

MIAMI

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ART + DESIGN ISSUE



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CREATING A NEW LANDMARK IN MIAMI

FACUNDO BACARDI

GIVES A TASTE OF THE FAMILY'S FINEST

PLUS

WHAT TO DO FOR MIAMI ART WEEK, MIAMI BEACH'S MOST IMPORTANT ARTIST
AND BEACH HOUSE 8 DEVELOPER VALERIO MORABITO

ONE ON ONE

BUONGIORNO BEACH HOUSE

DEVELOPER VALERIO MORABITO TALKS ABOUT HIS
LATEST PROJECT, BEACH HOUSE 8

BY **HADLEY HENRIETTE**
PHOTOGRAPHY **NICK GARCIA**



“I fell in love with Miami the first time I came here at age 18,” says Italian developer Valerio Morabito from his perfectly appointed waterfront home in Miami Beach’s Sunset Islands. “I stayed as a guest in a house across the water from my current house and I thought ‘Wow, I want to live here.’”

So he bought his house when it was still under construction and set about giving it the Morabito touch, rearranging the layout and eventually creating a Mediterranean-chic masterpiece that manages to be spacious, yet cozy and grand, yet laid-back. It’s clear that his design sense bleeds into every detail, from the custom-made furniture to the perfectly positioned Warhols and Harings.

It is the same touch that he brought to 70 Greene Street in Soho, and now to Beach House 8, a boutique condominium with eight exquisite penthouse units situated on the sand. For the project, Morabito has teamed up with fellow Italian developer Ugo Colombo and local design firm Arquitectonica.

Morabito came to work with Arquitectonica after seeking them out to retrieve documents. “They had been working with the previous developer who had the property,” he explains. After meeting with Bernardo Fort-

Brescia, he was won over. “My experience with Bernardo was amazing and I really liked the design they created, which is a modern take on Art Deco’s geometric, horizontal lines.” He adds, “they are also an incredibly well-run, organized operation.”

But a developer’s work doesn’t end with the choice of an architect. “The architect favors the exterior of the building,” he says matter-of-factly. “They will be known for the shell and most of the time they don’t look too much into the layout. As a developer, you want to make sure you’re doing something that people will enjoy living in.” By partnering with Ugo Colombo, Morabito is making a statement that the layouts matter very much as Colombo’s works are known for their superb construction and supreme livability. “We worked on the floor plans a lot together,” he says of Colombo.

The balconies are over 1,000 square feet apiece and there is only one unit per floor, with 360 degree views, thanks to the building’s small foot print. “We really wanted everyone to enjoy their view without having anyone on their left or right. It is extremely private, like having your own 4,000 square foot house on the ocean.” Condominiums start at \$6 million in the building but are oh-so-worth-it, with touches like Boffi kitchens and Italian hardware, a garden waterfall and Mauritian Teak. The pièce de résistance? A 6,000 square foot duplex penthouse with a private pool. The



Rendering of Beach House 8

neighborhood at Collins and 37th, where Beach House 8 is set to go up, seems poised to go through a serious transformation. There are a number of high-end projects like Faena House planned for the area that will likely become the jewel of Miami Beach. Quality retail, however, will have to follow and Morabito feels developers should work with the city to get the right mix.

His own properties are pretty interesting as well. In addition to his current home, he recently sold his Upper East Side townhouse on 74th Street, which had been completely gutted and redesigned, to Miss Zhang Xin, a very prominent developer in China. Since acquiring it, she has sung the praises of the quality of the construction, from the bones to the finishes. Morabito, whose family has been in the infrastructure business for three generations, credits the quality of the work he delivers to Italian designers, suppliers and craftsmen. He is also looking forward to working on Beach House 8 with Michele Bönan, an interior designer who has worked on Ferragamo Hotels, Hotel Vendome and J.K. Place, and been an inspiration to Morabito himself.

Another property ready to receive the Morabito treatment is a home

he's purchased in view of his current one, but he's having a little trouble getting the plans approved. "People spend millions to buy property in Miami Beach, so you should give them some range of freedom [to remodel or rebuild.]" It should be noted that the home would not be a McMansion or take up significantly more space than the ho-hum 1940s house in question.

"You have the opportunity to do something modern and contemporary and beautiful," he says. "It's hard because I was born in Rome and, to me, beautiful architecture is a little different from what I see around me here. The Deco hotels are wonderful, but when it comes to single-family homes, there needs to be some [leeway] for tasteful construction," he says.

"We should be creating the right standards. There needs to be logic; you need to have a view," he says pointing to Porto Cervo in Sardinia as an example to aspire to. "They brought in the two or three best architects and were very specific about the parameters of building. Every house there is a piece of art, and very small compared to the piece of land they are built on. Now the houses are selling for \$40 million and \$50 million. Miami has so much potential, you just have to make the right move."

