultural communities even and especially when coming together as refugees. And given the depth of degree—in time and space—of displacements, bloodshed, and willful erasures, there is no "figuring out" or fast track to understanding all that rumbles under the sign of the Seminole in ways that will satisfy settler modes of inquiry. Rather than perpetuate the endorsement of such shorthand, I stay close to a small constellation of artists and authors, here and in chapter 2, to nuance and, more importantly, recognize and honor all those who have endured much more than any truncated telling will allow.²⁰ Buffalo Tiger (Bird Clan) offers this for those struggling with the disorienting particulars: "We know who we are and what type of language we have."²¹

The chickee (or "house" in the Mikasuki language) is the traditional home structure and powerful symbol for both the Seminole Tribe of Florida and the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida, and is featured in their official logos as an icon of gathering. The chickee is an open-sided dwelling, built to scale depending on its function, and has long contoured the horizon of the Floridas. The chickees were traditionally placed in matrilineal hamlet arrangements, with separate ones built for cooking, for sleeping, and more

portable ones made for hunting.²² Their frames are usually made with logs from pine or cypress trees, and their roofs are made out of overlapping palmetto fronds woven into structural ribs (figure 1.3). Sleeping platforms were elevated several feet off the ground for aeration and for protection from curious fauna. It is a reinterpretation of a treetop, a silhouette that textures the sky. The palmetto fronds offer both a form of protection from and a being with the surround. The roof protects people and things from the rain, and its pliability allows strong winds to flow through rather than against the chickee. The structure moves with the given. The chickee's adaptability enables it to anticipate and endure anything that may be coming. Bird Clan philosopher Daniel Tommie Ochehachee began apprenticing under his uncle Johnny Tucker (an expert chickee builder) in the craft of their building as a teenager in the late 1970s and early 1980s.²³ The first thing Ochehachee remembered learning to do was "how to carry a good-sized log by yourself," how to balance even a twelve-foot log by pushing it upward, finding its center of gravity, and gently balancing the log on the shoulder without an extra pair of hands. Those extra hands, in turn, would be freed up to move on to the next step. An efficiency for making home.²⁴ He describes the difficulty of the work but believes that chickee building was part of what trained his multifaceted sense of discipline and creativity to make things easier. This is a learned practice that Ochehachee describes as "working smart instead of working hard."²⁵

As Ochehachee would watch and learn from his uncle Tucker and from his cousin, James E. Billie (Bird Clan), the influential chairman of the Seminole Tribe of Florida, he learned that for the practice of chickee building, "the key word that you need is compassion." What does it mean, and what could it mean, to build a dwelling with compassion? Note that he did not say compassion *for*, which would suggest a separate lived experience from others. What Ochehachee extends is a different cosmology for recognizing and *being with* feeling, be it happiness or sorrow or struggle or hunger, and how it may be met with integrity, honesty, love, and food. This being with is hard work and requires a steadfast dedication to remembering the past and a sense of responsibility to the future. Compassion is a keyword made into action, a necessary quality built into structure. It is also a structure of recognition—with and without material evidence—of deep ancestral techniques. When I asked Ochehachee what compassion meant to him, he beautifully pivoted to a story about his grandparents, Ruby Tommie (Bird Clan) and Jimmy Tommie (Panther Clan). His grandfather was an important



FIGURE 1.3 Jill Guttman, FS89394, photograph of James Billie's chickee—Big Cypress Reservation, Florida, January 1989. Folklife Collection, Series 1577, Seminole Project, no. 50, State Archives of Florida.

spiritual healer and bundle carrier who was afflicted with blindness. As a notable medicine man to their people, Ochehachee's grandfather would receive many visitors throughout any given day, and his grandmother made the infrastructure so that care was available to all. Ruby Tommie would be sure to prepare enough food to last throughout the day, which included meals for the family, for the extended family, and also for all the visitors who would come from all over to see them. This was when they still lived in the Everglades and would move their chickee from dry hammock to dry hammock. Ochehachee said that they could spot visitors on the horizon thirty minutes before they would arrive, and this would give his grandmother enough time to heat up food for them. The hospitality of Ruby Tommie is what Ochehachee calls "one of the many branches of compassion," and it is a material and spiritual component woven into the chickee.²⁶ As Ochehachee put it, "You're not supposed to be stingy with your food."²⁷

To return to one of Ochehachee's teachers (and cousin), James E. Billie, we are given other theories behind chickee design and what it enables for a different interaction between land and home and an invitation to imagine certain functions in and of *The Florida Room*. Billie emphasizes all the chickee lets in:

It does not hold back the noises coming from the outside. It does not prevent spiders, cockroaches, mosquitos, rats or snakes from visiting. Wintertime you freeze, but in summertime you are cool and comfortable. Every morning we are awakened an hour before daylight by the cawing of the crow greeting the day. Red birds (cardinals), mockingbirds, woodpeckers and from a distance you can hear the whooping crane and all are singing their songs and looking for breakfast. Jets overhead seem like they are coming through the roof. *A chickee does not hold back noise.* Raining on the roof and lightning is especially nice but a little scary. But it's our house and we love it.²⁸

Billie says it twice: a chickee “does not hold back noise.” It is surround-sound living. He asks that we imagine the rapid changes in frequency as a plane passes by; the special South Florida kind of doomsday rain and lightning that gives aural cues for the seasons (sublime for sure); and the deep south birdsongs, those mingled cries of migration that feel prehistoric and modern all at once. All of this is part of the chosen design and the love of living in the chickee. Here Billie shows a structural habitus for listening in this book. It does not, nor cannot, hold back noise. Billie's description of living models an inspiring capacity for taking in all the elements. Although the Florida room (as an architectural phenomenon) may try to filter out the undesired for the wanted, Billie shows *The Florida Room* that nothing is in my control, and this is a house one can love.

Ochehachee states that chickees are now mostly, though not exclusively, built for economic reasons. For example, they are commissioned by hotels, golf courses, or private pool cabanas. The trade is brisk and important for the Seminoles and is just one small industry among centuries-long industries developed with visionary entrepreneurial spirit. This spirit and determination are forces the i:laposhni:cha thli: help me to imagine in more detail in chapter 2. As is customary in their longer arts and economies of fortitude and self-sufficiency, there is an insistence on passing down traditional ways of life to the new generations. When I asked Ochehachee about how one may detect the different signatures from chickee makers in their work, he is quick to answer: “It is very, very subtle and very hard to tell.” The choice of wood, or the ordered placement of logs, for example, and also the particular size of the chickee can suggest its maker. These chosen aesthetics of scale and assembly, in other words, are part of what marks one builder's craft from another's. It would likely be difficult to tell unless you were trained alongside these architects. As for Ochehachee's practical and creative legacy, he has already started to ready his six-year-old daughter, Shonayeh Shawnie



FIGURE 1.4 Photograph of Daniel Tommie Ochehachee (Bird Clan), February 10, 2018, in Loxahatchee, Florida. Ochehachee offered this photo of himself in his Seminole War reenactment regalia for the book. “This is the image I want to put out there so people remember.” Photo permission by Gordon Ollie Wareham.

Tommie, in the practice of chickee building. It is an activity that goes hand in hand with trying to teach her colors and animals in his first language, Mikasuki. She’s a “perfect candidate,” he says, who will later “show some of the guys what hard work can do.” Ochehachee has begun by teaching her which sticks to save for certain positions in a fire and how to sort the scale of a tree’s offerings for a future chickee. “I’m working on a foundation,” he says of this education. “You might see her, next year, with a hammer in her hand” (figure 1.4).²⁹

Deep knowledge of currents, of elemental pliability, of weather patterns hard lived and hard won can also be seen, foundationally, in Florida’s Bahamian “Conch” houses. These innovative structures were named after the Bahamian settlers who came to Tarpon Springs, Miami, and Key West in the 1870s to work its nascent tourist economies and the sponge trades, and make new, single-family homes. They were built in such a way that the open front to the open back door of the house makes a single continuous circulatory breezeway. Bahamian ship carpenters are generally attributed



FIGURE 1.5 The Mariah Brown House. Courtesy of the author.

to be the earliest architects of this style. Characteristics include using wood joinery, raised foundations so as to allow for circulation, galleried front porches, and jalousied windows throughout, all designed with no lifestyle-ing extras and to allow for maximum possible air flow.³⁰ One notable example of this Bahamian living philosophy is the Mariah Brown house (circa 1890) in historic Coconut Grove Village West in Miami, one of the oldest parts of the city. Mariah Brown, born in 1851 in the Upper Bogue, Eleuthera, left home to work as a washerwoman in Key West and was among the first Bahamians to migrate to South Florida to work at the Peacock Inn, one of the first lodgings built for tourists, in 1880.³¹ Brown first lived at the inn but soon sought to make a home of her family's own. A founder in what Bahamians called Kebo, the first Black community in Dade County, Brown and early residents cut their own street off of the Main Highway and named it Evangelist Street (now Charles Avenue). The Mariah Brown House was one of the first homes on this cutaway (see figure 1.5).³²

We don't know who actually built the Mariah Brown House, but we want and need to imagine its activity of way past and current present. Looking at this house, the scrappiest of fighters, there is an absolutely detectable flurry of activity, of life and the living, even in its abandonment, even as

its front windows are boarded up. It emanates light and air. The historical imaginary made possible by this beautifully economical and compact structure, of the exits and entrances of Florida's early Bahamian residents, of how they made precious time out of the workplace, is palpable in the here and now. Note how the two front windows lend an experimental threshold to the front porch, portals that allow a person to be between, to be both in and of what is happening on the inside and outside of the house. This zone is a place of testing, of not being ready to leave or stay, and there is a kind of aerated comfort in that formally built transition. It is a proto Florida room.

The Mariah Brown House makes new gatherings even in its current condition. The Brown House, like so many other vestiges of Florida's Black histories—histories that rapacious developers have been fully invested in exploiting and then erasing—appears to be left somewhere in the limens of destruction and the false promise of preservation. “Awaiting restoration” is Florida real estate code that appeases outcries for conservation, usually important Black historical locations, before they corruptly cut out any opposition and tear them down. A wear down to tear down.³³ But there is, as always in Miami, so much more to this story. The fight on the part of long-standing Village West Grove residents is far from over; it still stands; it is still there. One among many fighters, the indefatigable Linda Williams was born and raised in Village West.³⁴ Her mom (“a Georgia gal”) was the well-known Bessie Thompson Williams Haithman, a domestic worker who maintained the homes of some of South Florida's prominent families, including the Alexander Graham Bells, Fairchilds, and Pancoasts (figures 1.6 and 1.7).³⁵ As a single working mom, Bessie Haithman saved her wages to buy a home in 1964 in Village West, where she raised young Linda. Linda Williams came of age with Coconut Grove's trenchant racial boundaries that later became known as the Coconut Grove Village West Neighborhood Conservation District (NCD-2).³⁶ She is sure to distinguish Village West from Coconut Grove because the former was the place designated “for our folks to live,” noting that one could not cross 32nd Avenue unless employed by a family on the other side. For Williams, however, Village West was self-sufficient, “we [had] shoe cobblers, fish markets, beauticians, barbers, mom and pop stores, etc.,” which enabled families and neighbors to clothe, feed, and provide care for the beautiful and talented among a tight-knit community. Among the incredible details of her life was her position as the first Black corps captain of the majorettes at then newly integrated Coral Gables Senior High. She eventually married Alfred Williams who she met while he was working as a butcher/market manager at the Winn-Dixie



FIGURE 1.6 Bessie Thompson Williams Haithman. Courtesy of Linda Williams.

FIGURE 1.7 Linda Williams. Courtesy of Linda Williams.

grocery store. In one of the greatest lines of love at first sight, Linda Williams said to Alfred Williams: “I won’t even have to change my name.”

