KINO LORBER

presents

THE LAST RESORT

A FILM BY DENNIS SCHOLL & KAREEM TABSCH

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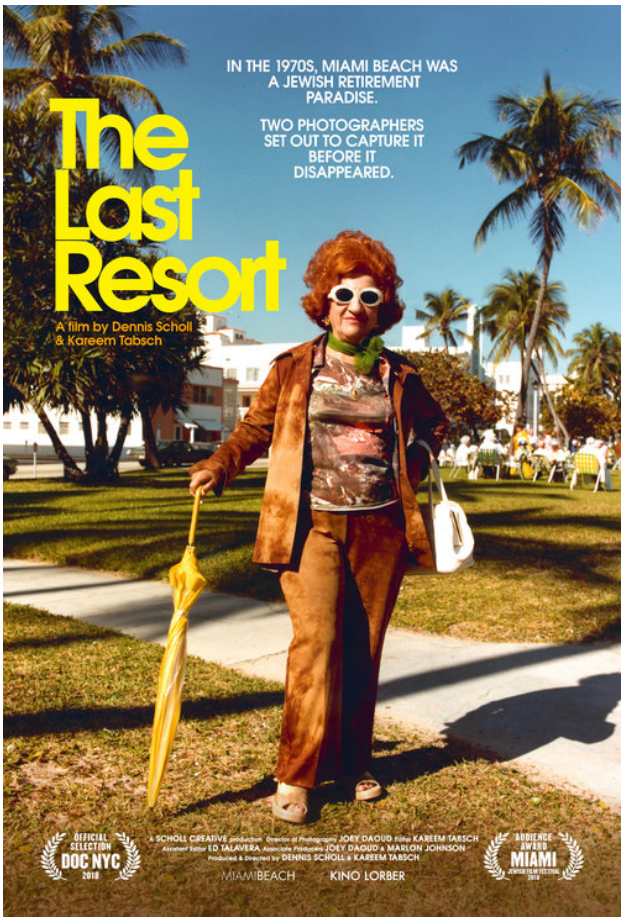
SYNOPSIS

Long before Art Deco was a movement and prior to the arrival of the youth culture of MTV and *Miami Vice*, South Beach was home to the largest cluster of Jewish retirees in the country. Intrigued by the small apartments, low-cost of living, sunny weather, and thriving cultural life, they came in the thousands seeking refuge from the Northeast's brutal winters. By the 1970's, these former New Yorkers were turning from seasonal visitors to year-round residents, all the while making Miami Beach home to a population that was primarily over 70 and overwhelmingly Jewish.

In *The Last Resort*, viewers embark on a journey to the iconic Miami Beach of yesterday thru the lens of young photographers Andy Sweet and Gary Monroe. With camera in hand, they embarked upon an ambitious 10-year project to document the aging population living in the sunburned paradise of 1970's Miami Beach and into the changing, turbulent 1980's. Working in different styles and approaches they captured the end of an era through engrossing black and white images by Monroe juxtaposed with Sweet's captivating candy-hued color photos. The result is one of the most fascinating photographic documentations of a community ever caught on film.

Featuring interviews with Pulitzer prize winner Edna Buchanan, filmmaker Kelly Reichardt, Jewish Museum of Florida Executive Director Susan Gladstone and photographer Gary Monroe, *The Last Resort* is a celebration of two of Miami's greatest visual artists and a stunning testament to a community all but forgotten...until now.



THE PHOTOGRAPHERS:

The Last Resort features the work of collaborators Gary Monroe and Andy Sweet.

GARY MONROE

Gary Monroe, a native of Miami Beach, received a master's degree in fine arts from the University of Colorado at Boulder in 1977. Upon returning home, he photographed the old world Jewish community that characterized South Beach. Since 1984 he has photographed throughout Haiti, and later looked at tourism across Florida, especially the "rite of passage" of vacationers at Disney World. He also "wanders aimlessly" to photograph in other countries – Brazil, Israel, Cuba, India, Trinidad, Poland and Egypt to name a few. Recently he has been looking at the landscape, especially the transformation of place due to corporate-driven planning. Monroe is the author of 15 books on Florida art and artists, including The Highwaymen: Florida's African-American Landscape Painters. A Fullbrgiht fellow, he's received grants from the National Endowment of the Arts, Southeast College Arts Conference and fellowships from the Florida Humanities Council and the Florida Division of Cultural Affairs. Monroe's work is distinguished by spontaneity and sureness, a knowing in the moment that has led to fresh, responsive imagery. His photographs are less didactic than they are inspired by wonder. He is presently a professor of Visual arts at Daytona State College.

