

# Palm Beach: Rich in Art, Too

By KELLY COMPTON



Although its name is synonymous with old money, sunny Palm Beach, Florida, dates back only to 1902, when New York architects Carrère & Hastings completed a 55-room mansion, Whitehall, for the region's visionary property developer, the Standard Oil magnate Henry Morrison Flagler (1830-1913). The opening of his winter palace spurred the construction of hundreds more villas on this barrier island lodged between the Atlantic Ocean and the Intracoastal Waterway. Most of the oldest homes can be found near Whitehall and Flagler's elegant resort hotel, **The Breakers**, where visitors can still enjoy a drink or meal overlooking the sea.



THE BREAKERS HOTEL & RESORT IS SET ON 140 ACRES OF OCEANFRONT PROPERTY.



Edna Boies Hopkins

## ON THE ISLAND

A stay on Palm Beach Island is best begun at Whitehall, officially the **Henry Morrison Flagler Museum**. After touring the mansion — as gilded as the age in which it was built — allow time to see the temporary exhibition with its deliciously ironic title, *A Spirit of Simplicity*. On view through January 3, this surveys nearly 150 objects on loan from Palm Harbor businessman Rudy Ciccarello, whose Two Red Roses Foundation now holds one of the largest private collections of American Arts & Crafts.

Co-organized by Flagler curator Tracy Kamerer and Martin Eidelberg (Rutgers University), the exhibition includes furniture, woodblock prints, stained glass, tiles, and metalwork, as well as re-creations of rooms designed by Gustav Stickley and Charles Rohlfs. Among the other famous names represented are Elbert Hubbard, Arthur Wesley Dow, the Byrdcliffe Colony, and the Newcomb and Rookwood potteries. On December 1, Eidelberg will give a talk in the galleries, and five days later Whitehall's 16-foot Christmas tree will be illuminated by Flagler's great-great-grandchildren while holiday music is played on the house's original 1,249-pipe organ. Evening tours of Whitehall aglow with its original light fixtures will be offered December 19-23.

EDNA BOIES HOPKINS (1872-1937)

*DATURA*

c. 1909, WOODBLOCK PRINT, 25 x 20 1/2 IN.

TWO RED ROSES FOUNDATION, PALM HARBOR

ON VIEW THIS SEASON AT THE HENRY MORRISON FLAGLER MUSEUM



From January 26 through April 18, the Flagler Museum turns its attention to *New World Eden: Artist-Explorers in the American Tropics*. This exhibition considers the artworks created by 19th-century Americans as they admired the jungles, volcanoes, ancient ruins, and exotic species of Central and South America, as well as Florida. Using artworks by such talents as George Catlin, Frederic Edwin Church, Martin Johnson Heade, George Inness, Louis Mignot, Thomas Moran, and Laura Woodward, curator Tracy Kamerer will show how romantic, soulful representations of tropical landscapes co-existed alongside more scientifically motivated images.

In 1936, Palm Beach's winter denizens established the **Society of the Four Arts**, which still presents exhibitions and performances from November through April. From December 5 through January 10, the Society will display 97 kimonos that reveal the surprising influence of Art Deco & modernism in Japan. Next up (January 23-February 28) is a retrospective of the English-born, American-based maritime painter John Stobart (b. 1929), *The Grandeur of America's Age of Sail*. Spanning six decades, the 60 oils here will reveal Stobart's rigorous study of technical details, as well as his unrivaled eye for composition and color. The master himself will present an illustrated lecture on January 23. The Society's season will close (March 13-April 18) with the superb touring exhibition, *Paintings from the Reign of Victoria*. As described in the April 2009 issue of *Fine Art Connoisseur*, this group of 60 canvases collected by the English pharmaceuticals magnate Thomas Holloway (1800-1883) sheds light on the Victorian taste for storytelling, exoticism, and powerful sentiment.

