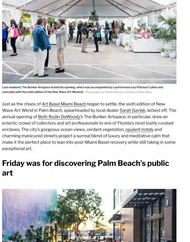
ARTS / ART REVIEWS

New Wave Art Wknd Is Palm Beach's Answer to Miami Art Week

After a whirlwind week culminating in Art Basel Miami Beach, Observer ventured north to the sixth edition of New Wave Art Wknd to explore what the island has to offer.

By Paul Gately · 12/03/24 5:00am



Last weekend, The Bunker Artspace hosted its opening, which was accompanied by a performance by Parkour Culture and coincided with the sixth edition of the New Wave Art Wknd. Photographed by Charles Provost Courtesy of Palm Beach

Just as the chaos of Art Basel Miami Beach began to settle, the sixth edition of New Wave Art Wknd kicked off in Palm Beach, bringing a fresh wave of art to the island. The annual opening of Palm Beach Gallery Network's The Bunker Artspace in particular drew an eclectic crowd of collectors and art professionals to one of Florida's most lushly curated enclaves. The city's gorgeous ocean views, verdant vegetation, opulent hotels and charming manicured streets project a surreal blend of luxury and meditative calm that make it the perfect place to lean into post-Miami Basel recovery while still taking in some exceptional art.

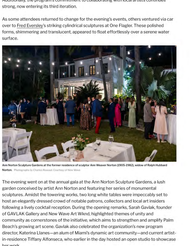
Friday was for discovering Palm Beach's public art



"The Gift of Public Art" bunches at The Bunker Artspace. Photographed by Charles Provost Courtesy of Palm Beach

The weekend kicked off with an art panel titled "The Gift of Public Art," staged under Amy Lincoln's vibrant mural Sun Through Leaves (Sunrise) (2024). The conversation featured Lincoln, powerful mantra "returning public art to the collectors." Moderated discussions featured Soheil Cardiet, head of art for the city of West Palm Beach, alongside artists Naomi Fisher and Antonia Wright, real estate developer Gopal Rajagopalis from Related Ross and Sam Glanzrock of public art management firm Negative Space. Together, they explored the role of public art in place-making and community-building in a thought-provoking dialogue on the intersection of creativity and civic engagement.

The conversation segued into a guided tour of public installations at West Palm Beach. Cardiet explained the city's innovative policy requiring developers to allocate one percent of their building value to art installations. One standout work along the tour was Annie Morris's Book 9 (Fitzmantle Blue) (2024), a precariously stacked sculpture of irregular spherical forms like a belly. The piece embodies themes of fragility, illness and resilience, reflecting the delicate equilibrium of the human condition.

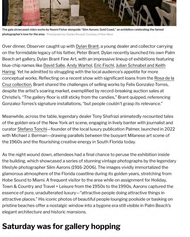


In the artist's first permanent installation in Florida, Jaqua Hats brings his lyrical and engaging Water Pavilion to West Palm Beach. Photographed by Charles Provost Courtesy of Palm Beach

Continuing to the main square, two children played joyfully in Jeppe Hein's Water Pavilion (2018),where cascading streams of water created a captivating interplay with the city's meticulously curated lighting scheme. Heine describes these works as "Social Sculptures"—art that is not complete until activated by the community itself, transforming its participants into an essential part of the experience. Nearby, Symmetry Labs' The Waiting Tree (2019) dazzled onlookers with waves of colorful, glowing leaves, echoing the light-and-sound portal of Kiki Collective's Esper Down The Lane (2024), which offered a hypnotic multisensory audio-to-haptic interaction.

Further along, in front of 360 Rosemary, Yinka Shonibare's colorful, swirling sculpture evoked a floating piece of carnivalesque fabric, linking to the artist's African heritage and his signature use of Dutch wax textiles. Finally, Jaqua Hats' permanent installation (2019) lit up a nearby building with its fluorescent glow, blending seamlessly into the urban landscape. Cardiet shared shared insights about the city's public art program and exciting plans for the future, including a forthcoming commission by the Rope Brothers a monumental peach tree reminiscent of their acclaimed work showcased at Design Miami this year. Additionally, the program's commitment to collaborating with local artists continues strong, now entering its third iteration.

As some attendees returned to change for the evening's events, others ventured via car over to Frost Everglades's striking cylindrical sculptures at Dreher Park. These polished forms, shimmering and translucent, appeared to float effortlessly over a serene water surface.