ANDY SWEET

Andy Sweet returned home to Miami Beach after receiving a Masters degree in Fine Arts from the University of Colorado at Boulder in 1977, to photograph the old world Jewish culture that then distinguished South Beach. While in graduate school, Andy was part of a small faction of young artist-photographers who were discovering the creative possibilities of color imagery. His beach-ball hues perfectly described the vivid light and lively culture he explored and portrayed, a culture that many others found bleak and pedestrian. Andy's aesthetic was as fresh as his colors. He rejected formalist theory and idea-driven imagery in favor of immediate and unmediated responses, of living it up and aligning himself with the people he knew he was privileged to photograph. Andy admired the work of Diane Arbus, and like her he rejected the notion of self-conscious art making. The pure and spirited photograph was what mattered. He knew he was an artist but his aesthetic, his intellect, and his ego required that he conceal this fact in service of achieving the caliber of photograph he desired. Intuitive, but certain, each click of his camera's shutter release was an affirmation. He photographed in this way until his death in 1982

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THE BRIGHTEST STILL THE FLEETEST
BY LAUREN GROFF, JULY 5, 2016

Andy Sweet's Miami Beach

The five A.M. flight from Gainesville to Miami is a dim suspension between dreaming and living, but it was my fault for choosing it; I wanted to see the sunrise over South Beach. My Uber driver from the airport hesitated when I asked him what he thought of Miami Beach. Then he said it seemed full of "Europeans," which means something particular to a certain strain of American, a euphemism for anything loudly sophisticated or expensive or gay. I climbed out of the car at Casa Casuarina, the ornate

mansion where Gianni Versace was shot dead in 1997, and the sky grew lighter as I went across Ocean Drive and through Lummus Park. A group of rough-looking men—amputated limbs and wheelchairs and blue tattoos and weather-beaten faces—stopped talking as I squeezed by. I took off my shoes when I hit the beach, and the wind nearly blew me over. Already the sunrise had shifted behind perforated clouds to make long golden beams stroking the ocean that we as kids called God-fingers.

Even so early, there were runners, dog walkers, kite surfers, meanderers. There were seagulls in natty black and white, skimming the waves, rising together in a sharp flick to hover, then dipping again all at once. I sat on the steps of a lifeguard hut on stilts and watched a male model being photographed. The model was so muscle-bound he could hardly walk. At first he wore a sleeveless, unzipped hoodie, black and white to match the gulls, but with the wind so wild, he soon took off the shirtish thing. There was something poignant in the huddle of coconuts with straws waiting for their turn as props. A loose circle of gawkers began to collect, mostly middle-aged men with paunches, their shoes cupped in both hands. The photographer had the model lie down at the edge of the waves so he was on his side, back to me. Then the model shimmied his white pants below the hips, probably to show off his junk, though I couldn't see anything, even when I climbed to the top of the lifeguard tower to look. Still, mine was a good vantage to watch the watchers as they stepped much closer, and to see when a rogue wave broke all over the model and made both the white pants and the artful shimmy redundant.

I was in Miami to think about Andy Sweet, a photographer who died far too young in 1982, and whose major subject was the weird, poor, old, and Jewish South Beach that everyone says has been gone for a long time now. Miami Beach's current incarnation has dramatically little to do with its past, and is not part of Miami proper; it is its own small island, almost nineteen square miles, separated from the city by Biscayne Bay. The land was taken from Native Americans of the Tequesta tribe, and bought in 1870 for seventy-five cents an acre by a father and son named Henry and Charles Lum. The first permanent building on the island was a place of refuge for shipwrecked people, a theme that would emerge again and again in the fraught history of Miami Beach. For a long time, the island was a coconut or avocado plantation and a mostly wild picnicking spot for Miami folk, if they could brave the mosquitoes. In the early twentieth century, standard human ecological catastrophe arrived, clearing out the protective, filtering barrier of the mangroves; ripping up the native growth; dredging out waterways; and building bridges. Someone had looked at the wild mess and seen an Atlantic City of the South.

The first hotel, Brown's, was built in 1915, followed by mansions, bath houses, golf courses, aquariums, and many more hotels. Through the 1930s, there were signs hanging in the fanciest hotels saying "Genteel Clientele Only," which meant "No African Americans, No Jews." When the hurricane of 1926 hit, Miami Beach lost much of its popularity among the rich, and poorer vacationers moved in. Small hotels and rooming houses sprang up in what is the Art Deco district nowadays. Jewish oldsters from New York came down, felt the sun on their skin and tasted the citrus on their tongues, and their delight in this relative paradise brought more Jews weary of cold New York. Delis opened, kosher hotels. There was Yiddish everywhere, and even makeshift shuls could be found in some of the hotels' great rooms. Shattered European Jews with numbers tattooed on their forearms took solace in Miami Beach after World War II; more shipwrecks.

Humans find comfort among our own, but close-knit communities can also keep others out, causing collapse. The inhabitants grew older and depleted their savings, and South Beach grew increasingly worn, the buildings ever more derelict. Few families moved to the area. People from more prosperous parts of Florida grumbled, calling it God's Waiting Room. When, in the spring of 1980, more than 125,000 desperate Cubans landed in Florida with the Mariel boatlift—yet another set of shipwrecks—they went where they could afford to live, and South Beach was cheap. News reports claimed that many Marielitos had been released from mental hospitals and prisons in Cuba, though the numbers were wildly exaggerated.

But the truth is that the neighborhoods of Miami Beach did become much more dangerous in the early eighties. Some of the new danger came from the Medellín "cocaine cowboys," who, beginning in the 1970s, used Miami as their portal into America, transporting huge quantities from Colombia by plane and boat. As supply caught up with demand, the cost of the drug plummeted and it became inescapable: by 1985, over 5.7 million Americans used cocaine, out of a total population of under 240 million. Also, whenever there are great numbers of aging people, there is natural attrition; this was compounded when many of the old people who didn't die off took their things and fled. Miami Vice began airing in 1984, rolling like a dog in all that muck and deadly glamour.