Although most people drive around Palm Beach, it's actually easy to stroll from the Society to **Worth Avenue**, renowned for its chic boutiques, bistros, and galleries. Treat yourself to an introductory walking tour of the neighborhood led by the lively historian **James Ponce**;

his details appear in the *Directory of Resources* below. After a rest, explore the many art galleries and antique shops here, most housed in Spanish Revival spaces designed from the 1920s onward by architect Addison Mizner. Among the standouts are **A.B. Levy** (with particular strength in 19th-century European material, French glass, and Japan's Meiji period); **Arcature Fine Art** (19th-, 20th-, and 21st-century European and American); **DTR Modern Galleries** (20th-century and contemporary); **Gallery Biba** (20th-century masters ranging from Alexander Calder to Peter Blake, with a dollop of 21st-century leaders like Julian Opie); **Gasiunasen Gallery** (modern and contemporary, especially Fernando Botero); **John H. Surovek Gallery** (American art 1840-1940, plus one outstanding living artist, Stephen Scott Young); and **Wally Findlay Galleries** (20th-century French paintings).

**Edward and Deborah C. Pollack Fine Art** (American paintings, especially Floridian) is justly celebrating Deborah Pollack's biography of the artist Laura Woodward (1834-1926), recently co-published with the Historical Society of Palm Beach County. Early in her career, Woodward followed tradition by depicting the Hudson River Valley and New Hampshire's White Mountains, but from 1888 through 1896 she broke new ground by painting Florida's then-unfamiliar landscapes; indeed, these eye-opening images encouraged Henry Flagler to make Palm Beach the terminus of his Florida East Coast Railroad. A schedule of Deborah Pollack's book-signing appearances around Florida is available on her gallery's website.

JOHN STOBART (b. 1929)

VALLEJO STREET WHARF, SAN FRANCISCO 1863

1975, OIL ON CANVAS, 20 x 26 IN.

PRIVATE COLLECTION

ON VIEW THIS SEASON AT THE SOCIETY OF THE FOUR ARTS



#### ON THE MAINLAND

Once dismissed as Palm Beach's homely backyard, West Palm Beach has grown safer and more lively over the past 15 years. Indeed, this is home to the **Norton Museum of Art** — the region's largest, with a permanent collection of 5,000 European, American, Chinese, and contemporary works. Founded in 1941 by Chicago steel magnate Ralph Hubbard Norton (1875-1953) and his first wife, Elizabeth, the Norton now boasts a spacious facility that can host several touring exhibitions at once. From November 7 through January 17, an exhibition co-organized with the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art will present nearly 75 works in different media by the fashionable South African artist William Kentridge (b. 1955), who is understandably fascinated by imperialism, colonialism, apartheid, and other forms of social dysfunction.

Next up at the Norton (January 16-April 11) is an installation of eight gigantic wall tapestries woven with silk, wool, and gold thread. These masterworks were made for Vienna's Habsburg emperors during the Renaissance and depict the legendary founding of ancient Rome by Romulus and Remus. And finally (February 13-May 9), the Norton is the latest stop for a touring exhibition of Old Master paintings once owned by the Amsterdam dealer Jacques Goudstikker (1897-1940). As the Nazis invaded Holland, Goudstikker fell to his death aboard the ship carrying him to England; in occupied Amsterdam his inventory of masterworks was looted and dispersed, and his survivors have endured a six-decade struggle to reclaim what is rightfully theirs from public and private collections worldwide.

Just down the street from the Norton are, somewhat confusingly, the **Ann Norton Sculpture Gardens**. As described in the February 2009 issue of *Fine Art Connoisseur*, the modernist sculptor Ann Weaver (1905-1982) married Ralph Norton in 1948, after the death of his first wife. This separate institution preserves her tidy house and

studio, surrounded by lush groves of rare palms and native plants, interspersed with Norton's enormous carvings. Not far away is the **Armory Art Center**, a striking Art Deco structure built in 1939 for the National Guard. Now devoted to art instruction, the Center also hosts scholarly lectures organized by the Art Deco Society of the Palm Beaches, and mounts exhibitions of contemporary art. Particularly intriguing are displays of work by the visiting instructors, among them the figurative painter Steven Assael (b. 1957).