Williams had an incredible career as an administrative secretary for Lester Pancoast, as the school secretary at the Everglades School for Girls (prior to the merger with the Ransom Everglades School), and even as the owner of her own secretarial firm for approximately five years. After downsizing her business, she accepted the opportunity to work for lawyer (and former client) Howard Long Jr., which continued until her mother became ill and required her full attention and care. Following her mother’s passing in 2006, Williams became galvanized by the encroaching development of Village West and the Grove, primarily the “big boxes” that would replace the historic Bahamian homes and community style and character. “I don’t require air conditioning,” she said as a way to signal the particular kind of pollutants coming into the neighborhood. Trees were cut down and/or destroyed, taxes were elevated, and more willful neglect came from outside landlords intent on furthering more development. Williams first showed up to meetings of concerned locals about Village West and Grove preservation, including the Mariah Brown House and the historic Coconut Grove Cemetery on Charles Avenue. “I took a lot of notes; remember, I was a

good secretary,” and she proclaims that this was the beginning of her central role in community advocacy. A recording artist. She was instrumental in getting Charles Avenue designated as a historical corridor, and her participation in the Negro Women’s Club helped to raise scholarship funds “so some little girl could go to school.”³⁷

Williams now serves on the board of the Coconut Grove Historical Cemetery Association, which is deeded the property of the Mariah Brown House. It is in the process of trying hard to turn the home into a museum, especially for elementary-school field trips to visit.³⁸ But for Williams, the committee cannot proceed without the participation of one of Mariah Brown’s ancestors. Enter Robin Gore to this story. Gore, who was born and raised in Liberty City and Miami Gardens, lost her father, the Bahamian Willie McKeithan, a Miami Metro bus driver, when she was five years old: “He was very, very much a part of my life, and still is.”³⁹ Gore was a veteran Dade County school bus driver until retiring in 2017. Retirement freed up the time and space for Gore to research her father’s family and background, and together with other family members, she picked up a few threads that led to Mariah Brown. She started going to meetings about the house and was brought into the acquaintance of Sandra Riley, a retired theater and English public-school teacher who had formed her own theater company, “The Crystal Parrot.”⁴⁰ Riley has long been fascinated with Brown and has written articles about her and also a historical drama.⁴¹ In 2019 Riley and Gore exchanged their mutual research about Brown’s past and confirmed Gore’s hunch: this was her family, and she was Mariah Brown’s great-great-granddaughter. The discovery shook the sixty-year-old Gore to her core. What was that like? “I still get chills whenever I talk about her. A great-great-grandmother that built the first house in the Grove in the Black section, and her being a washerwoman? I was so excited and I still get very excited.” What are your dreams for the house? I asked. “That someday kids can go there on field trips and learn about how she made coconut candy and almond candy.”⁴²

Aeration, as evidenced in the Brown house, is a strong current in Black aesthetic practices and formal invention in Florida.⁴³ The creation of new forms that allow for air and breeze, out of necessity and choice, is enduring work that does everything to blast open racist assumptions of stagnation. Even in moments of devastating displacement, as is and was the case of Overtown, another of Miami’s historic Black communities that has long been on the front lines of violent urban renewal and aggressive gentrification, Black Floridians have made Florida rooms that give and get air.⁴⁴ These places have been dynamically conceptualized, as with the work of artist

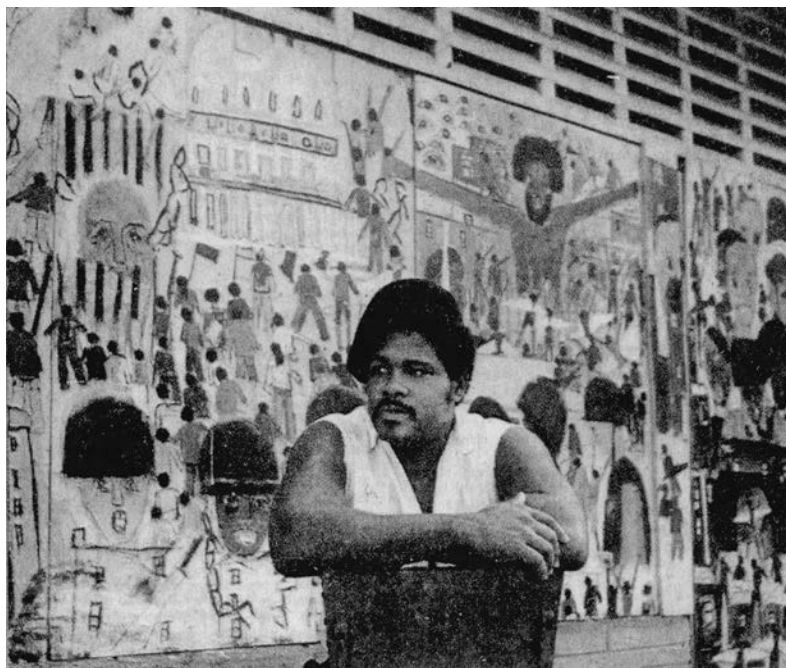


FIGURE 1.8 Purvis Young and his *Good Bread Alley* in 1971. Photo by John Pineda.
 “Purvis Young’s Murals Line Two and a Half Blocks of NW 14th Street . . .
 tumult of images look down on a ‘mean,’ trash-littered slum.” *Miami Herald*,
 September 24, 1971.

Purvis Young (1943–2010), who moved the idea of the Florida room out of the individual domain or idea of private property in its entirety. Young, born in Liberty City, gained public attention after painting a series of large panels that he installed on the ruins of Overtown’s buildings beginning around 1971. Inspired by a photograph of Chicago’s Organization of Black American Culture’s “Wall of Respect” (1967–71), Young made his own suite of works that are often referred to as *Good Bread Alley* (figure 1.8).⁴⁵ Young attached paintings onto the neighborhood’s wreckage wrought by Interstates 95 and 395, at that point in the midst of completion after decimating the Overtown neighborhood, its cultural institutions, and the movement patterns of its people. A kaleidoscope of steadfast embers, Young’s paintings were stacked high and low and were a vital form of social and political record keeping. His insistent brushstrokes pressed hard against their makeshift frames, all put together with found materials by the artist himself. They are peopled with

gestures that run into the other. Eyes are to be found everywhere in them. Hands too. They reach upward in ascension, petitioning, affirming, drowning. Vehicles, in the real time and future time of the highway's aftermath, are piled up and fixed in contained panels. People who remained and were forced out from the neighborhood are here in abstract portraiture; we feel them at work, together for some gathering, and all the surround sound is hemmed into and above withstanding walls.

Because of a lack of a well-lit studio space, Purvis Young would make a studio of the outdoors. He would often paint outside in clear view of all of Overtown. While this work was done partly out of necessity, his work suggests a keen attention and interest in watching people in the *doing*. Young's people are in motion, not made to pose in standstill or for the oft-abstract secretcies of the private studio space. His inspirations are on their way somewhere or on their way back from doing something, and they make wide and reflective room of the interim. Young models the outside, a social outside, not the pristine one made possible for a privileged few. And by doing so, Young inspires a primary aesthetic and scholastic mode for *The Florida Room*. The performers and artists to be discussed throughout recall Young's prolific mode of working—and of doing so out in the open—with a feverish urgency to create in order to live, and to keep making work so that others may also continue living. Although it is impossible to cohere his immense body of work (Young's known works are said to number more than three thousand), artist and curator Juan Valadez notes certain themes that run through it: devotion to pregnant women, enslaved people, people on boats, warriors, and holy figures, in addition to bugs, horses, and cosmic matters of planets and stars.⁴⁶ Young's flurry of documentation pauses on natality, the divine, mortality, the interplanetary. And not only the newness with which Young put them to canvas but also the very construction of canvas and frame themselves, as Gean Moreno observes, “announces rather than commemorates.”⁴⁷ *Good Bread Alley* suggests Young's large-scale and community service-driven register. It is also compressed into his more specific works. Encounter one of his works on a wall, and you'll find the Florida room's place within a place. You are asked to come in and stay for a while, however pleasant or painful. Young's stand-alone works suggest a portal-like quality of a Florida room that can be made anywhere and of any scale.⁴⁸

Purvis Young's biography is often overdetermined by racist fantasies of the otherworldly naïve artist, or he is used as an exemplar, function, or cautionary tale of the Art World given the flurry of commodification and

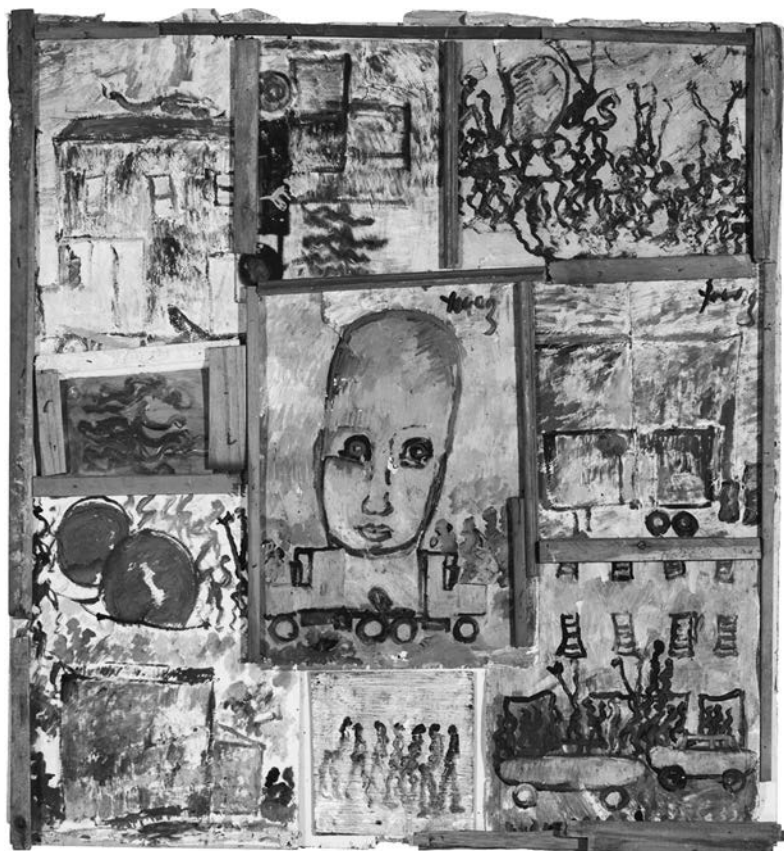


FIGURE 1.9 Purvis Young, *Untitled* (PY1067), 1980–1999, paint on wood and paper, 48 × 52 in., Rubell Museum Miami. Photo by Alexandra Vazquez.

market making of his work.⁴⁹ There is a common tendency to speak for or on behalf of the artist and how he chose to sell his oeuvre. These narratives tend to supplant careful and detailed reading of his actual work. What is required when taking in one of his works among the multitude, not to make individuated possession of it, but to enter it as prescient theory? To imagine the formal choices he made in a small space? Take in Young's *Untitled* (figure 1.9), for example, and his dexterity with found-chosen materials that make an undulant blueprint that contains (and decidedly doesn't) a series of rooms. The bottom left of the work is left wide open, a drain or a window, or more so, an airshaft that oxygenates the whole. It isn't possible to know whether this piece just fell off (a phantom joint) or whether Young meant for it to

keep the painting open, but it is nevertheless *open*. The wooden pieces used to break up the scenes are organ pedals, ways to play notes that ground what may be happening in the keys up top. A large dulcet portrait of a face rests atop a truck; balls with chains recall details from Young's slave paintings; there are people socializing around cars, some with outward danceable gestures; and there is a small building, perhaps a home, with a truck waiting just outside, idling below, or driving straight through it. This makeshift structure—this incredible theorization and implementation of a Florida room and its gathering of great difficulty and pleasure, and the announcement of all the people who have lived and continue to live there—offers a different kind of modernism that may have eluded Paul Rudolph. One has the great privilege to wonder how Young decided to put together these ten different scenes in this way and why he brought these particular pieces together, in this particular place, with joinery both tight and loose.

Young's work, you will note, inspires cumulative description. This is not accumulation for possession but rather meeting his unrelenting sense of adornment with your own. Engaging the work inspires inexorable add-ons: and then he does ____, and then he makes ____, look at the ____, why this figure ____, and why ____ there? All this is doubled and tripled, especially at the moment you think you are analytically done. The density of his compositions offers onlookers activities for the mind, games that keep memory active, abstractions that beg for more questions. Through *Good Bread Alley* and *Untitled*, Young's work lends a concretized sense of the baroque to the Florida room, one that has been conspicuously suggestive especially in the Miami Circle and Dustin's chamber. Young's baroque stuns for its complete assurance that there is cohesive activity among the seemingly disparate objects assembled here, and it is this assembly that puzzles and beautifully strains the eye and ear for a singular subject, whether person or theme. The very fact of them being brought to this wall, this canvas, this set of panels makes them more than "just things." Far from haphazard, the wet mortar carries the histories of people's survivalist arrangements of their surroundings. The People's Baroque.

The foregoing entries are all material, implemented establishments of the Florida room. There have been visitations to places that narrate Florida-for-outside, methods that hope to bring Florida inside, and other built actions that don't care to narrate at all but instead like to dig in and emanate the local for the local. These canonical and lesser-known

examples (depending on your regional orientation) all hold the twinned elements of objects and activities. Turning now to a few other architectures that are slightly more conceptual, but no less structural than these other examples, *The Florida Room* will reveal its plans for further realization. The awe that is part of Floridian study, and who and what you'll find in the expansive Florida room, is the ever-ready surprise that somewhere, someone has already laid it out for you. The state (whether location or living condition) tries hard to pronounce its newness. Yet village elders abound. Benny Latimore, a musician who will soon take over this room, once said, "When I was coming up, you listened to older people, and you learned from them. They were able to talk about their experiences, 'cause many things go 'round and 'round, but it's never the same when it goes around. *It's more like a spiral; it goes around and around, but moves up as it goes. And if you listen to older people, you can learn.*"⁵⁰

As part of her enduring project to transform ethnographic discoveries into experimental writing, Zora Neale Hurston spent her lifetime recording folkloric matter from the state and condition of Florida. Some of this material was gathered during her childhood spent in Eatonville and through her insistent visitations of the peninsula when she didn't reside there full-time. Some of this material was collected during her tenure with the Federal Writers' Project for its anonymous, group-authored state guide, in addition to other unpublished offshoots such as *The Florida Negro*.⁵¹ Hurston's research itineraries, particularly in the middle to late 1930s, have a suggestive unknown quality. It is impossible to know whether some of her writings were set down in the real time of their dating or were delayed inscriptions of experiences past. As one of the most established writers on the Florida unit but one of the lowest ranked and paid, Hurston enlisted her long cultivated and instructive persona of being lost or found when she most needed to be either. When her WPA supervisor, Carita Corse, would not hear from her for several weeks, her inquiries would eventually be answered with large envelopes stuffed full of findings sent from Hurston's Florida address. As one of her coworkers, Stetson Kennedy, recalled, "We did not care how, where, or when Zora had come by them—each and every one was priceless, and we hastened to sprinkle them through the *Florida Guide* manuscript for flavoring."⁵² Hurston's modification of others' truant version of her is notably philanthropic. That she responded at all to these disciplining queries, and with a bounty of materials, one wonders how and what she released to them, to their editorial control, knowing that she would be relied upon for giving the living, breathing feeling to the staid guide with no formal credit to her name.