Paradoxically, though, the show also reminded America how beautiful the area was, with its white beaches and beautiful bodies and pastel stucco. The pendulum reversed course, and, slowly, the money came back. The Art Deco hotels were renovated, palm trees replanted, tourists lured back to the area, a thick lacquer of wealth painted on. Versace moved in. These days, the idea of Miami Beach as a quiet resting place for America's antique Jews seems dizzyingly strange. The whole place now bows to youth. EDM music skitters out of stores, Señor Frog's is open by eight A.M., and sunburnt teenagers walk shirtless in flip-flops.

That morning I visited Miami Beach, as the sun rose higher, the bodies on the beach grew more and more naked, glistening with more and more oils. At last I saw a woman, younger than I've ever been, running by in a thong bikini. Her stomach was whittled out of soap. Her ass was a crucible. I went off to find a Cuban coffee, a shot of adrenaline to the brain. If I was dreaming before, now I was awake.

Before today's current youth-hungry iteration, there was Andy Sweet, who was raised in a beige stucco house with a terra-cotta tile roof on North Bay Road, not far from Miami Beach. His neighborhood these days glitters with money; I'd bet it did when Andy was a child, too—the prosperity here feels baked into the architecture, not retroactively applied. From the street, you can still see the porthole window in the maid's room that Sweet converted into a darkroom when he was twelve; his mother, Audrey, just laughed when she saw he'd painted the walls black. His father, Chick, was a judge and the head of the local Bar Association; Audrey was mostly a socialite, the daughter of some of the earlier hoteliers on the island. Her parents came to Miami from Pittsburgh in the 1930s and opened the Monte Carlo and the Royal Palm, which still exists on Collins Avenue. They were among the founders of Temple Emanu-El on the beach.

By all accounts, Andy was a gentle soul, a laughing and happy high schooler, the kind of kid who was friends with everyone. Unlike most high school boys, he loved hanging out and playing cards with his mother's friends. He had huge, curly brown hair and an enormous smile, and in most pictures I've seen of him, he's goofing around. In middle school, he had some money, so he called a stockbroker during recess. Another time, he convinced his sister to go in with him to buy a convertible before he was even old enough to drive.

Andy went to the University of South Florida in Tampa, joining his older sister, Ellen. Though most students had to take a number of classes as prerequisites before they were able to enroll in photography, Andy somehow charmed his way into Ellen's advanced class. She was living in a trailer in the country when Andy convinced her to make her bathroom into a convertible darkroom.

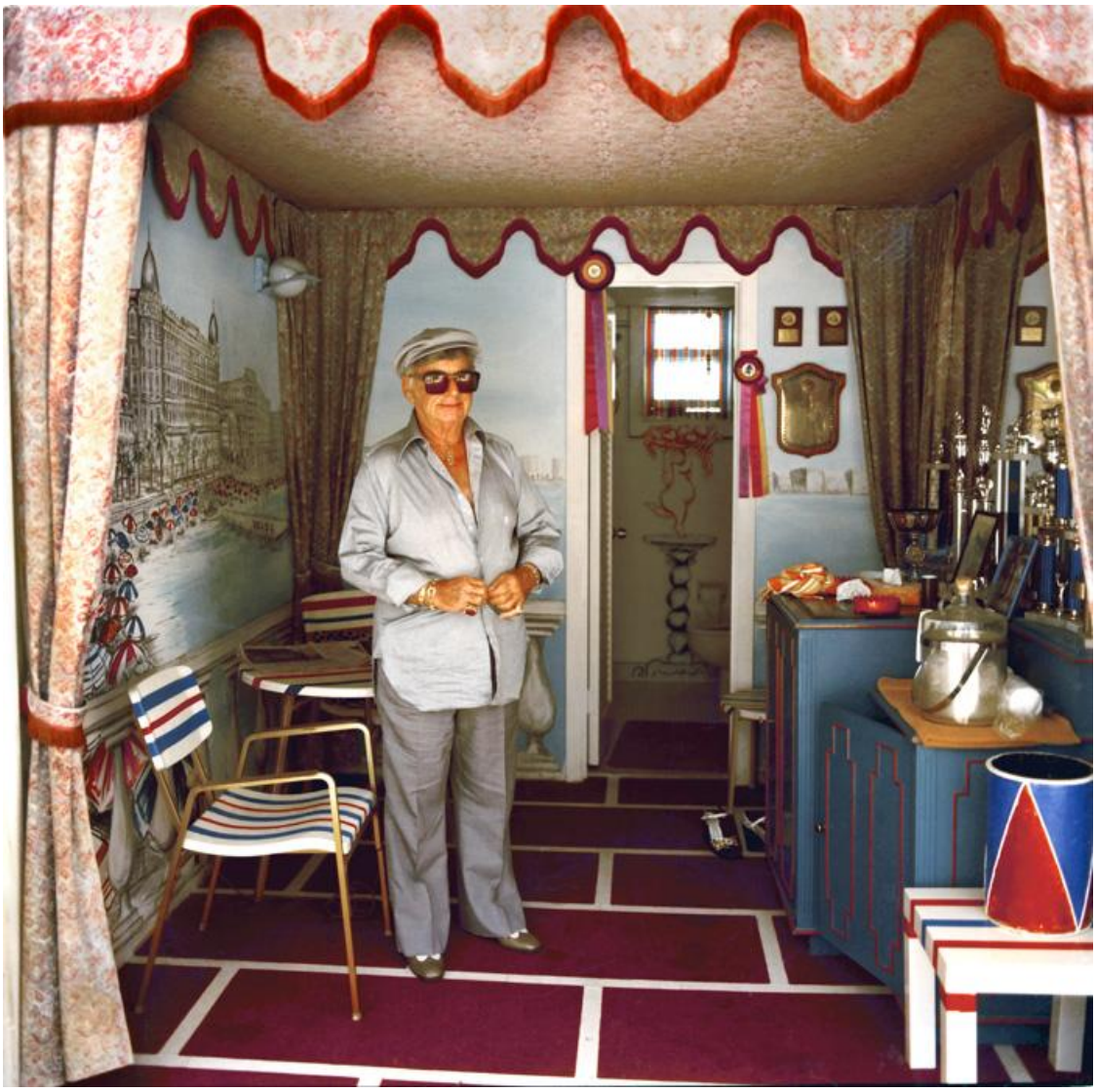
His work from that time is very much student work, experiments in composition and darkroom technique; still, there's a spark, an eye for the punctum, the wounding detail. A few pictures seem extremely accomplished, particularly those of Ellen's neighbors, a family with a number of hungry children who lived packed into a cockroach-infested trailer, headed up by a mother who drank. The finest of these portraits are heartbreaking, human, sad; you read a sort of pride in the family's faces, or gratitude that someone cared enough to look at them seriously. Andy was eventually so distraught by the neglect of the children that he called the authorities. He was devastated to learn later that they were taken away from the mother.

