



**The Wolfsonian–FIU Presents
*Smoke Signals: Cigar Cutters and Masculine Values***

*An exploration of the habits, values, and sometimes troubling attitudes
of the modern-age gentleman*

MIAMI BEACH (April 10, 2024) — The Wolfsonian–FIU presents the various forms of a single device as a way to explore the habits and values of the men who used them. *Smoke Signals: Cigar Cutters and Masculine Values*, on view April 25 through September 29, is drawn from a recent donation of 361 cigar cutters by Miami collector Richard Kronenberg.

With the rising popularity of cigar smoking in the late 19th century, a new device emerged. Used to snip the end of the rolled cigar without damaging its structure, cigar cutters ranged from utilitarian knife-like tools to elaborate decorative and figural objects. The installation presents examples that take many forms, including dogs, revolvers, champagne bottles, or women, as well as others that advertise various businesses. As reflections of their owner’s interests, affiliations and tastes, these articles offer an intriguing window onto the culture of masculinity during this era.

“Working with cigar cutters has been both a challenge and a voyage of discovery, as I knew little to nothing about them prior to this project, and very little has been written,” said curator Lea Nickless. “What I found fascinating is the potential of the most mundane of everyday objects to tell us about the past and about ourselves. They are artifacts embedded with meaning, awaiting decoding.”

Smoke Signals will include 141 cigar cutters from the late 19th and early 20th centuries, shedding light on leisure pursuits and class aspirations, as well as demeaning attitudes towards women. A portion of the installation will be provocatively displayed in a mid-century *Beauty Bar* cabinet used originally to display cosmetics, perfumes, and other products associated with femininity.

“Richard Kronenberg’s collecting style and interests are very Wolfsonian. He was intrigued by the many facets of these ordinary and often overlooked objects, and we are proud to give them a home here,” said Wolfsonian director Casey Steadman. “You do not need to be a cigar enthusiast to appreciate the stories about the broader social and cultural world that this collection allows the museum to tell.”

The installation will be augmented with select graphic materials from the Wolfsonian collection, as well as a digital presentation cycling images of the gifted cigar cutters not physically on view in the installation.

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Exhibition Credit

Installation and *Beauty Bar* restoration made possible by Richard Kronenberg and his recent donation of cigar cutters.

About The Wolfsonian–Florida International University

The Wolfsonian–FIU is a museum, library, and research center that uses objects to illustrate the persuasive power of art and design, to explore what it means to be modern, and to tell the story of social, political, and technological changes that have transformed our world. The collections comprise more than 200,000 items from the period 1850 to 1950—the height of the Industrial Revolution to the end of the Second World War—and include fine arts, decorative arts, graphic design, industrial design, architectural drawings, rare publications, and ephemera.

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

About FIU

Florida International University is a top public university that drives real talent and innovation in Miami and globally. Very high research (R1) activity and high social mobility come together at FIU to uplift and accelerate learner success in a global city by focusing in the areas of environment, health, innovation, and justice. Today, FIU has two campuses and multiple centers. FIU serves a diverse student body of more than 56,000 and 290,000 Panther alumni. U.S. News and World Report places dozens of FIU programs among the best in the nation, including international business at No. 2. Washington Monthly Magazine ranks FIU among the top 20 public universities contributing to the public good.