In 1938 Hurston sent in a set of paragraphs recorded from turpentine workers living and working in the most brutal of conditions in the northern reaches of Florida. Assembled under the heading “Negro Mythical Places,” Hurston transcribes and transforms some locational reprieves imagined by the turpentiners in order to stay alive.⁵³ They are not heavens per se. More like somewhere elses. And they always include the possibility of going there. “Zar,” for example, “is the farthest known point of the imagination. It is away on the other side of Far. Little is known about the doing of the people of Zar because only one or two have ever found their way back.”⁵⁴ Four out of five of these locations picked up by Hurston were included in “Tour 7” of the FWP Florida guide. The guide leads the traveler past the Glen St. Mary Nurseries and onward to the roadside attractions of “cabins of Negro workers” adjacent to a turpentine mill and quickly notes, “Negros have their mythical cities and countries which are discussed and referred to in everyday conversation as if they actually existed.”⁵⁵ Despite the violence of this contextual framing, and the likelihood that this work was included as the folkloric flavoring coveted by her white FWP colleagues, Hurston nevertheless tells them and us all: something in this state is out of your reach. She directs us to unfindable places that are nevertheless there.⁵⁶ Hurston herself is like a mythical place in the FWP guide, both there and not there. One mythical place Hurston set to page is called “Beluthahatchee,” “a country where all unpleasant doings and sayings are forgotten. It is a land of forgiveness.”⁵⁷ Kennedy, Hurston’s younger coworker and the later author of *Palmetto Country* (1942) and the KKK exposé *Southern Exposure* (1946), was so taken by the tale of Beluthahatchee that he named his northern Florida estate and wildlife refuge after it. Kennedy’s Beluthahatchee was a cherished retreat for Woody Guthrie and offered creative grounds for roughly eighty of his songs and for the completion of his autobiographical *Seeds of Man*. I include this fascinating detail not to show, as many are oft to do when discussing the folk strains of Americana, how all roads lead to Guthrie but to reveal how all roads really lead to Hurston.

Hurston is one interlocutor who helps us to ask not only why Florida, but *how* Florida? How can Florida be approached, articulated, adapted? Her 1939 “Proposed Recording Expedition into the Floridas”—the dream corruption of the grant-writing genre and dream proposition for the Florida room—is a realizable score.⁵⁸ In this short piece, Hurston turns the grand land mass into the plural Floridas and appeals for resources for future study in the state by dividing it into four areas. She introduces each with a stanza of a regional folk song, prefiguring music as the governing

structure and ethos for each area. The state's trenchant Gulf Coast, northern cracker parts, panhandle environs, and southern internationalisms are filled with Hurston's aphoristic descriptions that double as open instructions: "The material is plentiful." "Look for the roots of traditional sermons and prayers." Of South Florida she writes that "this foreign area really should be designated as a collection of areas" and describes its Everglades as "a hot mixture of all the types of material of the area. Worth the whole trip alone." Details such as her plainly put "Bahamian and Cuban elements in abundance" are especially enticing signals for any who care about the combination of those elements. This combination is particularly rich for future sections of *The Florida Room*.

Hurston's notes for research are baroque in the amount of promissory details and mystifying for the over-full gaps she leaves between them. She makes ecological, cultural, demographic, and poetic arguments for Florida's vitality, especially as a site of recording. Recording Florida is not about compiling data (although her grant-speak makes it seem like it is) but a way to move through it in a different kind a way, a way to hear it—and the whole Atlantic world—of the back then and not yet, together. Toward the end of her research proposal, she writes:

Recordings in Florida will be like backtracking a large part of the United States, Europe, and Africa for these elements have been attracted here and brought a gift to Florida culture each in its own way. The drums throb: Africa by way of Cuba; Africa by way of the British West Indies; Africa by way of Haiti and Martinique; Africa by way of Central and South America. Old Spain speaks through many interpreters. Old England speaks through black, white and intermediate lips. Florida, the inner melting pot of the great melting pot—America.⁵⁹

For Hurston, recording allows for time travel to the preconquest of the Americas, to who was here before, and to those people and locations before they were brought to the new world. Her proposal offers a space to imagine how they converged to make a new world sound. Drums—and I hasten to add, all the hands that have played them over time—are the conduits for time travel. This is not a clumsy, romanticized back to Africa but a nascent criollo theory of how all these locations were made "by way of" it, all of which lead to the Floridas. Hurston asks that, while listening anew, we come up with inventive modes and vocabularies to describe our experiences of Florida—and any and all experiences out of our reach, even from remote locations. This invitation is heartedly extended in the final, fund-me

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send-off when Hurston writes: “There is still an opportunity to observe the wombs of folk culture still heavy with life.”⁶⁰ Her “still” is a sound figure that reaches through the book and finds especial company in the fourth chapter.

Heaviness with life is a condition that is not easy to carry. It pushes the limits of your mind and body. It can make you tired. It is a downward force that requires a more concentrated pushing back. And yet in heaviness is also a condition of exuberance. Of learning how to live with the too much. Of an after-birth. In this Hurston example, it is heavy in that it makes any dissection or separation of Florida’s, or any soundscape’s, various parts impossible. It is this inventive mode that Hurston establishes and so many in *The Florida Room* insist upon: a heavy school that offers other anticipatory modes of response to histories of conquest, displacement, and subjugation. This school requires that we take it all, and take it all in, all at once. Heaviness is a quality and qualifier that works across the senses. “Heavy” has different applications in and as sight, smell, taste, and touch. It proposes a difficult unspeakable and even lends a way of joining the unspeakable and the pleasurable at once, as its contemporary usage in the Hispano-phonetic colloquial has much to teach us. Reggaeton to cumbia to rock en español all aspire to being bien heavy. As a conceptual unifier of synonyms that include the “lowdown” and (as I’ll soon reveal) aural synonyms such as Miami Bass, heaviness offers other ways of reading, hearing, and seeing the surfaces of soundscapes, ways that attend to surfaces and the gulfs that live underneath them.

If, as Hurston argues, in Florida there is “*still* an opportunity to observe the wombs of folk culture still heavy with life,” it is up to us to try and take up her instruction proposed long ago. What might be made possible, or even better, impossible, when taking up Hurston’s Florida as a primary architecture for the larger Florida room?⁶¹ By directing us to unfindable, unfundable places that are nevertheless there, Hurston’s work bears the complicated histories that made something like Florida possible, and her work proposes and designates Black life and Black feminist critical practices at the core of the aesthetics made up there. By releasing these offerings to wherever future winds would have or carry them, Hurston’s Florida offers an expandable environment for the study of inter-American arts and letters, partly because of the locations it opens up to do so, but mostly because Hurston and Florida, and Hurston’s Florida, help us to rethink the measured terms of location itself in our reading and writing practices. How, in other words, does Hurston direct us to *hear* location as a way of entering it? This is an invitation to listen to Daphne Brooks’s luminous work

on Hurston and her “musical cartography.”⁶² Location thus incorporates a multitude of sensations that exceeds those coordinates that too often bind our understandings of “setting” as we read. Hurston’s playful sense of location does more than merely document or create stages where fiction can be put on. It offers holistic sensory experiences for how stories come to be told and lush environments for their future tellings, readings, and writings.

Hurston’s proposal offers a prophetic blueprint for *The Florida Room*. The state and its state are material and imaginary, sharp-edged and flexible, regional and expansive.⁶³ Hurston asks that we let go of our sense-making enterprise: she makes Florida run differently. It is a beginning rather than an ending. It is an actual location that you can go to and an imagined dwelling that affirms, even in conditions of degradation, heaviness with life. And because of all of this, all at once, Florida can be found and felt across geographical and temporal limits. Hurston advances Florida as a state and a condition that teaches us to “learn to see the living,” as Camille Dungy once put it.⁶⁴ I adopt Dungy’s phrase to suggest that Hurston’s Florida trains us to boldly move into a mode of working—both resurrective and innovative—when writing out how things come to sound and appear.⁶⁵ I suggest Hurston as the originary figure for this work, for this training, and for her making emergent a point in history where writing, alternative ethnographic practices, and the advent of new recording technologies activate Florida as a new way of thinking about place, and in particular, that place we have come to call America.⁶⁶

III. *Florida’s Famous and Forgotten: History of Florida’s Rock, Soul and Dance Music* is a two-volume encyclopedic history on the history of Florida’s musicalia published in 2005 (figure 1.10). It was devotedly and painstakingly put together by Kurt Curtis, a former DJ and researcher who spent a lifetime collecting what some might have discarded as Florida’s aesthetic detritus—and more than twenty years searching out many mainstream and obscure performers for their side of the recorded stories. Floridians will surely appreciate that Curtis was once a DJ for the Flanigan’s Bar chain. Working with and in Florida, one is confronted by many tragic artifacts, of which this encyclopedia is a prime example. Henry Stone’s foreword tells us that on the very day it was supposed to go into press in 2004, its author died suddenly of a heart attack at the age of fifty-three and never saw his labor in actual book form. It was, however, sent with him to the afterlife: “A single copy was rushed to print and laid to rest

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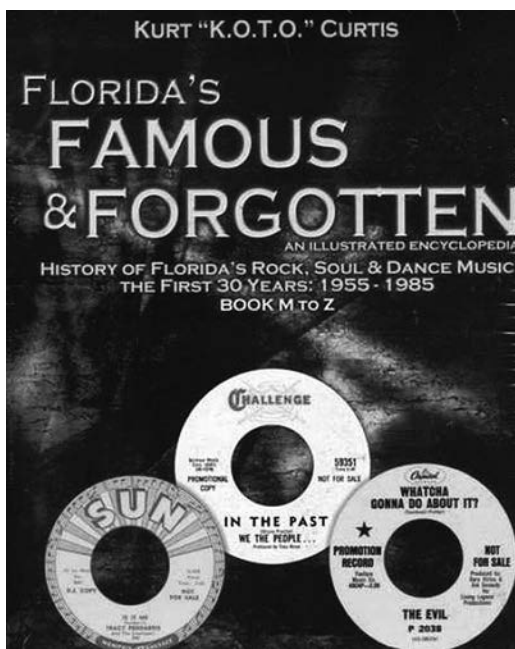


FIGURE 1.10 Kurt Curtis, *Florida's Famous and Forgotten: History of Florida's Rock, Soul, and Dance Music: The First 30 Years: 1955-1985, vol. 2, M to Z* (Altamonte Springs, FL: Florida Media, 2005). Collection of the author.

with Kurt in his coffin.”⁶⁷ There is a pathos felt in the font and design of its paperbacked covers, yellow and yellowed by a man who intuited this work was necessary for some, if unwanted by others. The cheap paper may betray the book’s production values but somehow adds to the tenderness that one develops in relation to this precious collection. There are so many laudatory things to say about these extraordinary volumes. Curtis’s putting together of music and musicians from the outermost coordinates of Florida, across the color lines, across genre, across any arcane sense of the high and low, is breathtaking. Far from the collector’s joy in the act of display, his research, and the ways it is put together in this way, *in the same place*, convey an avid and deep love of the music rooted in his childhood St. Petersburg. The Florida room he builds for all the musicians involved, the ones he could find and, just as vitally, the many others he couldn’t, conveys Curtis’s analytic seriousness. His more historically accurate way of showing how musicians cross paths and how their records actually circulate does much to reaffirm that there is no definitive data to be found on consumptive or listening habits or for how influence happens.

Curtis does not, in accordance with much of popular music criticism, make categories of generic groups of rock, soul, and dance music but allows

them to coexist and involve and influence the other. And placing them together, which Curtis does *without justification or fanfare*, shows how they all inform and lap into one another. The Allman Brothers Band is set between late-fifties crooner Steve Alaimo and Sammy Ambrose, one of Miami's great soul singers and limbo practitioners. Citizenship papers were not necessary. For Curtis, musicians need not be born in Florida to be Floridian, but must have had significant Florida periods or lightening-strike impact at a point in their recording careers. As one example, polymath Clarence Reid (aka Blowfly, originally from Cochran, Georgia) and his innovative R&B are framed by an entry on RCR's tickly disco rock (featuring Donna and Sandra Rhodes and Charles Chalmers, originally of Memphis) on one side and the Rhodes Brothers (originally from Columbus, Ohio) with their Motown-influenced vacation sound on the other. Curtis's indefatigable modeling of performers first, his attention to the work of performers before and beyond their categorical siphoning, is especially quantifiable when turning to the "Personal Interviews" appendix in the text. Curtis spoke with more than a hundred artists to build not one-sided but symbiotic entries that bridge their and his versions of the larger musical story. Imagine the myriad challenges involved in his tracking down, and after a lot of sweat equity, managing to get an artist to agree to talk to him. As he says in the preamble to the list of artists, "Tracking down many of the following for their stories, at times, was an incredible feat and a test of endurance and patience. It was no doubt a long, exhaustive and expensive 21-year journey. I would like to thank the 'music spirits' for being my guiding force through the 30-year 'time tunnel' of Florida Rock, Soul, & Dance Music."⁶⁸ Like Hurston's proposal, musical study is the premier vehicle for time travel.

This mode of transport is not undertaken without the risk of the social, risk for which one may appeal to the "music spirits" for guidance. To leave the relative safety of the writer/introvert's private space to the unpredictability of the social world makes musical study a physically and intellectually challenging practice. Seeing musicians or hearing music in the company of others—once commonly experienced as going to shows or concerts—is one way of opening up to other times and places, say by the (hopefully) multiple generations to be found there. While many critics (including this one) have had to fight hoops-off hard to argue for the life and living in archival recordings, *The Florida Room* advocates some renewal around liveness, not the liveness fetish we've had to fight against that would demand certain bodies to be on permanent and accessible display,

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the kind of liveness that doesn't believe in our dead, but rather a peopling-your-life liveness. This finds analog in what might be possible when you find a way (after a lot of homework doing) to speak to the musicians themselves, and if being in their live presence is impossible, then play in the interviews they've left behind. What Curtis advocates is not an ethnographic method but a social one. It is a social method that refuses the devouring habits of fandom or connoisseurship, and instead asks: "What can I learn from this person?" *The Florida Room* is based on many hours and years of trying to build a social world, and part of doing so was to speak directly with many of the musicians and artists included herein. When artists don't appear with primary source material, it was not for lack of trying.