At college, Sweet met his best friend, Gary Monroe, one of the very few kids raised among the oldsters of fifties and sixties Miami Beach. Gary was handsome and serious, with an intense work ethic compared to Andy's loose free-spiritedness, his pictures far more disciplined and formal than Andy's swift shots. But Andy was a maestro in the darkroom, able to go in at midnight with a box of fifty sheets of photographic paper and come out in the morning with forty-nine perfect images.

They went together to the University of Colorado at Boulder for their MFAs in photography, where Andy's master's thesis was sixty photographs of mostly young boys working out at Camp Mountain Lake in North Carolina, where he had once been a camper. In graduate school, Andy had fallen in love with color photography, which was still looked at askance in the art world, perhaps because it seemed too close to reality, perhaps because the color brought amateur family snapshots to mind.

After graduation in 1978, Gary and Andy were both drawn back to Miami Beach, loving the ferocious strangeness of the place, the beauty of the old faces, possibly even the sense that this world would soon be lost. They agreed to do a ten-year project together, taking daily photos of Miami Beach, and they won a number of grants for their work, including one from the National Endowment for the Arts. Gary was self-disciplined and went out to shoot every day, usually at dawn, the golden hour, when the light was perfect. Andy went when he woke up, often in the afternoon, and shot fast, sometimes posing his subjects. Together, year after year, they spent New Year's Eve photographing the elderly Jewish folks at hotel parties, the sausage-shaped balloons hanging overhead, the vibrant plastic leis and tiaras gleaming above the weary faces. Once, when the entertainment canceled at the last minute, Andy set aside his camera and sat down at the piano to play old songs.

Gary worked in classic black and white, and Andy's decision to render people in color was perhaps counterintuitive, particularly when it comes to old folks; black-and-white portraits ennoble the sitter, evening out variations in skin tone and making the topography of wrinkles beautiful. But Andy saw the potential in color, the addictive beauty of it, the way that it undermined conventional aesthetic ideas and somehow spiritually matched the sun-drenched, turquoise-and-yellow, wildly floral setting. Gary says Andy liked color because it was candy—seductive and irresistible.



A month before I flew down to Miami, I met Gary in Ormond Beach at the high-ceilinged house of Lisa Stone, a gentle and empathetic artist who is also serving the Sweet family as Andy's gallerist. Gary is still handsome in his sixties, with a leonine head of hair and a quietly rebellious aura. His career has morphed over the years, from his project with Andy in Miami Beach to a deep fascination with Haiti, where he photographed for decades. He is now a professor of photography at Daytona State College. An aficionado of outsider art, he is the preeminent expert on the Highwaymen, a group of African-American painters from the Space Coast of Florida who painted swiftly and cheaply and often collaboratively, and whose pieces do astonishing things with color. They worked between the fifties and the seventies, selling their

paintings en masse out of the trunks of their cars and in the lobbies of banks. Because their work was so ubiquitous, the artists arguably morphed the nation's mental image of Florida into something far more vivid and bright than the browns and greens that Florida had been known for, colors of The Yearling,Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings's study of a backwoods Florida boy. Gary Monroe's present-day admiration for the painters seems ineluctably linked to his friendship with Andy Sweet. There is something in this self-willed, intense, quiet man that seems to be attracted to the artists' similar looseness and freedom and color and vitality and sense of barely leashed wildness.

