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# Meet The Man Behind All Those South Beach Pastels

WLRN 91.3 FM

Published November 16, 2013 at 12:06 PM EST



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*Julia Duba*

In 1976, South Beach's population was aging and so were the buildings.



*Credit Miami Design Preservation League*

Leonard Horowitz

Then came Leonard Horowitz.

"I'll take care of the buildings. I'll do the frosting on the cake because these look like they're going to be a lot of fun to play with," said Horowitz in a film from 1988 called "Pastel Paradise."



The Barbizon, 530 Ocean Drive.

His love for Art Deco is why South Beach looks the way it does today.

Horowitz came from New York -- where he designed furniture, did window dressings for Bloomingdale's and studied architecture.

When he was 29, his dad cut him off financially after finding out Leonard was gay.

So Leonard left for South Beach, where his mother was living.

And quickly formed an unlikely friendship with Barbara Capitman.

Capitman was about 30 years older than Horowitz, but they became close because of their common interest: Art Deco.

They founded the Miami Design Preservation League and got to work on getting South Beach into the National Registry of Historic Places.



*Credit Julia Duba*

The Park Central, 640 Ocean Drive.

And with the help of Ernie Martin, who was director of community development for Dade County at the time, they got the funding to make it all happen.

Martin remembers the moment Leonard and Barbara showed up at his office building.

“They were somewhat eccentric in their appearance and in their presentation,” said Martin. “They were sort of dismissed as not being appropriate to be entering the office to seek funding. But I said, you know, lets listen to what they have to say.”

Later, Horowitz pitched another idea to Martin. He wanted to highlight the Art Deco design with the color.

Horowitz even created a color palette to do the job.

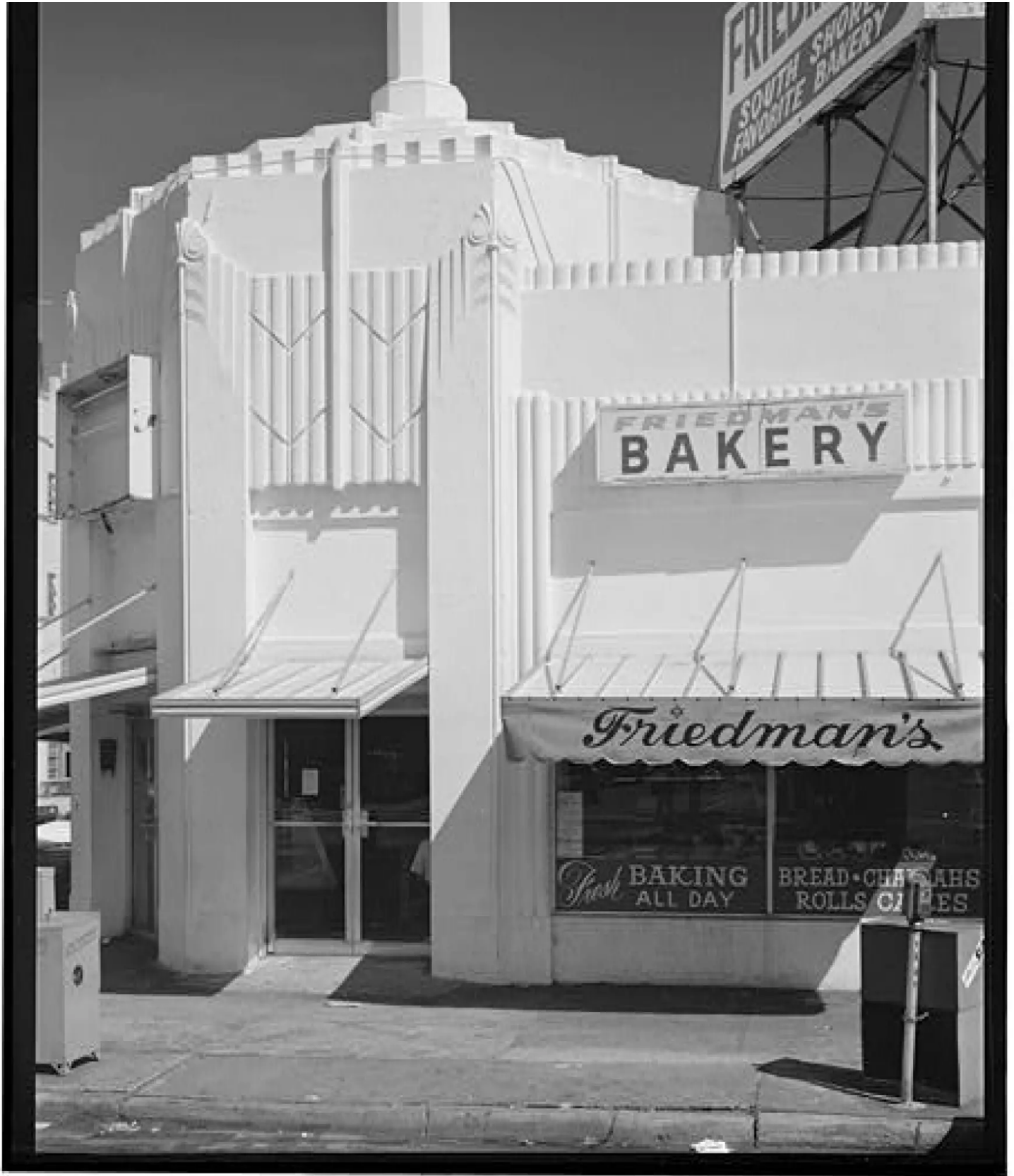


A palette of pastels created by Leonard Horowitz.