In the final pages of his encyclopedia, Curtis offers a set of strange and wonderful appendixes that we want to get behind and emulate in all our work. They include "Florida/Florida-Related Recording Artists Excluded Due to Insufficient Data" that honors, even if it can't, the impact of people's sound. As Curtis justifies, "Many years spent researching the following proved futile." Other categories include "In Loving Memory," which pays homage to Tampa Bay-area teen gathering places, with special subsections dedicated to "Pizza Parlors" and "Secret Make-Out Places," which we all know to be extremely important data points. He makes room for "Florida's top 40 greatest dance classics," that for many of us insta-cues the great Latinate opening of Company B's "Fascinated." There is an appendix for "Florida/Florida-Related Top 200 Greatest Classics," helmed by The Impacs and their 1966 melancholic hymn "Forever and a Day." There is wide room for debate: as Curtis notes of this list, "If you disagree, that's your privilege." What feels important to say about these appendixes are the marked ongoingness and outgoingness of this larger Florida history, the Rudolph-style leaving behind of designs for future dwellings. Through these supplements, Curtis leaves us his own proposal for recording expeditions into the Floridas.

The Florida Room understands itself in heaven and earth conversation with Curtis's love for the dizzying over-fullness of Florida's Famous and Forgotten. Of particular interest is continuing his work that uses the peninsula's ecological diversity to index its music. For example, Curtis includes a collection of musicians and songs under categories such as "Florida Islands and Keys," "Florida Gulf Coast," "Florida Everglades," "Florida Waters," and "Florida Hurricanes." Curtis is not the first figure to link sound and surround, but he helps to give evidence-based backup

to a listener of Florida, and for those very specific played and heard relations she hears between swamp and bass line, purple orange red sunrise and swelling chorus, brackish sensation and studio production. *The Florida Room* makes recourse, in peripatetic glimmers, to many of these environments. What are the challenges to how we come to hear certain places as having an identifiable sound and how we might write about it? We evoke the Miami sound, the Baltimore sound, the DC sound, the Atlanta sound with an anthemic pride for the local. But doing so can effect a taxidermying of its strange differences, of encasing those differences into a signifier that notates them in expensive ironic packaging. The categories become untouchable. The distancing is spiritual as much as it is material, for it is from the distances that our natal city sounds are being released from independent labels in Germany, Japan, and Great Britain. How might this elusive yet cohesive sound be written about a little differently, especially in the case of Florida and *The Florida Room*? To offer it temporary shelter after a long life on the commodified road?

If Florida study requires a willing adjustment to the unrecognizable and impermanent, I argue here and everywhere that any Florida sound is an elusive swamp of possibility that helps you turn away from the clean, detectable lines of the surveyor and collector. It invites a willingness to wade into the mangrove muck that anchors it and those difficult locations that give it life. "Florida," it must be said (again), has become contemporary shorthand for ecological disaster. It is a state of emergency. Yet this forewarning—rooted in global warming and centuries of land misuse and abuse—has the perhaps unintended effect of sensing only death and destruction. Florida's varied ecologies are almost always spoken about as tragedies and its coastal locations as *fait accompli*. *The Florida Room* does not want to cede all its room to talk of environmental destruction. To do so would be to relinquish all those performances that remain critically abandoned. To take in its wilderness means to refuse any nihilistic surrender to the disaster that it is being primed to be. I remain with the mangroves even when they are abused and littered. I stand with the Everglades as I would that most beloved family member who also happens to be sick. Part of what is astonishing about the natural world, especially the tropical or subtropical, is how hard it fights to be itself. And so together with our extant material structures and some supplementary conceptual ones, *The Florida Room* opens up, finally, to a song that encapsulates all of the above. The reliquary, the antiquity, aerated structures, speculative

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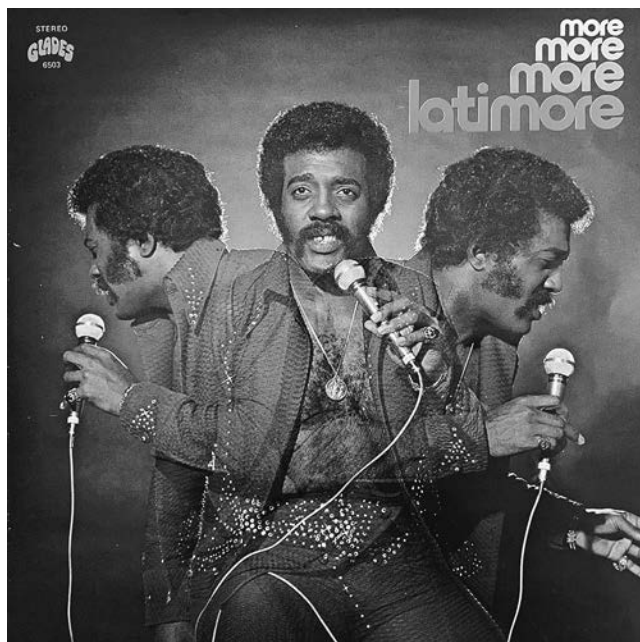
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grants, outdoors practice, future plans, and, inside all of this, its varied landscapes are made and felt in the following greatest hit.

IV. To get more specific on how a Florida room can be built and heard and felt in song, I'll wade in, slowly, to Benny Latimore's "Let's Straighten It Out," first recorded in Miami for Glades Records in 1974. Latimore was born in Charleston, Tennessee, in 1939 and first came to Miami in 1961 while on tour as a backup singer for Joe Henderson. While there, Latimore entered a talent contest at the venerated venue Clyde Killens's Knight Beat at the Sir John Hotel in Overtown.⁶⁹ Killens was so impressed with Latimore that he offered him a steady gig playing the organ for the venue. Although interpersonal disagreements with the house band kept Latimore out of it, Killens offered him the opportunity to play while the house band was on break. Latimore reports that Killens told him, "You try this. If you can hold the people so I don't have to play the jukebox then you've got the job."⁷⁰ And so Latimore intermissioned with his organ between the official house bands. He lived just above the club in an efficiency with his rent included in the \$110 weekly salary. His solo career thus began by making lush the interim, the inbetween, of the main acts. His performances eventually captured the attention of South Florida producer Steve Alaimo, who went on to produce his early recordings in Miami and Muscle Shoals, Alabama. These records enjoyed moderate success, but it wasn't until "Let's Straighten It Out" that Latimore had the number-one gold single on the *Billboard* Black music charts and eventually reached number 31 on *Billboard's* Hot 100.⁷¹ There are many different variations of the song out there, and although originally recorded in Miami, other versions were pressed and sent to France and other international markets. They all work for what I am talking about, but for the fun of following along (and hopefully you will), I'm listening here to the version put out on the original LP *More More More* (figure 1.11). For some, this song was long ago on repeat—for others, this will be their first time. Regardless, I invite the ear to tilt toward its experimentalism hiding in plain view. Play it.⁷²

Listen to all the vegetation in this song! It straightens out nothing. The first thing we hear is a drumroll downward. It takes the listener by the hand to the subterranean, to take ginger steps into the muck, into land that gives. Entering soon after is the bass played by Ron Bogdon and Latimore on organ. There is verdant, thick surround. Some heavy kind of alterity is required. The action is not one of grasping or gasping, but a laying

FIGURE 1.11 Benny Latimore's "Let's Straighten It Out"—*More More More* (Glades Records, ST-6503, ca. 1974, vinyl). Collection of the author.



into it. Everything takes deliberate time. What one hears is not a deferral but an organization. The introduction runs almost two minutes long, long to the point where you really feel like you're entering something. A Florida room. Its dimensions give us enough time to get as comfortable as possible, for what lies ahead is some difficult conversation. There is something assured that tells us that what we'll find ahead is hard-won relief, not confrontation. The beginning of this song finds companionship in so much Floridian musicalia. These extended, place-setting intros carry transitions between the elements: dry to moist, clear to murky, wetland to pineland. You can hear the convention in guitar preparations by Daytona Beach adoptees Duane and Gregg Allman, in KC and the Sunshine Band's Florida highlife invocatory tumbles, as danceable clearing spaces in songs by Trinere and Pretty Tony, and in the slow-burn entries of boleros by Zoraida Marerro. In Latimore's composition the introduction is not necessarily a seduction—it does not make us wait for some ultimate reward of predictable (inexpert) liaison. Latimore has been called a "love philosopher," and we feel it in subtle, durational practice here.⁷³ The introduction is something that tells you that you have company; someone is here. Only after the listener feels assured of this carefully crafted companionship

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does Latimore sing: “Sit yourself down girl and talk to me, tell me what’s on your mind.”

There are so many ways to feel the Florida room-like qualities in this song. It offers the structure and the lyrics for so many possible visitations. There is its sound, which I’ve begun to suggest in the above, and there is the matter of the song’s personnel.⁷⁴ In the Floridian music scene, especially in Miami, there is a dynastic quality to its musicians. Music stays in the family and, rather than being stultified by insularity, gives artists multiple opportunities to gather with different players (especially across its R&B and dance music genres). As happens also in Cuban music, there is something robust about these slightly out of reach, southern scenes of music that bands together those who chose to stay and make music rather than leaving for other cultural capitals such as New York or Los Angeles. The song’s bassist, Ron Bogdon, was a Philly native and sailing buff who brought a fascinating itinerary to this scene of recording. Bogdon got his start by playing saxophone with a Philadelphia group called the Mummers, with whom he toured Cuba when he was eleven years old. He came to Miami in the 1970s to play with Sam & Dave and became one of the most sought-after session musicians in the city, playing or recording with some of the city’s most important artists.⁷⁵ Bogdon passed away from colon cancer in 2015. In the aftermath of his departure, Mike Reinig, one of his recent bandmates, gave him this beautiful tribute: “There were times I’d rehearse with him where you wouldn’t hear him play a note—the note just appeared.”⁷⁶

When you listen to Bogdon’s work on “Let’s Straighten It Out,” there is this surprise-given quality. His notes are made instantly available for play, even if elusive about their provenance. The drums are played by Robert Ferguson, pioneer Miami percussionist and part of the foundational group Frank Williams and the Rocketeers, who were a crucial part of what made the Sir John Hotel’s Knight Beat an institution. Forrest City, Arkansas-born guitarist Willie Hale, widely known by his nickname “Little Beaver,” does not appear on the track though he claimed to have written its bass line. This claim is refuted by Latimore, but he was a crucial player on the rest of album. Little Beaver first came to guitar after seeing Blind Roosevelt play in a juke joint when he was six years old. A self-taught musician, Hale moved to Homestead, Florida, in 1964 to play with Big Maybelle, eventually became part of the Rocketeers, and has played guitar or composed songs for every important musician to emerge from the area.⁷⁷ Over his four-plus-decades’ music career, Hale’s work has been covered by or used as

source material by such artists as Jay-Z, Monterrey Mexico rockers Banda Macho, and Spanish rappers Los Chikos del Maíz. In sum: Latimore's company on *More More More* era bien heavy. And if you think I'm making up any of the environmental sound attachment here, consider that Bogdon, Ferguson, and Hale also had their own group called Thunder, Lightning and Rain before recording with Latimore. Their hit "Super Funky," recorded for Frank Williams's Saadia label, opens with a long introduction featuring the repeated, hallucinatory chorus "Hey, can you feel it?"⁷⁸

In an interview, Latimore reflected on his decades-long practice:

When we did songs, it [was] like a story because you've got a beginning, a middle and an end—*well, a colon, not really an end*. It's the end of that particular segment, then there's another chapter here, another chapter there. But [it's] something that is memorable, something that goes on in your head, a melody that flows and goes on into the future. Now we got what I call microwave music—"Oh, it's great! It's hot! It gets right to the point! Right to the point!" *And there's no in-between*. It's either here or there. . . . We're living in a pushbutton, microwave world. But something that makes you think or causes you to think—that's something that we can live on.⁷⁹

Latimore gives us a guide to listen to gems such as "Let's Straighten It Out." He also gives us a guide for making a song. If, for this scholar, "song" means "book," Latimore makes it possible for me to render *The Florida Room* as a way to tell a story with a lot of in-between. Latimore reminds us that songs are not containable structures but wave-like repetitions for public health. Here is colon's etymology in ancient Greek: "limb, member or clause of sentence, portion of strophe," and in rhetoric, "a member or section of a sentence or rhythmical period."⁸⁰ This punctuation mark is more than a metaphor; it is a way to mark out the in-between as a space to live, work, write. A playing space left open for lots of additions, contestations. It hopes to leave more "memory that flows and goes on into the future." Latimore's call for in-betweens gives all much to live on. Head to a live version of "Let's Straighten It Out," where, to his signature introduction, Latimore adds calls of "yeah yeah, yeah," of "yeah," over and over, singing the ultimate yes-and in a bright red suit.⁸¹

Latimore's compositional method refuses the final word, and "Let's Straighten It Out" is an invitation to move into another segment. It asks for augmentation, company, space for a lyric to become something else. To write a song for another to live on is conversational rather than reactive. It allows for important temporal disordering of who calls and who responds,

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FIGURE 1.12 Cover of Gwen McCrae's *Let's Straighten It Out* (T.K. Records, TKR 82518, ca. 1978, vinyl). Collection of the author.

of who says or does something first and who follows. The ethos and aesthetic of the in-between makes it difficult to indicate the flows of influence with strict directionals. Sometimes these conversations happen outright. Let's tune into another limb, a partnering segment on another record that is Gwen McCrae's 1978 version of "Let's Straighten It Out," where she transforms the idea of the cover song into a reveal song (see figure 1.12). Nor does McCrae follow the conventions of the "answer song," the woman responsive to some man's call, but in any case, Latimore did not write it in a way that demanded a definitive answer.