We sat all afternoon at Lisa Stone's house, and as we talked, the Florida sun from the window slowly lit Gary from the feet to the hair and made him perspire. He was so focused on what he was saying that he hardly noticed. I had the impression that I was talking to a person honest to the marrow who was, even so, barely containing his complicated feelings. His eyes filled with tears when he spoke of his friend, even though Andy has been gone for more than three decades. His voice was also tight with anger—Gary was the one to discover Andy's body—and perhaps even a small measure of competitiveness. Their project in Miami Beach was shared, even down to the grants, which Gary wrote, Andy not really caring much either way. The family situation after the death was complicated, and Gary may have stepped in too hard with his good intentions, giving Andy's parents a prepared document outlining what they should do to preserve Andy's art. Andy is no longer around to enjoy the acclaim, but his photographs are the ones getting attention now, though Gary has worked extremely hard, with an artist's pigheaded focus, all his life. Gary's love for his friend is obvious, but it's not simple, and he isn't afraid to critique Andy's work. The formal qualities of the work were superseded, Gary said, by the over-drenched colors Andy used. It's true that the photographs were usually composed with the subject at the bull's-eye center. Gary also said that Andy didn't censor himself in either life or art. There's an inherent critique there, the slight disdain by a master craftsman for his friend's carelessness, his lack of editing.

Street photography is a curious thing—both an imposition of self and a self-effacement at the same time. The photographer hides in observing and takes what isn't his. The difference between the styles of street photographers seems to exist in the spirit of the theft. A Vivian Maier image is shot with prickliness, if not outright hostility; Eugène Atget's photos feel hungry with nostalgia; a Weegee bears fleeting witness; a Garry Winogrand picture is almost manic with energy; a William Eggleston, whom Andy most resembles, is extraordinarily tender. An Andy Sweet is simultaneously elegiac and bighearted. There's a glimmer of humor in the faces Sweet photographed, which makes his best photos feel like a loop of generosity, the photographer's own warmth warming the subject so that she beams back into the camera lens and warms the viewer. One photo of an elderly Orthodox Jewish man stretching his arms on a branch overhead, grinning, shows such complicity. A person who is not disposed to like the pictures could see the comedy in them and think Sweet was being unkind or making fun of his subjects. But the photos feel the opposite of unkind to me. American society is terrible at seeing older people—age is embarrassing, alarming, so we pretend it doesn't exist, we do everything we can to push it away from us; it is a harbinger of death and we are too optimistic for death, it goes against our can-do spirit. Firm skin, bright eyes, and white teeth make their bearers visible; wrinkles and falling flesh and big bellies render their bearers invisible.

But Sweet is really looking. He's paying attention. The way he sees people nearing the end of their life is vibrant; he loves them in the brightest colors he can magic out of the camera. In my favorite of Andy's

photographs, the color shouts old age triumphant: a woman in a red wig leans on her white umbrella, grinning rakishly. A man in a cabana full of trophies—everything matching in red, white, and blue—beams with pride under his captain's hat. Picture after picture shows old ladies sitting quietly in their beach chairs outside of their tiny hotels, gentle moments of rest, their sneakers huge at the ends of their columnar, panty-hosed legs. And because Andy often shot in the late afternoon, with its hot and slanted sun and lengthening shadows, there is a sense of swiftly depleting time, a threnodial quality to the work that underscores the humor and deepens it.

In 1979, one of the most renowned young photographers in America, Mary Ellen Mark, came to Miami Beach, and Andy generously showed her his turf. "He may have been younger," she said after Sweet died, "but I considered him every bit an equal. He started in photography so young that we were doing what we were doing for nearly the same length of time. His work inspired me." She was thirty-nine, and he was twenty-five, but they became friends. Andy took a number of pictures alongside Mary Ellen, and even took some of the photographer herself: one of her sitting wearily on the floor behind a great cascade of undeveloped film, a snapshot of her in a bikini on the beach, with her camera around her neck. She was an immense and sudden influence on him. For one thing, he had in his life a model for how an art photographer could be entirely devoted to the work but also wildly successful. For another, he took Mary Ellen to visit some of his mother's wealthy friends and now found his own gleeful, jokey, lighthearted nature in love with this glossy, bright, and wealthy part of Miami, with its orchids and beautiful clothes and almost frantic energy. He photographed costume parties with feathers, young girls with lion manes of fresh flowers. There were drag beauty pageants, Miss Tall 1978 with the contestants' miles of skinny legs. There was a socialite in a ball gown with a tiny dog, sitting under a painting of herself, far younger, in the same ball gown. He focused on this moneyed part of the city and took fewer photos of the humble, bittersweet, surreal Old World bubble of Miami Beach. The newer photos seem complicit with the glitz they portray; the older ones feel grander, more objective in their sympathy. The new photos are fun, but the old are resonant.

Something changed in Andy after Mary Ellen Mark left, which even his closest friends couldn't quite track. Some nights he would call her and they would talk until dawn; other nights he started hanging out with what his family and Gary describe delicately as "sketchy" people. I get the impression of street hustlers, drug dealers, but nobody would tell me for sure. Gary, who had bought a condo in the same building as Andy's, had no idea what was taking place in his friend's life.

"The short version of the story," Gary said, with bitterness, "is that Andy got himself killed."