The big story in West Palm this season is the brand-new home of the **Palm Beach Photographic Centre**, which offers instruction in photography for students of all ages. This 26,000-square-foot facility is located at City Center, the downtown shopping and entertainment complex developed in the 1990s on the former site of a slum. On November 13, the Centre opens its 13th annual INFOCUS juried members' show, as well as the exhibition *Celebrating US! Photographs of Presidential Inaugurations & Historic White House Moments*. Later this winter (January 19-23), the Centre will host its 15th annual *FOTOfusion*, a festival of photography and digital imaging that draws devotees from around the world.

While in West Palm, call ahead to ask if you might trail a prebooked group visiting **Whitespace**, the private warehouse/home/museum created by collectors Marvin and Elayne Mordes. Renowned for their cutting-edge tastes and generous loans to museum exhibitions worldwide, Dr. and Mrs. Mordes welcome visitors personally and bring their holdings alive through changing installations. This winter's window of opportunity for visits is November 6-May 10.

Laura Woodward (1834-1926)

*WORKMEN'S CAMP, PALM BEACH*

c. 1893, OIL ON CANVAS, 10 x 13 IN.

COLLECTION EDWARD AND DEBORAH POLLACK

No visit to West Palm is complete without a stroll down **Antique Row**, a stretch of South Dixie Highway lined with 50 specialty shops, galleries, interior designers, and decorators. Be sure to visit **Gavlak** (cutting-edge contemporary, including gritty glam photographer Marilyn Minter) and **N.P. Trent Antiques** (English and Continental fine and decorative arts, especially furniture). If you're in town on March 6, grab a ticket for the 15th annual *Evening on Antique Row*, which closes Dixie Highway to traffic so that guests can enjoy live music, cocktails, and gourmet snacks while benefiting the Historical Society of Palm Beach County.

Also worth a visit in West Palm is **Eaton Fine Art**, led by the former chief curator of the Boca Raton Museum of Art, Timothy A. Eaton. A standout here is the American artist John Alexander (b. 1945). On view through November 28 is a survey of modernist multiples shepherded by publisher Hank Hine, including work by such stars as Ed Ruscha and Richard Tuttle. And running December 5-January 16 is a retrospective of the German-American abstractionist Friedel Dzubas (1915-1994).

#### FAIR WARNING

In the last two decades, Palm Beach's artistic profile has soared thanks to its lively fairs, which are actually mounted in West Palm, where there are more suitable spaces. Up first (January 15-17) is the 28th annual *Palm Beach Winter Antiques Show*, which features 52 international dealers handling objects that predate 1960. Overlapping with it (January 15-19) and complementing it thematically is *Art Palm Beach*, which focuses on contemporary art, photography, and design. The 2010 edition will pay extra attention to galleries in operation less than five years, to art and design from the Netherlands, and to 30 international artists (led by Britain's Tony Cragg) displaying their works in the Convention Center's sculpture garden.

The newly renamed *American International Fine Art Fair* (February 3-8) features more than 80 international dealers handling everything from antiquities to contemporary, as well as fine jewelry, which always sells briskly in Palm Beach. Last year this world-class fair drew 24,000 visitors, an impressive figure considering the economic gloom that prevailed then. Hopes are high for the 2010 edition, the catalogue of which will show how 20 prominent interior designers incorporate fine art and antiques into their clients' 21st-century décors.

As soon as AIAFA vacates the vast Palm Beach County Convention Center, it moves the *Palm Beach Jewelry, Art & Antique Show* (February 12-16). Comprising more than 200 dealers housed in smaller stands, this busy fair seems to have something for everyone, at almost every price point. Finally, March 5-7 sees in the *Palm Beach Fine Craft Show*, featuring more than 100 American artists working in ceramics, glass, fiber, wood, metal, and jewelry.

#### AND REMEMBER THE BEACH

Whichever cultural attractions draw you to Palm Beach, be sure to build in at least one day to enjoy the region's scenic beauty. Details on where to soak up some sun are readily available from the Palm Beach County Convention and Visitors Bureau.

KELLY COMPTON is a contributing writer to *Fine Art Connoisseur*.

## Directory of Resources (in alphabetical order)

All listings are in Palm Beach or West Palm Beach, FL and area code 561, unless noted otherwise.