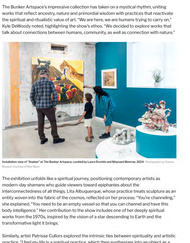


Ala Ebtekar Sculpture Garden at the former residence of sculptor Jean Weaver Kerlee (1904-1982), author of Gold Fishbowl Number. Photographed by Charles Provost Courtesy of Palm Beach

The evening went on at the annual Ala Ann Norton Sculpture Gardens, a lush garden conceived by artist Ann Norton and featuring her series of monumental sculptures. Amidst the towering works, two long white tables were impeccably set to host an elegantly dressed crowd of notable patrons, collectors and local art insiders. Following a hotly-cocktail reception. During the opening remarks, Sarah Gordon, founder of GAYLAA Gallery and New Wave Art Wknd, highlighted themes of unity and collaboration, emphasizing the importance of the Palm Beach community and Palm Beach's growing cocktail scene. Gordon also celebrated the organization's new program director, Katerina Llanes—an alum of Miami's dynamic art community—and current artist-in-residence Tiffany Alfonseca, who earlier in the day hosted an open studio to showcase her work.

Gaviola's journey as a trailblazer began over nearly two decades ago when she became one of the first gallery owners to establish a foothold in sunny Palm Beach, where she quickly cultivated a loyal community of collectors. In 2018, she launched the New Wave residency program to bring emerging artists to the area, fostering creative production and collaboration. The residency, now a nonprofit, has enriched the local art scene with dynamic programming and has become a key component of the area's advisory board that includes collector Beth Rudin DeWoody, Franklin Sirmans, Isolde Brielmaier, Yvonne Force Villareal, Jane Holzer, Lisa Perry and other luminaries.

Gordon's gallery presence has consistently prioritized underrepresented voices, with a focus on female, BIPOC and LGBTQ artists. Her exhibitions have featured now-prominent names like Simone Leigh, Marilyn Minter, Rob Wynne, Lisa Anne Auerbach, TJ Wilcox, Jessica Cannon and Robert Peterson, and the gallery's new space, equipped with soaring ceilings, enables even more ambitious installations, starting with an upcoming retrospective of Linda Bongis. In her ongoing effort to solidify Palm Beach as an art destination, Gaviola founded New Wave Art Wknd six years ago, building on South Florida's thriving arts culture and creating meaningful connections between artists and collectors.



The gala showcased vision works by Nuanni Porter alongside "Slim Aarons Gold Coast," an exhibition celebrating the famed photographer's love for the area. Photographed by Charles Provost Courtesy of Palm Beach

Over dinner, Observer caught up with Dylan Brant, a young dealer and collector carrying on the formidable legacy of his father, Peter Brant. Dylan recently launched his own Palm Beach art gallery, Dylan Brant Fine Art, with an impressive lineup of exhibitions featuring blue-chip names like David Salle, Andy Warhol, Eric Fischl, Julian Schnabel and Keith Haring. Yet he admitted to struggling with the local audience's appetite for more conceptual works. Reflecting on a recent show with significant loans from the Rose-Ak Ila Cruz collection, Brant shared the challenges of selling works by Felix Gonzalez-Torres, despite the artist's soaring market, exemplified by a record-breaking auction where all Orchids's "The gallery floor is still sticky from the candies." Brant quipped, referencing Gonzalez-Torres's signature installations. "And people couldn't grasp its relevance."

Meanwhile, across the table, legendary dealer Tony Shafrazi animatedly recounted tales of his days operating one of the New York art scene, engaging in lively banter with journalist and curator Stefano Tonchi—founder of the local luxury publication Palmer, launched in 2022 with Michael Stern—drawing parallels between the buoyant Milanese art scene of the 1960s and the flourishing creative energy in South Florida today.

As the night wound down, attendees had a final chance to peruse the exhibition inside the gallery's space, which featured a selection of vibrant, dreamlike works by the legendary Merchuk photographer Slim Aarons (1916-2006). The images vividly immortalized the glamorous atmosphere of the Florida coastline during its golden years, stretching from Hobe Sound to Miami. A frequent visitor to the area while on assignment for Holiday, Town & Country and Travel + Leisure from the 1950s to the 1990s, Aarons captured the essence of pure, unadulterated luxury—"attractive people doing attractive things in attractive places," His iconic photos of beautiful people lounging poolside or basking on pristine beaches offer a nostalgic window into a bygone era still visible in Palm Beach's elegant architecture and historic mansions.

Saturday was for gallery hopping

The "A Wing and a Prayer" exhibition will guest curated Kyle DeWoody and Gen Doy Lee's Wonsuenyo, Rod Ruthmon and Pattrese Cullors. Photographed by Charles Provost Courtesy of Palm Beach

On Saturday, the day began at The Bunker Artspace with a visit to the exceptional collection of Lukov Family Foundation with Rubin DeWoody, who headed art panel discussing the highly-anticipated annual exhibition, which he co-founded with Brad Kahlhamer and Pattrese Cullors joined guest curators Zoe Lukov and Alex Kanevsky to delve into the central themes of the current show, "A Wing and a Prayer" on the exhibition showcasing more than 140 works from both the BIRD Collection and Kyle DeWoody's personal trove.