On October 17, 1982, Andy was stabbed twenty-nine times with a kitchen knife and a screwdriver. He was twenty-eight years old. Something strange had been in the air; Andy had been worried enough to invest in an alarm system. The two workers who installed the system were leaving when two rough-looking men shouldered their way inside the condo. The door closed behind them. The installers ran outside to get weapons but could find only sticks. They heard a struggle inside but then heard nothing. They were frightened and left.

When Andy didn't show up for dinner with his parents, Chick and Audrey called Gary, and Gary entered the apartment to find Andy's body. This is the scene from officer Robert Bluni's report:
I observed a pair of blue jeans soaked with blood in the hallway of the apartment. I turned toward the bedroom, pushed open the door, and observed blood on the walls and the mattress pushed off the bed. The telephone was off the hook, on the floor, and covered with blood. There was a foot visible under the mattress. I reached over the mattress to feel the body to determine if rescue was needed. The foot was cold and stiff.

It is hard to say why Andy was killed. Maybe he was hanging out with unsavory people. Maybe he was into drugs. Maybe he owed people money. In retrospect, his friends and family said, Andy was probably gay, though he hadn't come out, and maybe he got mixed up with some hustlers. Most people backed away from this idea quickly, the emotional side of the storyline being so rich with guilt and shame and repression that it was apparently too hurtful to consider for long. Andy's older sister, Ellen Sweet Moss, who is a beautifully optimistic person, said she thought maybe her brother's death had to do with photography.

I met Ellen and her husband, Stan Hughes, at their blue, art-filled house in Miami Shores. A tree near the driveway is full of orchids that Stan and Ellen rescue from the trash when the flowers fall off and the owners believe the plants to be dead. Ellen and Stan are thin and tall, young-looking for their early sixties, with the focus and good humor and weariness of people who have pursued art all of their lives, despite the toll it takes on both wallet and idealism. When I told Stan he reminded me of a thinner, artier Ben Franklin, he chuckled and said he was glad, because Franklin was a hero of his. Ellen has a wide and toothy smile somehow not at odds with the hesitant sadness to her, and she starts very interesting sentences that trail off before they hit a full stop.

"Andy's death was a nightmare beyond a nightmare," Ellen said, and for a minute or two she couldn't say anything more.

The family's sorrow made Andy's art impossible to deal with. Gary tried to step in with suggestions about what to do with it, but he came in too soon, and he was too forceful, and the family was offended by what they took to be his coldness. They ended up putting most of his prints and negatives in a professional facility that specialized in art storage.

Jesus Ortiz and John Taylor were arrested for the murder—Taylor was wearing Andy's pants, Ortiz's fingerprints were all over Andy's apartment—but they blamed each other. Ortiz was acquitted, and Taylor was convicted and sentenced to life in prison, which was overturned in 1998 by an appeals court. He was released in 2002. Andy's father, Chick, was so disheartened by the trial that he resigned from the Bar Association and never formally practiced law again. Nancy, Andy's younger sister, eventually moved away. Ellen's first marriage fell apart, then she met Stan, who has had multiple careers, including teaching photography and animation at the Art Institute of Chicago. They had a long-distance five-year romance before he moved to Miami, along with his pet turtle, on September 11, 2011.

The family didn't realize they'd stopped being charged the $25 monthly storage fee for Andy's work until months after the last bill. By the time they inquired, the boxes had been lost. The facility offered them $1 a box as compensation, but the family sued, and they were awarded a sum they're not free to discuss. The loss of Andy's work felt, to Ellen, like losing her brother all over again.

But then, in 2006, as Stan was rearranging the family's storage unit, he found a shelf of neatly labeled gray boxes. When he looked inside, he found Andy's work prints, eight-by-eight-inch tests for his large-format final prints. Many were disintegrating—even today they smell very strongly of photographic chemicals and have stains on them, as well as fingerprints and blotches—but they were undeniably Andy's, and there are more than 1,600 of them.

Stan opened a box and let me flip through the images. Because everyone I talked to, and everything I'd read about Andy, emphasized his lightness and his joy and his near-laziness, I was not expecting how beautifully neat and organized the images were, the label on the box perfectly typed, the images numbered on the back and carefully ordered. He may have been goofy in life, but he was serious in work. I held the images and it felt as though I was holding fragments of ghosts. It was all I could do to keep my shit together. Something very essential of Andy Sweet's was in my hands, but I was also holding the old people who were frozen, beaming or scowling into his Hasselblad, all of whom are surely dead, and who had to wait in a dark box for decades.

Digital photography is the Jesus to the Lazarus of ruined photographs. Stan scanned the work prints and, with editing software and Gary's help, began restoring the images, carefully titrating the colors and keeping faithful to Andy's cropping and organization, as well as the size, which was limited in Andy's day because his final prints could be only as large as the largest available pieces of color photo paper. The images that Stan has rescued have attracted some attention, with a few articles published by the Miami New Times and the Washington Post, but as of yet there has been no major gallery show. In addition, many more prints remain to be fixed because the work is painstaking and Stan and Ellen's business doing decorative painting—as well as their own art, done for their own souls—has kept the couple from producing more than a few dozen high-quality Andy Sweet images.

I finished my second Cuban coffee of the day, then Stan and Ellen very kindly drove me down to Miami Beach to show me some of the places that Andy photographed. As we rode, Ellen told me about the places she went as a child, about Lummus Park and Flamingo Park and the band shell where the oldsters danced and the hotels that Andy's grandparents built and the Sweet childhood home, which is the same, except, as a neighbor explained, the backyard had been made Buddhist with a koi pond and bamboo.

