

PRIVATE AIR

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2005


THE HOLIDAY ISSUE

GIFTS FOR HER
TEE TIMES FOR HIM
SPARTIES FOR US

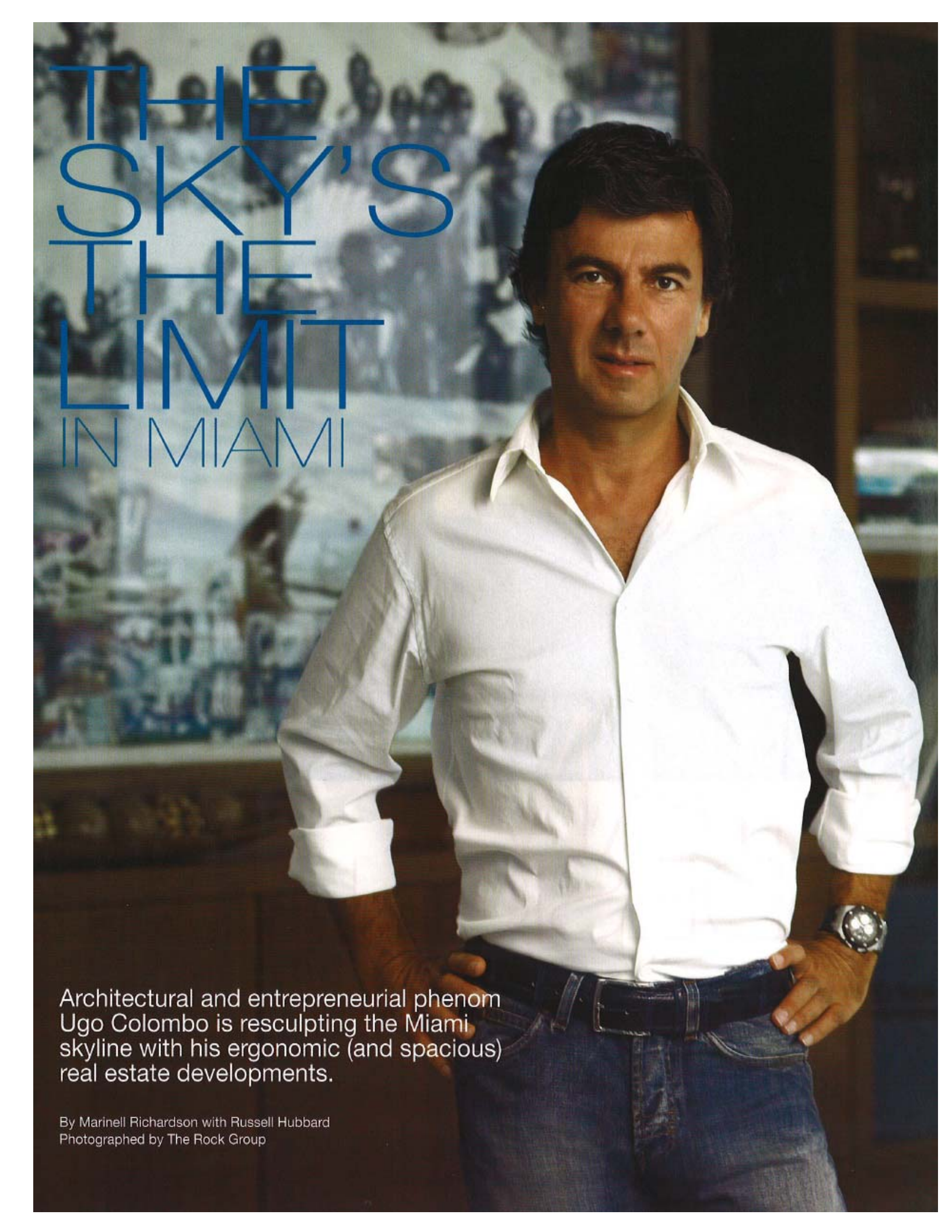
SCULPTURE PARKS
ART IN ITS NATURAL
HABITAT

MIAMI BY DESIGN

ENTREPRENURIAL ARCHITECT UGO
COLOMBO, 12 MOVERS & SHAKERS,
AND ART BASEL MIAMI BEACH

A man with dark hair, wearing a white button-down shirt and dark trousers, is sitting cross-legged on a light-colored surface. His hands are clasped together in front of his chest. He is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. A large, vibrant red ribbon is tied into a bow in the lower-left foreground. In the lower-right foreground, a book titled "ALBERTO PINTO" is visible, resting on a surface. The background is a blurred interior space with shelves and books.