"He looked at the sun and the sky and the seas and the beach and pulled out these colors and put them together on this palette," said Lynn Bernstein, a friend of Horowitz.

Horowitz then tested out these colors on Friedman's Bakery on the corner of 7th and Washington Avenue.





*Credit Library Of Congress*

Friedman's Bakery (on the corner of 7th St. and Washington Ave.) circa 1980, before being painted with Leonard Horowitz's

design.

Friedman's building was all white.

Ernie Martin helped Leonard get funding from the county.

And the paint up went.

"My first reaction was, 'Oh my God what have I done,'" said Martin. "Because it was so unlike anything I had ever seen before."

The initial reactions weren't too positive, Martin added.

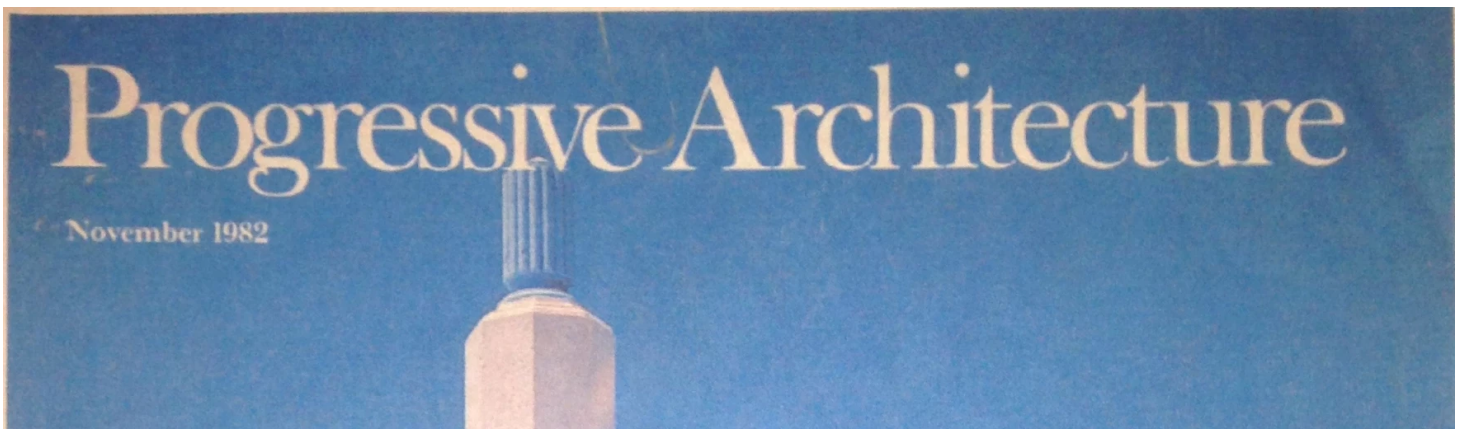
"I remember this one lady saying 'this is not us. This is not what I remember from as long as I've lived here. Deco schmeco.'"

Some people said Art Deco was a reminder of the Great Depression, so why would you want to highlight that?

Horowitz recalled in "Pastel Paradise" one complaint in particular: "I hate that building, it looks like a whorehouse."

But building by building, Leonard won over the neighborhood.

And in November 1982, Friedman's Bakery was featured on the cover of Progressive Architecture magazine.







Friedman's Bakery circa 1982. The building -- and Leonard Horowitz's design -- were featured on the cover of *Progressive Architecture* magazine.

After that, the rest of the world caught to Leonard's vision.

South Beach became a backdrop for photo shoots and TV shows like “Miami Vice.”

Buildings Leonard had nothing to do with were being painted with Leonard’s pastels.

“Well it feels obviously vindicating that this crazy person, that’s what they used to call me, is being copied everywhere,” said Horowitz.

One year after “Pastel Paradise” was released, Leonard died of AIDS. He was 43.

Saul Gross was a close friend, and remembers Leonard’s final farewell in South Beach.

“A bunch of Leonard’s friends got together and went out on the boat and took the boat along Ocean Drive and looked back at the hotels that Leonard had painted and scattered his ashes in the ocean, looking at the Art Deco hotels on Ocean Drive.”

Today, Manolo restaurant is where Friedman's Bakery used to be.





Credit Julia Duba

Friedman's Bakery today (2013), now Manolo restaurant.

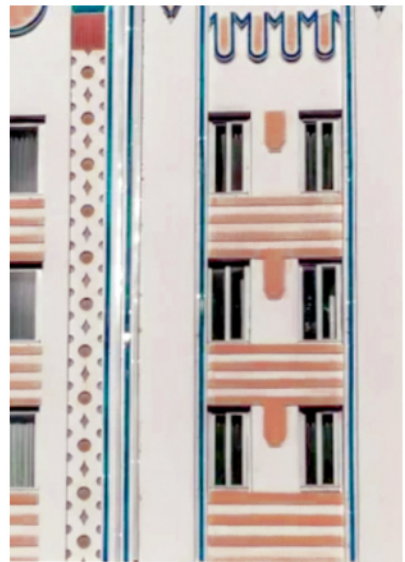
Leonard Horowitz had escaped from New York to a drab, broken-down city and died in a place that was about to become an international icon.

*This story originally ran on WLRN on July 26, 2013. It was rebroadcast on [WBUR's "Here and Now"](#) on Nov. 15, 2013.*

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