By the time sweet Stan and Ellen dropped me off again in South Beach in mid-afternoon, I was overwhelmed with Sweet, maybe a little cloyed. It was just so much, to see the past and the present flash by in such swift succession. I sat on a bench on the boardwalk and watched the pretty people with all of their tight flesh wandering by, many exercising their perfect bodies, many already drunk or high. I had wanted to try to find someone who could have known Miami Beach while Andy Sweet shot it, but the only man who could have conceivably lived there in the seventies had hair that matched his apricot poodle's fur and was in the middle of some kind of transactional handshake with a skinny, tweaky, shifty-looking guy who looked like he had a good layer of street-dirt on him. It seemed best to not get involved.

The story of Andy Sweet is in fact three separate stories, or so it seems to me. The first is that of Andy's life and his photographs of a lost Miami Beach. The second is that of his murder. The third is that of the apparent death of his art and its gradual and painstaking resurrection by his family. I held back the last two stories because the photographs, absent the dramatic storyline, are deeply pleasurable and interesting by themselves, and because it feels more respectful to the art to regard it for the first time outside of the context of Andy's life. But now I wonder about my tactic. As soon as the stories are braided into the photographs, there can be no unbraiding.

When I saw him in Ormond Beach, Gary Monroe said a curious thing that I haven't stopped thinking about. He said that there is no narrative in a photograph, that a photo is in fact a work of antinarrative. He would argue this to the death, he said. I think what he meant is that narrative is human progression through time and a photograph is one moment stilled, a piece of art that stands complete by itself, outside of time. I understand what he's saying, but I wonder if it isn't too idealized to be true. Because even when we look at works of art made by anonymous creators, we humans—creatures of narrative—will infer

stories simply by the act of regarding. One of the great pleasures of visual art is the way that the art invites an empathetic imagining of its creator. You can look at the anonymously sculpted and ancient Venus of Willendorf and imagine the hand that shaped her, because you have held things in your life of comparable weight and texture. Add to this the additional narrative that the viewer constructs about the object itself as it passes through time. You can look at a photograph and see both the subject of the photograph as separate from time, and understand that the subject exists within the context of its own time. The old woman in the red wig and rakish smile, leaning on her umbrella, has a past that you can infer, whatever her truth may actually be, because you have perhaps known a woman, or, better yet, you've known a woman who wears a wig, or, best of all, you've known an old Jewish woman in South Beach in the seventies who wears a wig and a natty pantsuit and is a bit saucy. A truly poignant photograph is one in which the inferred narrative of the photographer mysteriously meets and ignites the inferred narrative of the subject. The lost Jewish Miami Beach of Andy Sweet's work is illustrated in precise small detail, like all great narratives, and in the individual faces of the oldsters we are looking at from our places in the future. When the narrative of the past meets the context of Andy Sweet's life and terrible early death, the combined stories make for an explosive meditation on age and sorrow and loss and change.

I come forward as witness to the fact that you can grow tired of even a sunny paradise like Miami Beach, the constant way the warm wind comes off the ocean and wags the sea grape leaves, the beauty, the nudity. I decided to leave before the sunset. If little about all of the bodies around you is left to the imagination, there's less to wonder about; besides, I have two young sons, so I have more than enough nakedness in my life. I went for a walk northward on the boardwalk, away from the blazing youth and skittery music, far enough that the foot traffic became less overwhelming. This is where I started seeing evidence of modern Jewish life, which I was somehow shakily relieved to find does still remain, if diminished in force and quantity: three older ladies sheltering from the sun under a pergola, wearing Orthodox wigs and long skirts; a man in payot, or ringlets, his white tzitzit string waggling with every step; two speed-walking beauties in denim skirts below their knees and headscarves—sweaty in clinging long-sleeved shirts. Their shoes were the marshmallowy sneakers of the high school cheerleader. The lovely young women were laughing, and I had a brief moment of adolescent insecurity at my wilted outfit that I'd put on by feel in the dark of the night.

Seeing these Jews of modern South Beach felt like an exclamation point at the end of the long sentence that my day had been. It was visual reiteration that the Jewish past of Miami Beach is still present in some form, that Andy Sweet still lives through his work, and that we are lucky to be able to put it on our walls and hold it in our hands, that we are all better for complicating our narratives, for paying attention, for bearing witness in whatever art that comes to us while we so briefly wear the wrinkles and warts and failing organs of these astonishingly beautiful bodies of ours.

Lauren Groff's books include the novel Fates and Furies, a finalist for the National Book Award and the National Book Critics Circle Award, and the story collection Florida, to be published in June. She lives in Gainesville, Florida.