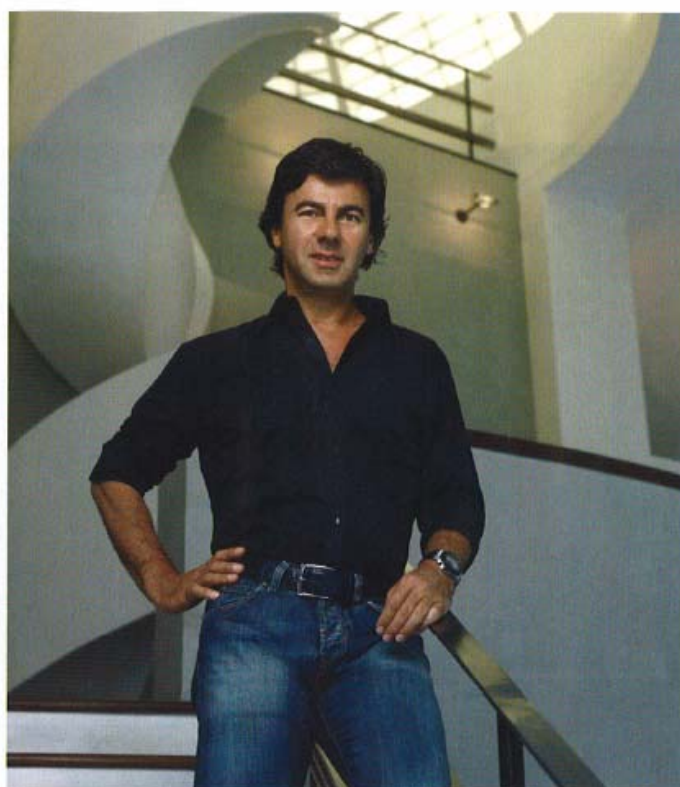
ALBERTO PINTO

A man with dark hair, wearing a white button-down shirt and blue jeans, stands with his hands on his hips. He is looking directly at the camera. The background is a wall covered in numerous small, overlapping photographs, likely related to architecture or real estate. The lighting is soft, highlighting the man's features and the texture of his clothing.

THE SKY'S THE LIMIT IN MIAMI

Architectural and entrepreneurial phenom Ugo Colombo is resculpting the Miami skyline with his ergonomic (and spacious) real estate developments.

By Marinell Richardson with Russell Hubbard
Photographed by The Rock Group



Miami real estate developer Ugo Colombo, whose next project will be the most dramatic addition to the city skyline in decades, doesn't like windowsills.

With a string of home-run residential developments in the city over the years, he has had ample opportunity to ponder the structures, which he considers unsightly. But people still need windows, so he bought into a glass-and-window company that found a way make them to his specifications. In the process, his Glasswall LLC hit on a new manufacturing technique that not only eliminated sills but also exceeded the stringent Miami-Dade County building code for windows. It's all part of Colombo's drive to create "livable works of art" instead of plain-vanilla houses and condos. That vision that has made him one of the most influential of the country's urban developers and has landed him front and center at Miami's Dupont Plaza redevelopment.

The Residences at Dupont, a \$225 million hotel and condo project on the site of the historic Dupont Plaza Hotel, at the intersection of the Miami River and Biscayne Bay, is intended to offer an urban-living experience comparable to those of New York City, Paris, and other world capitals. "Basically, we have a building that has a hotel but condominium residences above," says Colombo, 43, whose CMC Group is developing the property. "The idea is you can call downstairs to the hotel and order fresh sheets, flowers, room service—the same services of a hotel, but it is your apartment."

The original Dupont has been torn down, revealing a slice of waterfront property with panoramic views of the river and bay. In its heyday, the old hotel was a magnet for wealthy Northern scions such as the Vanderbilts and sharp talkers like lawyer-politician William Jennings Bryan, who was paid to live in the Sunshine State in the 1900s and talk up Florida real estate. Now, twin high-rise condo towers are planned for the site, with the blessing of the city government, which overcame some late-in-the-game criticism from those who wanted to designate the land for a park commemorating Florida's history.

But Colombo, who started in the business as a condo property manager, might be Miami's leading voice for downtown living. He believes in working, shopping, and having fun amid with a distinctly urban vibe. Dupont Plaza "is the best site downtown," he says. "You are close to the beach, you are close to the business district, you are on the water."

Colombo, who was born in Italy and moved to the States in 1983, has been ginning up eye-catching projects in Miami for years. Typical is the

Grovenor House condo development, in Coconut Grove. It's on 3.5 acres in the heart of an upscale bohemian enclave—across from the marina and close to trendy shops, theaters, and restaurants. The project sold all 166 units in six months, with majestic views of Dinner Key and Biscayne Bay among their most compelling selling points. "I wanted to offer the same features and amenities of a house, without the actual hassle of a house," Colombo says.

The developer got his start in real estate when he took over as property manager for the absentee owner of The Imperial, a Miami condo complex where his parents owned a penthouse. When business troubles hit the owner, Colombo ended up acquiring the unsold units, then wound up selling all of them and restoring the building to the fashionable address it had once been.

Later Colombo began forming relationships with the craftsmen and artists who could make his plans come to life. "Together we have been developing a vocabulary over the years," says Luis Revuelta, one of Colombo's preferred architects. "Like myself, Ugo is hands-on and detail-oriented, which not only makes it easier during the design process but also allows us to truly hammer out the shared vision as we progress."

Colombo tends to return to winners he has trusted before. Revuelta, for example, designed the Grovenor House and also teamed with Colombo on Bristol Tower, a 40-floor condo development with waterfront and downtown views and a striking curvilinear design. Another Colombo favorite is Italian architect Michele Bonan. The force behind Florence's famed Hotel Continentale was hired specifically to create the lobbies of both Grovenor House, scheduled for completion in 2006, and the Residences at Dupont.

Colombo lives in Bristol Tower with a brood of dogs he rescued from animal shelters and, in one case, a garbage bin behind his glass-and-window company. He is a generous contributor to the Greater Miami Humane Society's Soffer-Fine Adoption Center, a kind of upscale homeless center for animals. It has skylights, soft beds, dog and cat "lifestyle centers," and—predictably—large windows.

The developer sees no deceleration in demand for urban living and envisions Miami's Brickell neighborhood, the site of Bristol Tower and The Imperial, which is sometimes called the Park Avenue of Florida, vying with Manhattan to offer city living at its best. "What I do is set out to conceive of and develop livable works of art that are timeless," Colombo says.