McCrae's is another telling using the structure penned by Latimore. In her version the song is slightly brought up a key, and the effect is a subtle lift off of the ground. More space, more circulation. Her version used the same tracks used by Latimore, so the session was McCrae, the recorded presence of the original players, and the producer, Clarence Reid. As her daughter Leah Jackson informed me, "It was just her alone in a booth with a microphone and a producer."⁸² Added to her version are some marshy opening strings and swells arranged by Mike Lewis. They add different currents to Latimore's original, a kind of velvet philharmonic setting for McCrae's entrance. The strings tell us to get ready in another way, and instrumentally at least,

the narrative has already changed. When McCrae comes in with “Sit yourself down and *listen* to me,” she gently takes the song by the hand. Right from her entrance, she does match Latimore’s original vocal line but makes it something all her own. With her incisive start, McCrae offers surprise as the fundamental element in a cover and suggests a whole other way to approach the situation. McCrae’s voice is extremely beautiful, resonant, with the slightest scrape along its round edges. Her faculty with using her voice to reveal something that was in the song all along is carried throughout her oeuvre—and vice versa, as her voice institutes in song things for others to live on. This is absolutely palpable in her groundbreaking 1972 version of “You Were Always on My Mind.” McCrae’s was the first release of that song that would later become a signature for others from Elvis to Willie Nelson. In “Let’s Straighten It Out” McCrae has clearly studied and listened carefully to and with Latimore: when she begins her version, it puts the song and us in a whole different place. [Find it here](#) and go with her.⁸³ McCrae shows that she knew the song in advance of its writing. She even said as much with a tender, knowing laugh of delight after I suggested that her version was better than the original.

McCrae is one of the most powerful voices to emerge from Florida and is perhaps best known for her gorgeous 1975 single “Rockin’ Chair,” written by Clarence Reid and Willie Clarke. McCrae was born in Pensacola in 1943 to Minnie Lee Mosley Hawkins and George Washington Mosely.⁸⁴ Her mother was born in Thomasville in Southwest Georgia and was a touring jazz pianist. While Hawkins was on tour, she met her future husband, Mosely, while he was working as a porter on the railroad.⁸⁵ The couple settled in Pensacola in a wooden shotgun house on Yonge Street, and Mosley left a life of the road to sing and accompany gospel choirs in local churches, especially the House of Chapel Church. Young Gwen Mosley would watch her mother as she would play, first from a pew and eventually from inside the choir. This early conservatory provided by her mom was accompanied by other teachers and their recordings that caught her young ear at the time, including Sam Cooke, the Caravans, and especially Shirley Cesar.⁸⁶ Young Gwen would meet her eventual husband, George McCrae (who was originally from West Palm Beach), after he joined the US Navy and was stationed in Pensacola. They would become a major wife-and-husband musical duo and performed in clubs all over Florida, especially West Palm Beach, Pompano Beach, and Miami in the middle to late 1960s.⁸⁷ The couple was eventually introduced to Henry Stone (the recording impresario behind several of Miami’s independent record labels) by Betty Wright (whom we will hear a lot from in chapter 4) in 1969.⁸⁸ What is important to reiterate here from the

studios above and from Wright's personal introduction: these are just a few details from the ample connectivity between Floridian musicians, of tight collaboration between a close company. McCrae, Betty Wright, Latimore, Timmy Thomas, and Little Beaver would become an ensemble that played, accompanied, wrote, lived, and ate together often.⁸⁹ McCrae's prolific career would eventually move out from Miami-based labels to Atlantic Records, where she would release her extraordinary albums *Gwen McCrae* (1981) and *On My Way* (1982). Like many Black women vocalists from the United States, she remains an especially beloved performer in Europe, with its sustained fixation with the past and present of dance music. In the United Kingdom, for example, she is known as the "Queen of the Rare Groove."

In the summer of 2020, I asked Gwen McCrae to name her favorite collaborator of all time, and without hesitation she responded: "Latimore. *Latimore*." Latimore twice. The first to set the record and the second to revel in the phenomenon. And just after this, McCrae also mentioned that she had a picture of Betty Wright (whom she called Sister, for their musical-spiritual connection was very close) right in her bedroom. This attachment to collaborators over the span of five decades gives us a different model of working from those who make the smash hit and then run. This long *durée* of conversation made between Latimore and McCrae, the forms it took and takes in and outside of song, refuses to stay put in the enclosed place fables of the recording studio. It thwarts the impulse for the glossy authoritative documentary. Instead, hearing Latimore and McCrae's different versions of a singular song, and all the versions between then and now in their contemporary repertoires, opens up what Deborah Vargas calls "a musical imaginary of what could be" because we know there will be more.⁹⁰ Or in Latimore's axiom, more, more, more. Theirs is a future-oriented practice rooted in a collaborative past. Their growing up together nurtures a "what could be" that is regularly made, picked up, and rearticulated across South Florida's musics across the genres and generations. The long view of the telling happens often in the song, not always in the narrative apparatuses constructed around a song.

As much as *The Florida Room* provides ample room for connection between artists who may have never technically shared the same space, there are nevertheless many others, like McCrae and Latimore, who were in direct conversation. To bring in one person involves the invitation of many others. I look back to who is already here in this chapter and what

they make possible. They have given a set of historic structures with ingrained signs of migration. There is the assumption of aeration and heaviness together and not at all paradoxically. There are the adaptive and baroque arts of survival. Hurston's proposal, Curtis's assembly, and Latimore and McCrae's conversations are amplifications of how the musically conceptual can also be structural. I insist on all of this. I have not held back noise. Nor can I hold back the approaching noise that wants to be here too. To tend the ground of the finale performance I discuss below, there is a lot more to build out, and I, and everyone involved here, ask for your bearings. It involves walking a long stretch of shore with more company.

Felix Sama, one of South Florida's most influential DJs and musical deltas, was born in 1965 in Havana's Santos Suárez neighborhood, the birthplace of some of Cuba's musical greats such as Frank Emilio Flynn and Celia Cruz. Such does his mix artistry inform all his practices that during one phone interview, he subtly patched in his mother, Caridad Sama, to the call, mid-sentence and without my realizing, so that she could say more than he could. In Havana his mother was a secretary at the Department of Public Works, and his father, Marcos Sama, repaired and cleaned firearms. When I asked her if she had any musical background, Ms. Sama said that her mother was always, always dancing and that this was foundational in fostering her love of music. Of her musical attachments while in Cuba, Ms. Sama said she was especially fond of Chilean singer Lucho Gatica, affectionately known as the "King of the Bolero." I want to hold on to this bolero surround during Felix's infancy.⁹¹ The family (immediate and extended) left Cuba in 1967 and went straight to Chicago, where Sama's uncle Tony already lived. Together they pursued the family dream of opening a TV repair store called the Sama Brothers, which they opened on the Southside. While there, Felix recalled listening to eight-track tapes of Barry White and Teddy Pendergrass in their family's Impala, music that had been introduced to them by his uncles and cousins and by the soundwaves of the Chicanas/os and African Americans who lived in the neighborhood.⁹²

From these early backseat experiences in the Impala, and with his ear tilted to radio, Sama recalled that "I always attached myself to music." Note how Sama goes to music, and meets it there, rather than making it come to him. Sama's Chicago childhood was a happy one, and "because we were mixed, people wouldn't bother us much." Sama, who firmly recognizes his family's African, Chinese, and Spanish roots, was quick to note that he did not experience racism until he moved to Miami. The family had grown tired of Chicago's cold and its cost of living, and they wanted to join Sama's

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paternal grandmother already in Miami, so they left for south in 1976. They first lived in one of the houses that used to line the Okeechobee Canal in Miami Springs, but the cat-sized rats, so large they “would squiggle their way out of the traps,” sent them in quick search for elsewhere. They moved to North Miami, right across the street from North Miami Senior High School, and this is where Sama first experienced racist violence. Young Sama had been walking down the street when a big truck carrying a Confederate flag tried to run him down, screaming vicious epithets his way. He ran for his life even as he was unable to comprehend that they were *actually* trying to run him over. This dual mode of staying alive while also expressing incredulity is something that can be heard across Sama’s later work. At the new house in North Miami did you have a Florida room? I asked. Sama replied immediately. “Yes. It was kind of like the hangout spot where we would watch tv.” Theirs was not a given form, however. It was once a carport that Felix, his brothers, and their father turned into a Florida room. They used a mix of construction elements (wood, cement blocks, laminate flooring) and installed a set of interior glass doors to separate it out from the rest of the house. The room was particularly prized because “if you were the first one there, it was like you owned it for the day.” They turned their carport into a Florida room—a zoning unthinkable—in full view of North Miami.

Sama has two older brothers, José and Eduardo, and in the great sibling tradition of the musical hand-me-down would train his ear. They turned Sama on to Earth, Wind & Fire and the repertoire of *Saturday Night Fever*. These attachments were foundational and strong. The first single Sama recalls buying was Bed-Stuy’s own Stephanie Mills’s “I Never Knew Love Like This Before,” with its sweet synth opening and vocal that helps us all to process a new sensation as the singer documents her own. Hold on also to this single as one of the adolescent building blocks for Sama’s later work. The subsequent record he purchased for home was the Sugarhill Gang (from Englewood, New Jersey) and their “Rappers Delight,” which helped Sama become a strong contender in playful competitions with friends involving who could memorize all the words. This single and many others were bought at Spec’s Music on 163rd Street, where Sama would spend countless hours before being chased out at closing time. This alternative library was being constantly researched while Sama was being exposed to DJing at house parties. There he would observe closely how DJs would put their collections toward *making* the rooms. For this dream just out of reach, Sama worked as a stock clerk at Jafee’s Printing Company and as a grocery bagger at Pantry Pride to save money to buy DJ equipment and records. He started

with a mixer, a turntable, and a tape deck, all “pieced together Sanford and Son style.” While describing the early dexterity required to edit between tape deck and turntable, Sama gave a theory of his developing aesthetic: working with what he had, however incomplete or broken.

Sama started DJing house parties as a student at North Miami High School. His sets included Evelyn “Champagne” King, Shalimar, and Howard Johnson, and this early career development was a magical time. Sama eventually started doing mobile DJ gigs for weddings and bar mitzvahs, where he learned about all kinds of music and how to tailor music to the different scenes, which meant learning a lot about Frank Sinatra and Motown. Such gigs gave him his “first footing with massive crowds,” which later brought Sama, as an underage seventeen-year-old, to a standing gig at the Playboy Club near the Miami airport. Just by reading all these sentences, you may feel some effects of all this nightlife compressed in a short span of time. But there is more, more, more. *Then* Sama worked the cruise-ship circuit to the Bahamas and other ship triangulations to Ocho Rios, Jamaica, making people move in his way as they crossed water. Let’s review this already prolific career by the time Sama was barely twenty-one: from Santos Suárez to Chicago to the Okeechobee Canal, to North Miami house parties to everywhere Miami weddings and bar mitzvahs, to a “gentlemen’s club” and aboard huge ships. All of this and there and them became chosen additions of migrations into his DJ sound.

Sama would come to define one of the most innovative eras of Miami radio after submitting a mix tape to Hot 105 FM. Station managers were so impressed that he was brought into a guest spot, which turned into permanent top billing from 1985 to 1990. The burgeoning celebrity mobile DJ circuit brought Sama out of the studio to gigging some of the city’s hottest nightclubs and other vital musical laboratories, including the Hot Wheels Roller Rink (see figure 1.13). A change in programming brought Sama to Power 96 FM, then the broadcast place of intrepid, badass live mixes from 1990 to 2002 (see figure 1.14). To some listeners these sets emerged from the radio waves as if by magic, and because they happened in the live, a listener had to bring all faculties when trying to feel their construction in real time. These live sets could be heard again only if you have been armed with a tape recorder at the right place and right time. For Sama, these mixes were events of intense study and rehearsal. It was mixing, blending, and transitioning that required twenty-four-hour-type rehearsal.⁹³ Of all this preparation, Sama recalls, “I was enfermo.” Home rehearsal was about learning transitions, how things did and didn’t fit, or how he could



FIGURES 1.13 AND 1.14
Felix Sama, DJ radio personality. Top: Sama as headline DJ “mixing the jams!” on a promotional flyer for Hot Wheels Roller Rink, ca. 1988. Bottom: Sama mixing live at Power 96 FM, circa 1997. Photos courtesy of Felix Sama.



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take things and build them to fit. Sama's gift for the transition and making patterns through editing made him the go-to person to for "mega mixes" (or mega mixxxes), a practice of compressing many things into a singular track. Sama has made expert mega mixes of genres (say songs across house, Freestyle, hip-hop, Latin) or has taken other people's repertoires, often per their request (e.g., Trinere, Luke, Poison Clan) and blended them into one danceable track. The mega mix is as much a structure that can hold an unimaginable many as it is a form that can transform an individual artist into the multitudes.