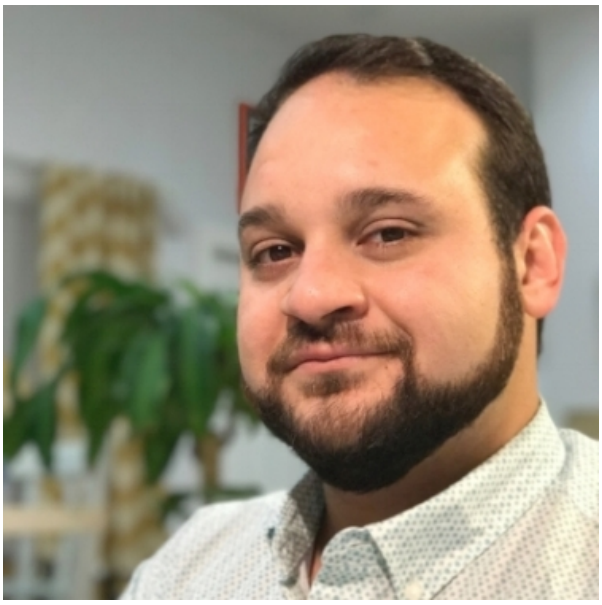
The Filmmakers

Dennis Scholl

Dennis Scholl is an award winning documentary filmmaker whose work is focused on arts and culture. He co-produced and directed his first feature documentary, *Deep City: The Birth of the Miami Sound*, with Marlon Johnson and Chad Tingle. The film premiered at the 2014 SXSW International Film Festival, screened at film festivals and was acquired by public broadcast station, WLRN, for international distribution. His second feature, *Queen of Thursdays* was co-written and produced with noted Cuban filmmaker Orlando Rojas and premiered at the Miami International Film Festival winning Best Documentary. He also produced and directed *Symphony in D*, the story of America's first crowd sourced symphony which was performed by the Detroit Symphony Orchestra.

He has won 13 National Academy of Television Arts and Science regional Emmys all for documentaries about art and artists. He is the executive producer of a dozen films with the Miami-based Borscht Film Collective, including six short films that debuted at the Sundance Film Festival including Yearbook, winner of the 2014 Animated Short and Glove which went on to win Best Animated Short at SXSW.

He and his wife, Debra, recently received the National Service to the Arts award from the Anderson Ranch Arts Center. The former VP of Arts at the Knight Foundation, Dennis serves as CEO of ArtCenter South Florida. He is currently in production on documentaries about Grammy Award-winning jazz singer Cecile Mclorin Salvant and abstract expressionist painter Clyfford Still.



Kareem Tabsch

Kareem Tabsch is the co-founder and co-director of O Cinema, Miami's largest art house cinema; an Award winning documentary filmmaker and an Arts Advocate who strongly believes in the power of the arts, particularly film, to enrich lives and revitalize communities.

As a documentary filmmaker, Kareem's works has been included in several prestigious film festivals. His short documentary *Dolphin Lover* which he co-directed with Joey Daoud premiered at Slamdance, and went on to win the Best Short Documentary Prize at the LA Film Fest and garner Honorable Mentions at the Sidewalk Film Festival and IndieGrits Festival. His first short film, C*herry Pop: The Story of the World's Fanciest Cat* played prestigious festivals including AFI Docs, DocNYC, Provincetown Film Festival, Miami Film Festival and won Best Short Documentary at Sidewalk Film Festival. His films have garnered international press attention from outlets like Comedy Central, Vice, The NY Post, Cosmopolitan, Jezebel, Bravo and from celebrities including Andy Cohen, Rush Limbaugh, and Howard Stern.

In 2013 Kareem was featured in the Miami New Times 'People Issue' for his contribution to the cities film culture, he was named a '20 under 40' by the Miami Herald's Business Monday in 2014 and in 2015 was the recipient of the Knight Arts Champion award presented by the Knight Foundation in recognition of O Cinema's contribution to the cultural vibrancy of Greater Miami.

Tabsch has served on the Advisory Committee of the Miami Foundation's Our Miami initiative, on the National Arts Advisory Committee of the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. In 2018 he helped conceptualize the Cinematic Arts Residency at ArtCenter South Florida.

Directed by:
Dennis Scholl and Kareem Tabsch

Cast:
Edna Buchanan
Susan Gladstone
Stan Hughes
Mitchell Kaplan
Gary Monroe
Ellen Sweet Moss
Kelly Reichardt

Produced by:
Joey Daoud (Associate Producer)
Marlon Johnson (Associate Producer)
Dennis Scholl (Producer)
Kareem Tabsch (Producer)

Cinematography by:
Joey Daoud (Cinematography)

Film Editing by:
Joey Daoud (Additional editing)
Kareem Tabsch (Editor)

Music Department:
Groove Garden (Composer)

About Kino Lorber:

With a library of 2,000 titles, Kino Lorber Inc. has been a leader in independent art house distribution for 35 years, releasing 30 films per year theatrically under its Kino Lorber, Kino Classics, and Alive Mind Cinema banners, garnering six Academy Award® nominations in nine years, including last year's documentary nominee *Fire at Sea*. Current and upcoming releases include *Let the Corpses Tan, Chef Flynn*, *Of Fathers & Sons*, Golden Bear winner *Touch Me Not*, Jean-Luc Godard's *The Image Book*. In addition, the company brings over 300 titles yearly to the home entertainment and educational markets through physical and digital media releases. With an expanding family of distributed labels, Kino Lorber handles releases in ancillary media for Zeitgeist Films, Carlotta USA, Adopt Films, Raro Video, and others, placing physical titles through all wholesale, retail, and direct to consumer channels,as well as direct digital distribution through over 40 OTT services including all major TVOD and SVOD platforms.