- **A.B. Levy**, 211 Worth Avenue, 835.9139, 33480, ablevypb.com
- **American International Fine Art Fair**, Convention Center, 650 Okeechobee Boulevard, 33401, 239.949.5411, aifaf.com
- **Ann Norton Sculpture Gardens**, 253 Barcelona Road, 33401, 832.5328, ansg.org
- **Antique Row**, South Dixie Highway between Southern Boulevard and Belvedere Road, westpalmbeachantiques.com
- **Arcature Fine Art**, 320 Worth Avenue, 33480, 805.9388, arcaturegroup.com
- **Armory Art Center**, 1700 Parker Avenue, 33401, 832.1776, armoryart.org
- **Art Palm Beach**, Convention Center, 650 Okeechobee Boulevard, 33401, 239.949.5411, artpalmbeach.com
- **The Breakers**, One South County Road, 33480, 655.6611, thebreakers.com
- **DTR Modern Galleries**, 345 Worth Avenue, 33480, 366.9387, dtrmodern.com
- **Eaton Fine Art**, 435 Gardenia Street, 33401, 833.4766, eatonart.net
- **Edward and Deborah C. Pollack Fine Art**, 205 Worth Avenue, Suite 202, 33480, 655.1425, edwardanddeborahpollack.com. Details on Blue Heron Press's Woodward book are available at laurawoodwardartist.com/woodwardbook.html.
- **Gallery Biba**, 224A Worth Avenue, 33480, 651.1371, gallerybiba.com
- **Gasiunasen Gallery**, 415 Hibiscus Avenue, 820.8920, gasiunasengallery.com
- **Gavlak**, 3300 South Dixie Highway, Suite 4, 833.0583, gavlakgallery.com
- **Henry Morrison Flagler Museum**, One Whitehall Way, 33480, 655.2833, flaglertmuseum.us
- **Irving Galleries**, 332 Worth Avenue, 33480, 659.6221
- **James Ponce**, Worth Avenue Welcomes You, 659.6909, worth-avenue.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=pages.jamesponce&x=1135963
- **John H. Surovek Gallery**, 349 Worth Avenue (12 Via Parigi), 33480, 655.2665, surovekgallery.com
- **Liman Gallery**, 139 North County Road, 33480, 659.7050, limangallery.com
- **Norton Museum of Art**, 1451 South Olive Avenue, 33401, 832.5196, norton.org
- **N.P. Trent Antiques**, 3729 South Dixie Highway, 33405, 832.0919, nptrentantiques.com
- **Palm Beach County Convention and Visitors Bureau**, 1555 Palm Beach Lakes Boulevard, Suite 800, 33401, 233.3000, palmbeachfl.com
- **Palm Beach County Cultural Council**, 1555 Palm Beach Lakes Boulevard, Suite 300, 33401, 472.3340, palmbeachculture.com
- **Palm Beach Fine Craft Show**, Convention Center, 650 Okeechobee Boulevard, 33401, 203.254.0486, craftsamericashows.com
- **Palm Beach Jewelry, Art & Antique Show**, Convention Center, 650 Okeechobee Boulevard, 33401, 822.5440, palmbeachshow.com
- **Palm Beach Photographic Centre**, 415 Clematis Street, 33401, 276.9797, workshop.org
- **Palm Beach Winter Antiques Show**, Crowne Plaza Hotel, 1601 Belvedere Road, 33406, 483.4047, zitawatersbell.com
- **Richard and Pat Johnson Palm Beach County History Museum**, 300 North Dixie Highway, 2nd floor, 33401, 832.4164, historicalsocietypbc.org
- **Russeck Gallery**, 203 Worth Avenue, 33480, 832.4811, russeck.com
- **Society of the Four Arts**, 2 Four Arts Plaza, 33480, 655.7226, fourarts.org
- **Wally Findlay Galleries**, 165 Worth Avenue, 33480, 655.2090, wallyfindlay.com
- **Whitespace**, 2805 N. Australian Avenue, 33407, 842.4131, whitespacecollection.com