It is to one of Sama's mega mixes that I turn to, to turn up, back and forward, the past into the future and back again. It is the greatest possible tie-together and send-forth of all these proposals for the Florida room: Felix Sama's 1996 "Mega Mix" of DJ Uncle Al on the album *Liberty City* (see figure 1.15).⁹⁴ For many Miamians, Uncle Al involves a sacred gesture when invoked. Born in Liberty City in 1969, Albert Leroy Moss was one of the great innovative artisans of Miami music and, especially, its Bass, a rumbling life-line for many (hear chapter 4). Moss was a beloved, bold, and beautiful activist with a robust and interlocking set of community practices. He made pirate radio-show broadcasts, gathered the young and the old for Sunday sundown gatherings on 71st Street and 15th Avenue in the mid-1990s, and started initiatives such as the annual "Peace in da Hood" celebrations, which gave people a safe place to go and dance.⁹⁵ In the words of his son Albert Leroy Jr., his father's events were all "about positivity and about bringing people together."⁹⁶ DJ Uncle Al was tragically murdered on September 10, 2001, and the immediacy of the loss—physical and spiritual—is still palpable. Miami lost one of its most luminous musical freedom fighters, and it is hard not to weep while dancing and listening to his records. But Uncle Al's music, even prior to his death, always made tears of joy and pain. I do not want Moss's death to signpost an end, for it is an active and urgent project by many—from his family to his fans—to keep him and his legacy alive and present. And so, with this longer initiative, I turn to the "Mega Mix" on his *Liberty City* and to how Felix Sama textures the dizzying, maximalist work of Moss and how he records their direct conversation. By going *there* and remaining in that hinge between primary and secondary mega-mix material, Sama models how we may tenderly pick up the fragments we are given and left to build the most coveted of hangout spots.

Uncle Al chose to incorporate Sama's "Mega Mix" on his original album rather than relegating it to a separate, follow-up release. Moss agreed to handing over his a capellas—or vocals without beats—to Sama, who was

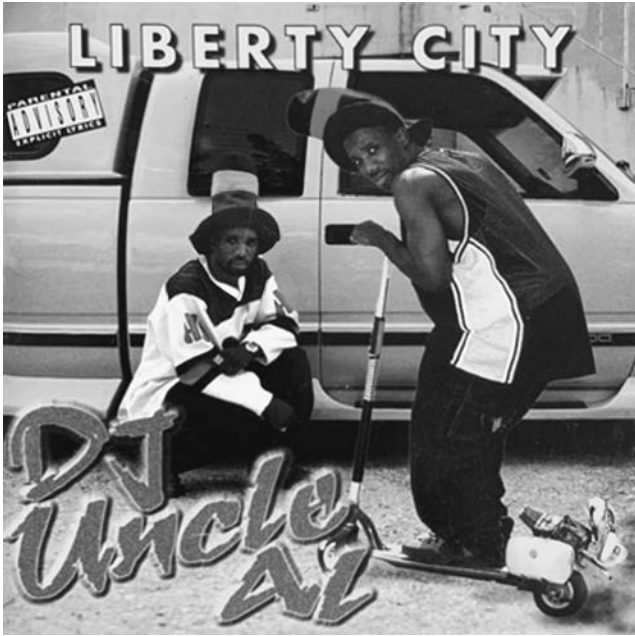


FIGURE 1.15 Cover of DJ Uncle Al's *Liberty City* (On Top Records, OT-9034, ca. 1996, compact disc). Collection of the author.

an artist he had long admired. As Sama tells it, “I really wanted to do something special,” and when he said this, there was a Stephanie Mills sweetness in his tone. Moss’s pirate-radio aesthetic, which very much extends from island living and wrecking practices, gave his vocals certain characteristics. Because his broadcasts—whether from a hijacked signal or from a live party—were always about bringing people together, they were very much in the spirit and timbre of open calls. Calls that could be heard outside and for several blocks away at least. Moss’s calls were for all who heard him to participate in some way in a public seen and unseen, actual and felt. Take in all of DJ Uncle Al’s different possible entry and exit points, their potential for adaptation, the myriad planar options, and most of all, how he urges all to stay with it: “Mix it up,” “To the floor to the floor ya’ll,” “Keep dancing,” “Shake it on,” “Say what?,” “Slip and slide,” “To the ground.” Moss repeats each phrase in quick succession, and the bass that grounds them gives plenty, if fast, opportunity to alter with the repetitions. Moss would often mark Miami history outright with his recurring yelling of “goombay,” marking for real and for good the city’s Bahamian foundations and ongoing parties. He would tuck in other funny phrases for breaking bread and gift giving too: “Chomp that chicken” and “Santa Claus coming.”

Sama took all these vocals, samples of Moss's own signature songs, and created his own drum loops and patterns to make transitions, in-betweens, that did everything to honor all the who and where and when together.⁹⁷ It is a direct conversation between two DJs and the histories they carry. They were called by Moss and put together by Sama in a new way, and his mega mix is a bountiful addition and extension to many more. In the "Mega Mix" Sama and Moss make innumerable parties of past and present. And for now, and for here, there is no other way I can put it: it is *furious and joyful*. Sama's unrelenting mobile sound that takes up fragments borrowed from Uncle Al, Havana, Chicago's Southside, New York, and the various Miamis moves you around so many places in quick succession. And yet it happens in one structure, in one song, in one mega mix. It is beyond what could be dreamed possible about where you can be, all at once, in the company of everyone. *The Florida Room* aspires to resound all the fury and joy of this conversation, of those others who live and lived in the foregoing structures, and for all those to follow.

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NOTES

PREFACE

- 1 This book is founded in music, but that is not to say it does not recognize the robust and hard-fought scholarly foundations about a field we might call “Miami Studies.” There are dozens of scholars—whom you will find threaded throughout the book and as sentinels in the bibliography—who have profoundly shaped my thinking. Their work has been as important to my training in the writing about history as they have been in my listening to it. They have made both activities, by necessity, feel closer. They thrum throughout this book, especially those figures who skate the scholarly/literary/musical continuum, such as Zora Neale Hurston, in all ways the field’s prescient chair. You will hear from noncanonical voices who self-publish their words because no one else will. You will hopefully meet many others you weren’t expecting.
- 2 Miami is perhaps a “Gone City,” in the sense of the manic song masterpiece written in 1949 by Arturo “Chico” O’Farrill for Machito and his Afro-Cubans. O’Farrill is among the most important and prolific Cuban composers, and his influence is as palpable in jazz as it is Cuban music. I must note that O’Farrill first fell in love with the trumpet and big-band jazz when he was sent to military school in Florida. See “Chico O’ Farrill” in Radamés Giro, *Diccionario enciclopédico de la música en Cuba*, vol. 3 (Habana: Letras Cubanas, 2007), 167–68.
- 3 See Michele Currie Navakas’s great book, *Liquid Landscape: Geography and Settlement at the Edge of Early America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017). The first lines of Navakas’s study say it all: “What does it mean to take root in unstable ground?” (1).
- 4 “Cubans” play an especially strong role in the larger geopolitical story of good and evil in and out of Miami. This monolithic Cubanity (sometimes true, sometimes false) is circulated by Right and Left, and does much to obliterate what José Esteban Muñoz calls a “sense of brown.” See José Esteban Muñoz, *The Sense of Brown*, ed. Joshua Chambers-Letson and Tavia Nyong’o (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020).

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- 5 Lorna Goodison, "Deep Sea Diving," in *To Us, All Flowers Are Roses* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 55–56.
- 6 For some of my earlier writing on mangroves, and a bibliography that helped me to get there (and here), see Alexandra T. Vazquez, "Learning to Live in Miami," *American Quarterly* 66, no. 3 (September 2014).
- 7 Severo Sarduy, "The Beach," in *For Voice*, trans. Philip Barnard (Pittsburgh: Latin American Literary Review Press, 1985), 15–16.

CHAPTER ONE: THE FLORIDA ROOM

- 1 *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, "jalousie, n.," accessed July 18, 2019, <https://www-oed-com.proxy.library.nyu.edu/view/Entry/100677>.
- 2 *New Oxford American Dictionary Online*, "Florida room, n.," accessed July 4, 2019, https://www-oxfordreference-com.proxy.library.nyu.edu/view/10.1093/acref/9780195392883.001.0001/m_en_us1247871?rskey=JD56tM&result=1; *Oxford Dictionary of English Online*, "Florida room, n.," accessed July 4, 2019, https://www-oxfordreference-com.proxy.library.nyu.edu/view/10.1093/acref/9780199571123.001.0001/m_en_gb0304450?rskey=JD56tM&result=3; *The Canadian Oxford Dictionary Online*, "Florida room, n.," accessed July 4, 2020, https://www-oxfordreference-com.proxy.library.nyu.edu/view/10.1093/acref/9780195418163.001.0001/m_en_ca0025631?rskey=JD56tM&result=2.
- 3 Other literatures that mention a Florida room include Claudia S. Slate's "Florida Room: Battle for St. Augustine 1964: Public Record and Personal Recollection," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 84, no. 4 (2006): 541–68; and Carlos Victoria, "Comentarios De Un Oidor o Lorenzo García Vega En Su Florida Room," *Encuentro De La Cultura Cubana*, nos. 21/22 (2001): 48–51, which is an encounter with the Cuban author all staged from a Florida room (!). On small mentions of other architectural histories, often around the decline of the Florida room, see Albert C. Manucy and St. Augustine Historical Society, *The Houses of St. Augustine: Notes on the Architecture from 1565 to 1821* (St. Augustine, FL: St. Augustine Historical Society, 1962); Barbara Marshall, "Reviving the Florida Room: New Exhibit Re-creates, Modernizes State's Iconic Home Fixture," *Palm Beach Post*, February 14, 2014, www.palmbeachpost.com/article/20140214/LIFESTYLE/812058992; and Eric Barton, "The Quiet Demise of Florida's Room," September 15, 2020, www.flamingomag.com/2020/09/15/the-quiet-demise-of-floridas-room.
- 4 Donald Fagen, "Florida Room," by Donald Fagen and Elizabeth "Libby" Titus, on *Kamakiriad*, Reprise Records, 1993, compact disc.
- 5 See Craig Thompson Friend, "Editor's Preface," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 81, no. 3 (2003): 253.
- 6 Elizabeth Dustin, "Doings of Women: Mrs. Quintan of the Indian Association . . .," *Los Angeles Times*, February 22, 1891, 14, accessed July 9, 2019, <http://proxy.library.nyu.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww>.

proquest.com%2Fhistorical-newspapers%2Fdoings-women%2Fdocview%2F163563875%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D12768. ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

- 7 After Dustin's introduction, we find traces of the Florida Room in classified ads advertising the state's mid-century building boom. In a 1952 ad in the *St. Petersburg Times*, we're presented a home that boasts a Florida room "built for outdoor living Florida Style" (a style which means shielded from the actual elements), a place screened in and topped with an insulated roof. *St. Petersburg Times*, January 4, 1952, 35.
- 8 See "Paul Rudolph—A Life of Art and Architecture," Paul Rudolph Heritage Foundation, accessed January 13, 2020, www.paulrudolphheritagefoundation.org/biography.
- 9 Joseph King, "Twitchell and Rudolph," in *Paul Rudolph: The Florida Houses*, ed. Christopher Domin and Joseph King (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2002), 22–56. For more in-depth work on specifically Floridian vernacular architecture, see Dorinda K. M. Blackey, "Defining Vernacular through the Florida Vernacular—the Cracker House," student paper, American Architectural History, College of Architecture at the University of Florida, 1982, <https://ufdc.ufl.edu/UFO0103303/00001/1j>.
- 10 This premise and accompanying aesthetics that forge what Ross Gay has succinctly identified as "the not-so-good old days," is something that the poet initially suspected, "as a kind of aesthetic assimilation, questioning I realized was actually a centering of whiteness when I remembered my Papa's house in Youngstown with the rhubarb plants out back, mid-century par excellence. Aunt Butter's more or less the same." Ross Gay, *The Book of Delights* (Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin, 2019), 139.
- 11 Of Rudolph's Floridian buildings, C. Ford Peatross notes his "ability to explore and develop the spatial richness, complexity, and interrelationship of the interiors and exteriors of his buildings, their sites, their natural surroundings, and their climate." Also, "It was in Florida where Rudolph developed many of his bold and brilliant techniques of graphic representation. . . ." And so, the hereafter of Rudolph's Florida Room period did much to alter how spaces were represented on the page. C. Ford Peatross, "Preface," in *Paul Rudolph: The Florida Houses*, ed. Christopher Domin and Joseph King (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2002), 9.
- 12 Robert Bruegmann, "Introduction," in *Paul Rudolph: The Florida Houses*, ed. Christopher Domin and Joseph King (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2002), 15–16.
- 13 Alison A. Elgart, "The Animal Interments at the Miami Circle at Brickell Point Site (8DA12)," *Florida Anthropologist* 59, nos. 3–4 (2006): 179–90. For a play-by-play about the site in the public imaginary and how it was transformed into place for scientific inquiry, see Ryan Wheeler's informative and engaging "Miami Circle Reflections" for the Robert S. Peabody Institute of Archaeology, April 22, 2020, <https://peabody.andover.edu/2020/04/22/miami-circle>

-reflections-part-1-the-journey-begins. Wheeler wrote this as the first of a series of blog posts he began on the subject.

- 14 The Miami Circle is (justifiably) a place of intense scholarly focus. For example, it was the feature of three special issues of *The Florida Anthropologist* between 2000 and 2006. See also National Park Service, *Miami Circle: Special Resource Study* (Washington, DC: US Dept. of the Interior, 2007).
- 15 Robert S. Carr, *Digging Miami* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2012), 237–38.
- 16 Ryan J. Wheeler and Robert Carr, “It’s Ceremonial Right? Exploring Ritual in Ancient Southern Florida through the Miami Circle,” in *New Histories of Pre-Columbian Florida*, ed. Neill J. Wallis and Asa R. Randall (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2014), 203–22. See also Elgart, “The Animal Interments,” 179–90.
- 17 Carr, *Digging Miami*, 241–42.
- 18 Carr, *Digging Miami*, 243. See Jacqueline Eaby Dixon et al., “Provenance of Stone Celts from the Miami Circle Archeological Site, Miami, Florida,” *The Florida Anthropologist* 53 no. 4 (2000): 328–41.
- 19 For all about these ways of living and how I was trained in “being with,” see Kandice Chuh et al., “Being with José: An Introduction,” *Social Text*, no. 4 (2014): 1–7; and José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: NYU Press, 2009). This concept “being-with” extends from Jean-Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, trans. Robert Richardson and Anne O’Byrne (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000).
- 20 I came to the term *i:laposhni:cha thli*: from two sources. The first was Daniel Tommie Ochehachee. People of Mikasuki-speaking heritage may formally belong to either the Seminole Tribe of Florida, the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida, or the Independents. In my attempt to use the names chosen by the people themselves, I follow the example of Patsy West in her *The Enduring Seminoles: From Alligator Wrestling to Casino Gaming* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998). West states that “Mikasuki (in many different spellings, including Miccosukee) referred originally to the large late-eighteenth-century town east of Tallahassee in northwest Florida, where the forebears of these people lived” (1–2). West’s use of these peoples own term of identity (which at the time of her book’s publication was *i:laponathli*) was made in consultation with Mikasuki-speaking elders.

This dynamism of self-naming was documented in another of West’s articles, “Abiaka, or Sam Jones, in Context: The Mikasuki Ethnogenesis through the Third Seminole War” (*Florida Historical Quarterly* 94, no. 3 [2016]: 367n1), West specifies that “Mikasuki persons who have been taught their traditional culture call themselves ‘i: laponathli,’ a contraction meaning ‘the people,’ and ‘ilaposhni cha thi’; that literally means ‘the people who speak,’ which could be seen to refer to their early Southeastern roots.” West has recently re-consulted with Jeanette Cypress (granddaughter of Susie Billie), and the preferred term of identification is now *i:laposhni:cha thli*:. West’s findings emerge from her

historical research, oral interviews, and involvement with the i:laposhni:cha thli: for more than five decades. West has an exhibition. “The i:laposhni:cha thli: Saga: An Untold Florida History,” (HistoryMiami April 2022) that specifically addresses the complexities of naming. As of this writing, Jeanette Cypress has instructed West to use i:laposhni:cha thli: (and this spelling) and, together with my own discussion with Daniel Tommie Ochehachee, I follow their collective instruction here. Daniel Tommie Ochehachee in discussion with the author, November 29, 2021.

In Buffalo Tiger’s 2002 autobiography, which heavily informs chapter 2, he uses “Eelaponke” and it is hard to know if this orthography is his or Harry A. Kersey’s. For more sources on broader Seminole histories, readers may refer to my bibliography.

- 21 This beautiful line, an “y mas na” line, is from a very short section called “Our Names” in Tiger’s autobiography. In its last paragraph, Tiger more directly schools the reader, “It is important for you to know what we call the Everglades. ‘Everglades’ is not in our language, but it is where we have always lived. Some of our people call it *Paheyaoke*—‘River of Grass.’ Some people call it *Ashaweayaoke*—‘Where the Cypressess Are.’ And others call it *Chooyayaoke*—‘Where the Pines Are.’ Pine trees grew on the sandy soil.” That this phrase, “what is important for you to know,” is decidedly not used when he describes the names of people, is profound instruction. Buffalo Tiger and Harry A. Kersey Jr., *Buffalo Tiger: A Life in the Everglades* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 38–39.
- 22 William C. Sturtevant and Jessica Cattelino, “Florida Seminole and Miccosukee,” *Handbook of North American Indians*, vol. 14, *Southeast*, vol. ed. Raymond D. Fogelson, general ed. William C. Sturtevant (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 2004), 438. For a deeper dive into the chickee, its construction, and its aesthetics, see Carrie Dilley, *Thatched Roofs and Open Sides: The Architectures of Chickees and Their Changing Role in Seminole Society* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2015).
- 23 Daniel Tommie Ochehachee (Bird Clan) in discussion with the author, January 11, 2021. Ochehachee describes Tucker’s skill as particularly extraordinary because he was able to precut all of the pieces for the chickee in the field “so that he wasn’t wasting time on the job.” Tucker was “efficient, he didn’t waste time, he was generous, and he was serious about his work.”
- 24 Some scholars, such as Maskókî-speaking Seminole historian Willie Johns (Wildcat Clan), have argued that the contemporary chickee (from at least the time of the Seminole Wars) was strategically designed to be built relatively quickly, so if a family group needed to run, it could do so. Johns also notes that his ancestors lived in log-cabin-like structures before their relocations (forced and chosen) to different parts of the peninsula. The chickee, or as Johns put it, “survival huts,” were harder for settlers to detect. Willie Johns and Stephen Bridenstine, “When Is Enough, Enough?: Willie Johns on Seminole History and the Tribal Historic Preservation Office, the Creek Perspective,” in

We Come for Good: Archeology and Tribal Historic Preservation at the Seminole Tribe of Florida, ed. Paul N. Backhouse, Brent R. Weisman, and Mary Beth Rosebrough (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2017), 6. See also Dilley, *Thatched Roofs and Open Sides*, 53. For another history of the chickee, the intense shift in clan formations, and the effects on the culture's matrilineal structure and gender roles in the transition to concrete housing, see Jessica Cattelino, "Florida Seminole Housing and the Meaning of Sovereignty," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 48, no. 3 (2016): 699–726.

25 Ochehachee discussion, January 11, 2021.

26 It is impossible to date the chickee according to the norms of Western time and its accompanying archaeological science, but there is tacit agreement that it is a design handed down over a long period of time. See Dilley, *Thatched Roofs and Open Sides*, 53–55. Some of the ongoing debates about the i:laposhni:cha thli: presence in the southern part of the peninsula revolve around when these populations actually began to live there. The histories often told of the Seminole rely on a familiar narrative of people being pushed down from the ancestral lands now known as southern Georgia, Alabama, and northern Florida by colonial violence. These narratives make migration strictly a *reaction to*. This is of course partly true, but there are other histories—as handed down by the i:laposhni:cha thli: themselves—that insist on their much, much longer stewardship of these lands. As Buffalo Tiger tells us, "We know Florida as the 'pointed land.' Years and years ago people were always looking for which way to go because it was not easy for Indian people to find food and the right place to live for their people. So the wise people were sitting around all night figuring which way to go. At that time, they saw a beautiful tree standing with its limb pointing south, and that meant something . . . they found out that the 'pointed land' was a beautiful place to live, so that's when they started moving down this way. So we know that's how we got here years ago." Tiger and Kersey Jr., *Buffalo Tiger*, 35.

27 Ochehachee in discussion with the author, January 12, 2021.

28 James E. Billie, "Life in a Chickee on 'Tahl-Chobee Yo-Gee,'" *Seminole Tribune*, April 29, 2015, <https://seminoletribune.org/life-in-a-chickee-on-tahl-chobee-yo-gee>, emphasis mine.

29 Ochehachee discussion, January 11, 2021.

30 City of Lake Worth, Florida, *Architectural Styles and Building Traditions* (Lake Worth, FL: n.d.).

31 Jane S. Day and Sarah E. Eaton, "Mariah Brown House: Designation Report 3298 Charles Avenue," Report of the City of Miami Preservation Officer to the Historic and Environmental Preservation Board on the Potential Designation of the Mariah Brown House, n.d. According to Marvin Dunn, the Brown House is likely Dade County's oldest Black dwelling (built in the mid-1880s). In Marvin Dunn, *Black Miami in the Twentieth Century* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1997), 36.

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- 32 For a foundational resource on Bahamian migration to Miami, see Raymond A. Mohl, “Black Immigrants: Bahamians in Early Twentieth-Century Miami,” *Florida Historical Quarterly* 65, no. 3 (1987): 271–97. Bahamian migration to South Florida (and more bibliographic resources) will be listened to and discussed further in chapter 4. For more on the history of Kebo, see Dunn, *Black Miami in the Twentieth Century*, 36. See also “The Mariah Brown House,” ATE&T Miami-Dade County African-American History Calendar, 1996, Black Archives History and Research Foundation of South Fl (1996_005a_Mariah_Brown_House).

For more about details about Mariah Brown culled together from settlers’ journals, see Sandra Riley’s “Mariah Brown and Coconut Grove’s African-Bahamian Village on the Bay,” *Journal of the Bahamas Historical Society* 29 (2007): 33–41. Riley notes that the house was built with Dade County Pine.

- 33 As Graylyn Marie Swilly-Woods has written, “Over the last century, residents of Overtown and West Coconut Grove have had little or no control over developments in their communities or how mainstream tourism leaders make their investments.” See her experienced and community-based overview of the difficult histories and possibilities of West Grove and Overtown as heritage tourism: Graylyn Marie Swilly-Woods, “Glocalizing Community Heritage Tourism in Two African-American Communities in Miami” (PhD diss., Antioch University, 2019).
- 34 All of the information and story here is from Linda Williams in discussion with the author, January 20, 2021, and through various follow-ups in the weeks following. Throughout our first call I got to overhear several people in the neighborhood come up to her and chat. She said: “This is what we do. People pass by; people say hello.” Toward the end of the call I could hear the bells ring at Christ Episcopal Church, built in 1901 by Bahamian immigrants.
- 35 The Fairchilds, as in David Fairchild, the botanist who brought hundreds of thousands of exotic species to the US. Also, the Pancoast family is one of South Florida’s famous architecture families (the father, Russell, was one of Miami Beach’s principal architects and the son, Lester, a guru of the neo-mid-century home).
- 36 Linda Williams in discussion with the author, January 28, 2021.
- 37 Williams was careful to note that they did not seek the “Community-wide historical designation” because it would have created a lot of financial burden on residents should they want to change something like a doorknob in a style that might not match up with the original home. Williams discussion, January 20, 2021.
- 38 Williams is openly critical about how long it has taken the committee to restore the Brown House. She says, “I don’t have this kind of time.”
- 39 Robin Gore in discussion with the author, January 21, 2020.
- 40 Riley was Coral Gables Senior High’s International Baccalaureate English and theater teacher and, after retiring, formed her theater company. In the later stages of the writing of this book, Sandra Riley became one of those six-degrees

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figures, as in “Have you talked to Sandy?” I first found her on the Crystal Parrot Players website. See <https://crystalparrot.org>. Riley then put me in touch with Linda Williams, who then put me in touch with Robin Gore. As Gore said of Riley, “She is the sweetest person I know.” Riley also has an important connection to Patsy West, who is an important figure in chapter 2.

- 41 Sandra Riley, “Mariah Brown,” in *Bahamas Trilogy* (Miami: Parrot House, 2017).
- 42 Gore discussion, January 21, 2020. I want to stress the importance of field trips here. I am far from alone when I say that my own intense attachment to much of South Florida’s histories and ecosystems can be traced directly from field trips such as those imagined by Williams and Gore.
- 43 For a recent photographic essay that includes these formal inventions in various architectures, see Germane Barnes, “Black Miami’s Resiliency: A Photographic Essay,” *Anthurium* 16, no. 1 (2020): 3. This was featured in the wonderful special issue “Looking for Black Miami,” coedited by Donette Francis and Allison Harris.
- 44 Overtown, what N. D. B. Connolly once called “a little corner of the Atlantic World,” will be met in more musical and historic detail in chapter 4. In N. D. B. Connolly, “Colored, Caribbean, and Condemned: Miami’s Overtown District and the Cultural Expense of Progress, 1940–1970,” *Caribbean Studies* 34, no. 1 (2006): 3–60. Overtown has been known in past iterations as Miami’s “Central Negro District” and, starting around the 1920s, as “Colored Town.” “Overtown” became the name generally used for the area starting in the 1940s.
- 45 Interview with Purvis Young by Hans Ulrich Obrist (2005) in *Purvis Young*, ed. Juan Valadez (Miami: Rubell Museum, 2018), 24. According to Dorothy Jenkins Fields, Good Bread Alley stands between Northwest Twelfth and Fourteenth Streets and between Third and Fourth Avenues, and was “an area that began evolving prior to 1920 and was so named because some of the women baked and sold bread in their homes. In the ‘alley’ there were more than three hundred shot-gun houses with less than five feet between them. The front porch of one house was directly in front of another, divided only by a path or alley” (329–30). Good Bread Alley was destroyed by the expressway construction that trampled Overtown, a devastating event that will be further analyzed in chapter 4. See Jenkins Fields, “Tracing Overtown’s Vernacular Architecture,” *Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts* 23 (1998): 323–33. See also N. D. B. Connolly’s great collation of oral histories about Good Bread Alley in his “Colored, Caribbean, and Condemned,” 19–21.
- 46 See Juan Valadez’s catalog *Purvis Young*, and especially his “Introduction,” in *Purvis Young*, ed. Juan Valadez (Miami: Rubell Museum, 2018), 12–14.
- 47 Gean Moreno, “Writing the Glyph,” in *Purvis Young*, ed. Juan Valadez (Miami: Rubell Museum, 2018), 40.
- 48 For brilliant new work on dissent against scale, see Mary Pat Brady, *Scales of Captivity: Racial Capitalism and the Latinx Child* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2022).

- 49 Purvis Young is one of the most famous and recognizable of Miami's artists and is also perhaps one of the most circulated names in the "Miami art boom" that expedited the commodity making of artists, their works, and formerly "undesirable" areas of the city in the late 1990s. For more on Young and the speculation of his work, see Nathan Connolly's "Speculating in History," *Anthurium* 16, no. 1 (2020): 9. Juan Valadez's *Purvis Young* is a notable exception of critical literature that attends closely to the artist's work and his relationships with people.
- 50 David Whiteis, "Latimore: Some Things You Can't Fake," *Living Blues: The Magazine of the African American Blues Tradition* 49, no. 5 (2018): 10–20, emphasis mine.
- 51 On Hurston's work for and the publication history of *The Florida Negro*, see *The Florida Negro: A Federal Writers' Project Legacy*, ed. Gary W. McDonogh (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1993).
- 52 Stetson Kennedy, "Florida Folklife and the WPA: An Introduction," State Archives of Florida, n.d., accessed January, 15, 2020, www.floridamemory.com/onlineclassroom/zora_hurston/documents/stetsonkenedy. Original essay appeared in Jill Inman Linzee, *A Reference Guide to Florida Folklore from the Federal WPA Deposited in the Florida Folklife Archives* (Tallahassee: Florida Department of State, Division of Historical Resources, Bureau of Florida Folklife Programs, 1990).
- 53 For a brilliant and comprehensive reading of the WPA guide series, the conditions of labor behind the Florida guide, Hurston's presence within it, and Florida in the American interwar imaginary, see Sonnet H. Retman's "The Last American Frontier': Mapping the Folk in the Federal Writers' Project's Florida: A Guide to the Southernmost State," in *Real Folks: Race and Genre in the Great Depression* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011).
- 54 Zora Neale Hurston, "Negro Mythical Places," in *Go Gator and Muddy the Water: Writings by Zora Neale Hurston from the Federal Writers' Project*, ed. Pamela Bordelon (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999), 108.
- 55 Federal Writers' Project of the Works Progress Administration for the State of Florida, *Florida: A Guide to the Southernmost State, American Guide Series* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1939), 431.
- 56 As Retman sagely puts it, "These stories have yet another function: they point to the unmappable—a subversive space of imagination, desire, and agency—a space that resists the fixing gaze of the tourist and the state." Retman, "The Last American Frontier," 150–51.
- 57 Zora Neale Hurston, "Negro Mythical Places," in Federal Writers' Project, *Florida: A Guide*, 431. I've included here the original text as Hurston wrote it. The FWP guide heavily edited the original, which became the following: "Beluthahatchee is a country where all unpleasant doings and sayings are forgotten, a land of forgiveness and forgetfulness" (431).
- 58 Zora Neale Hurston, "Proposed Recording Expedition into the Floridas," May 1939, manuscript/mixed material, Library of Congress, accessed February 17, 2014, www.loc.gov/item/flwpa000213. The finding aid gives us the

following context for the piece: “Hurstons’s essay was written in preparation for the visit of Herbert Halpert (director of the folk song department of the National Service Bureau, Federal Theater Project) on the Joint Committee on Folk Art and Library of Congress–sponsored southern recording expedition. According to Dr. Corse, ‘His trip was cut short so that only a few of these recordings were made. Zora Neale Hurston completed contacts for Negro recordings at the turpentine camp in Cross City and in Tampa before she was called to Philadelphia.’”

59 Hurston, “Proposed Recording Expedition into the Floridas.”

60 Hurston, “Proposed Recording Expedition into the Floridas.”

61 The critical literature on Hurston and Florida is as vast as its rivers of grass. However, as this introduction reveals, I hope to move attention on Hurston’s Florida from conventional readings of literary setting and into performative doing. For one important resource that sought to specifically focus on the Floridian substances in Hurston’s work, see *Zora in Florida*, ed. Steve Glassman and Kathryn Lee Seidel (Orlando: University of Central Florida Press, 1991, distributed by University Presses of Florida).

62 As Daphne Brooks, one of the greatest theorists of Hurston, has written, “Her performance doubly inscribes the self-making dreams and imagination of the Black collective whose voices she preserves, as well as her own present, active, independent reception as a woman with her ear to the ground and her voice to the wind” (159). Brooks’s chapter, “‘Sister, Can You Line it Out?’ Zora Neale Hurston Notes the Sound,” on Hurston, nestled within her majestic work *Liner Notes for the Revolution: The Intellectual Life of Black Feminist Sound* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2021), is required reading.

63 On the invitations made possible by the conceptual difficulty of Hurston’s work, I am very much inspired by the stunning correspondence between Barbara Johnson’s writing on Hurston featured in her *A World of Difference* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987) and Hortense J. Spillers’s reading of it all in “A Tale of Three Zoras: Barbara Johnson and Black Women Writers,” *Diacritics* 34, no. 1 (2004): 94–97.

64 From Camille T. Dungy’s “Before the Fetus Proves Viable, a Stroll Creekside in the Sierras,” *Callaloo* 34, no. 3 (2011): 787.

65 By this mode of working I need to invoke Spillers’s reading of Johnson’s work on Hurston when she writes that “Johnson gives us a *relative* that becomes, in Ralph Ellison’s aesthetic logic, an *ancestor* with an idea that in turn opens a tradition of writing not as a *monument* or mausoleum, but as a *practice*” (Spillers, “A Tale of Three Zoras,” 96).

66 There is also an ecological sense here as Hurston witnessed much of the laboring in and of the state of Florida that made raw materials for the United States. See Susan Scott Parish’s wonderful “Zora Neale Hurston and the Environmental Ethic of Risk,” in *American Studies, Ecocriticism, and Citizenship: Thinking and Acting in the Local and Global Commons*, ed. Joni Adamson and Kimberly N. Ruffin (New York: Routledge, 2013), 21–36.

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- 67 Henry Stone, "Foreword," in Kurt "K.O.T.O." Curtis, *Florida's Famous and Forgotten: History of Florida's Rock, Soul and Dance Music, the First 30 Years: 1955–1985*, vol. 1, A to M (Altamonte Springs, FL: Florida Media, 2005), 17.
- 68 "Personal Interviews" from Curtis, *Florida's Famous and Forgotten*, vol. 2, M to Z, A1–A2.
- 69 Killens plays a central role in chapter 4.
- 70 Benny Latimore in discussion with the author, October 15, 2021. "Benny Latimore aka Latimore Talks Miami Soul: 'I Lived Overtown at the Sir John Hotel,'" an interview with Jacob Katel featured in Jacob Katel and Henry Stone, *The Stone Cold Truth: Inside the Music Biz* (Henry Stone Music USA, 2016), 172–74. For more on Latimore, see John Capouya, "Blues Hall of Famer Benny Latimore Calls Riverview Home but Never Takes the Stage Here," *Tampa Bay Times*, May 25, 2017, accessed January 28, 2020, www.tampabay.com/news/humaninterest/blues-hall-of-famer-benny-latimore-calls-riverview-home-but-never-takes/2325159. Capouya's *Florida Soul: From Ray Charles to KC and the Sunshine Band* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2017) will figure heavily in chapter 4.
- 71 Curtis, *Florida's Famous and Forgotten*, 1:423–24.
- 72 As of this writing (January 21, 2020), you can find the song here: "Latimore Let's Straighten It Out," YouTube video, posted by Aud, November 9, 2010, www.youtube.com/watch?v=aRctq68MGxM.
- 73 Capouya, "Blues Hall of Famer." In another interview with Capouya, Latimore has this to say of the song: "In my life I used to tell people: 'Evidently something has gotten crooked. We need to straighten it out.' But my idea was you have to sit down and straighten out any kind of relationship you have . . . it doesn't have to be a man-woman relationship. It could be with your brother, uncle, boss, or your friend. With any two human beings there's going to be a little bit of clash and you have to straighten it out. I say that onstage a lot." In Capouya, *Florida Soul*, 296.
- 74 *More More More* was produced by Steve Alaimo.
- 75 Andy Vineberg, "Levittown Bass Player Ron Bogdon Made Lasting Impression," *Burlington County Times*, July 14, 2015, accessed January 28, 2020, www.burlingtoncountytimes.com/article/20150714/LIFESTYLE/307149693.
- 76 Vineberg, "Levittown Bass Player Ron Bogdon Made Lasting Impression."
- 77 Benny Latimore in discussion with the author, October 15, 2021. Little Beaver biographical data has been culled from Curtis, *Florida's Famous and Forgotten*, 1:444–48. See also Alexandra T. Vazquez, "You Can Bring All Your Friends," *Small Axe* 49 (2016): 185, for a closer reading of Little Beaver's extraordinary recordings *Party Down I* and *Party Down II*.
- 78 You can find the incredible "Super Funky" here: "Thunder, Lightning & Rain—Super Funky (parts 1 & 2)," YouTube video, posted by DJ Weego, April 22, 2011, www.youtube.com/watch?v=V28aZYY-BeE.
- 79 Whiteis, "Latimore: Some Things You Can't Fake," 10–20, emphasis mine.

- 80 *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, “colon, n.2,” accessed January 22, 2021, www-oed-com.proxy.library.nyu.edu/view/Entry/36513?result=2&rskey=zCgViO&.
- 81 “Latimore/Let’s Straighten It Out,” YouTube Video, posted by Kazuharp, December 11, 2010, www.youtube.com/watch?v=DgFRxaSk5yA.
- 82 Leah Jackson and Gwen McCrae, email message to the author, January 25, 2021.
- 83 “Gwen McCrae, Let’s Straighten It Out,” YouTube video, posted by Neil Allen, July 2, 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Ck5gsAUTF4>.
- 84 Gwen McCrae and Leah Jackson in discussion with the author, July 3, 2020.
- 85 Gwen McCrae knows little about her father: he died when she was a baby. There are few details I can include here other than the fact that he was born in Pensacola. Jackson and McCrae email message, January 25, 2021.
- 86 McCrae and Jackson discussion, July 3, 2020.
- 87 George McCrae’s single “Rock Your Baby” would be one of the greats in the catalog of what came to be known as the “Miami Sound.”
- 88 Henry Stone is the force and music industry “iron fist” through which any study of South Florida musical history must pass. As the founder/promoter/distributor of some of the area’s most important independent music labels, he figures largely in the history and manufacturing of the “Miami Sound.” I want to acknowledge and honor the important infrastructure he made possible for Miami musical production, but my focus here will stay with the artists because their stories are often subsumed, like all musicians, by the stories of their labels. I do not want to shorthand their musical contributions under the catchall names of the labels they worked for—for example, the “TK days,” or, as has been done elsewhere, “Motown,” “Fania,” etc. In the press about Stone’s various labels, artists are very often referred to as being part of his “stable.” There is ample literature on Stone, and I refer readers to Katel and Stone’s *The Stone Cold Truth*; Curtis’s entry on Stone in his *Famous and Forgotten*, 2:769–72; and this excellent web resource: www.henrystonemusic.com.
- 89 McCrae and Jackson discussion, July 3, 2020. Note how Latimore puts the work of the company (not The Company) this way in 1975: “Hell, I’ve recorded everywhere. New York, L.A., you name it, I’ve been there. All of those cats in all those places all they’re really interested in is overdubbing 75 horns or how many strings they can bring in and things like that. Well all that’s only icing on the cake. Here at TK we don’t worry about no icing. Here we just bake the cake!” Jon Marlowe, “TK’s Here to Bake the Cake, but That’s Not All That’s Cookin,” *Miami News*, January 16, 1975, 3.
- 90 Deborah R. Vargas, “Punk’s Afterlife in Cantina Time,” *Social Text* 31, no. 3 (2013): 57–58. Gwen McCrae and Latimore recorded a version of “Let’s Straighten It Out” together in 2006.
- 91 Felix Alexander Sama and Caridad Sama in discussion with the author, January 24, 2021.

- 92 Felix Alexander Sama in discussion with the author, January 22, 2021.
- 93 For more about mobile DJs and their arts, a must-read is Christine Bacareza Balance's *Tropical Renditions: Making Musical Scenes in Filipino America* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016).
- 94 *Liberty City* and its "Mega Mix" is available on most music platforms. For now, you can also find it here: "Mega Mix," YouTube video, posted by DJ Uncle Al-Topic, November 8, 2014, www.youtube.com/watch?v=nBA7TiGdgAg.
- 95 For some of my earlier writing on DJ Uncle Al, see Alexandra T. Vazquez, "How Can I Refuse?," *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 23, no. 2 (2011): 200–206. For an important piece on DJ Uncle Al and his incredible work, including heartbreaking lines from his son Albert Moss Jr., see Dave Tompkins, "An Oral History of the Miami Mobile DJ Scene," September 23, 2019, accessed December 2019, <https://daily.redbullmusicacademy.com/2019/09/miami-bass-mobile-djs-regulating-oral-history>. For another source on Moss by fellow DJs, see the section on him in the documentary *Music Regulators*. The Uncle Al segment may be accessed here: "Music Regulators—DJ Uncle Al 3," YouTube video, posted by SFLA80S, May 16, 2019, www.youtube.com/watch?v=PiDUq_boiaM.
- 96 Moss Jr. offered these touching words of tribute to his father in the documentary *Music Regulators*, which also includes footage of Uncle Al in action. See *Music Regulators—DJ Uncle Al 3*.
- 97 Here I am very much influenced by Shane Vogel's concept of the "elsewhen." See his incredible chapter "Working Against the Music: Geoffrey Holder's Elsewhen," in Shane Vogel, *Stolen Time: Black Fad Performance and the Calypso Craze* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 163–205.

CHAPTER TWO: MIAMI FROM THE SPOILS

- 1 This superlative is mentioned on a bronze signpost (those that mark important locations of Florida's early history) found in the Barnacle Historic State Park in Coconut Grove.
- 2 See Charlie Hailey's wonderful *Spoil Island: Reading the Makeshift Archipelago* (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2013), xiii–xiv. For Hailey's specific work on the spoils in Miami's Biscayne Bay, see his chapter "Rational and Irrational: Developing Biscayne Bay's Lagoon," 173–96. And for other resources on the history and restoration efforts in Biscayne Bay, see Gary R. Milano, "Island Restoration and Enhancement in Biscayne Bay, Florida," in *Proceedings of the Twenty Sixth Annual Conference on Ecosystems Restoration and Creation*, ed. P. J. Cannizzaro (Tampa: Hillsborough Community College, 2000), 1–17; and Donna J. Lee and Anafriada B. Wenge, "Estimating the Benefits from Restoring Coastal Ecosystems: A Case Study of Biscayne Bay, Florida," in *Coastal Watershed Management*, ed. Ali Fares and Aly I. El-Kadi, 283–98 (Southampton, UK: WIT Press, 2008).
- 3 Hailey, *Spoil Island*, 2.