During the discussion, Lukov considered the exhibition's core question how can we continue to find hope in these turbulent times, and how can art serve as a conduit for healing and spiritual resistance? The exhibition brings together symbolic forms and abstract compositions, encouraging transcendence while weaving in recurring images of snakes and other archetypal energies that tap into the collective unconscious across time and space.

The Bunker Artspace's impressive collection has taken on a mystical rhythm, uniting works that reflect ancestry, nature and primordial wisdom with practices that reactivate the spiritual and ritualistic value of art. "We are here, we are humans trying to carry on," Kyle DeWoody noted, highlighting the artists' efforts. "We decided to explore works that talk about connections between humans, community, as well as connection with nature."

Installation view of "Snakes" at The Bunker Artspace, curated by Lukov Kuvshe and Maryland Morrow, 2024. Photographed by Charles Provost Courtesy of Palm Beach

The exhibition unfolds like a spiritual journey, positioning contemporary artists as modern-day shamans who guide viewers toward epiphanies about the interconnectedness of all things. Lita Albuquerque, whose practice treats sculpture as an entity woven into the fabric of the cosmos, reflected on her process: "You're channeling," she explained. "You need to be as empty vessel so that you can channel and have this body intelligence." Her contribution to the show includes one of her deeply spiritual works from the 1970s, inspired by the vision of a star descending to Earth and the transformative light it brings.

Similarly, artist Patrisse Cullors explored the intrinsic ties between spirituality and artistic practice. "I feel my life is a spiritual practice, which then sometimes into an object as a whole," she shared. "I committed to be the whole of myself. When you make art from this deep place of awareness and spirituality, the works are infused with spiritual energy." According to the curatorial essay, for many of the exhibition's artists, the act of creation becomes a ritual—a means to channel energy, invite revelation and envision alternative pathways forward. Through their works, these artists use storytelling and unveiling as a method for healing, aiming to ignite a spark of transformation in the viewer.

Central to the exhibition is the "Medicine Room," a sanctified space where healing vibrations reverberate through works by artists such as Kaari Upson, Ana Mendieta, Candice Lin and Judy Chicago. Tonga paintings on found paper from India join the chorus, amplifying the room's meditative atmosphere.

Lunch at The Whitman. Photographed by Charles Provost Courtesy of Palm Beach

Rooted in an anti-colonial ethos and centered on Indigenous perspectives, the collection operates on a principle of constant rotation, with a primary goal of facilitating loans to exhibitions. The couple behind it, Becky Gochman and Zach Feuer, are also the co-founders of Forge Project, a Native-led initiative located on the unceded homelands of the Mohican tribe in Upstate New York. Forge Project's focus includes Indigenous art, decolonial education and fostering leadership in cultural advocacy, food security and land justice.

The Gochman Family Collection consists of a private rotating collection of contemporary art focusing on work by Indigenous and American artists. Photographed by Charles Provost Courtesy of Palm Beach

The selection of works on display is as rich as it is diverse, with a site-specific wall installation by Melissa Galeano, a striking wall painting by Jeffrey Gibson and multiple signature pieces by Rose Ock and Jaune Quick-to-See Smith. Among the highlights is Smith's sculpture, perched on a stone table and positioned to face the swimming pool, creating a serene yet powerful dialogue with the surrounding environment. On the bunker's lobby, a massive folder brimming with fact sheets offers an insider's overview into the breadth of the collection. Flipping through its pages reveals a striking evolution—from a focus on North American Indigenous communities to an expanded scope that includes

visionary Indigenous artists from across the Americas, such as Argüo, a translucent form from the last Venice Biennale, and Sara Flores, now represented by major international galleries.



The Bunker Artspace opened in 2017. Photographed by Charles Roussel; Courtesy of Nion Mann

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In the afternoon, we headed to the official opening of The Bunker Artspace, where attendees were greeted with caviar-topped snacks and Italian gelato as they waited in line to explore the exhibitions. Inside, the now-crowded rooms buzzed with energy—a vibrant meeting ground for dealers, collectors and artists.

The tour continued in the evening with a gallery hopping between the masterpiece on view at Acquavella and the curated design and fine art selection at Orna house, conclude with GMAC, a new art space founded by collector American collector and philanthropist George Frederick Mead Merck to present curated exhibitions tied to his collection of Light and Space art. The current show, "Perception is the Medium," presents a series of newly commissioned works by artist Hap Tivey, welcoming visitors with an extremely Instagrammable portal of light. Tivey's work *Helios III*, 2023 creates a mesmerizing interplay of light and energy, resulting in a dense, immersive field that invites reflection and wonder—a perfectly mesmerizing conclusion to a day steeped in art, exploration, and connection.

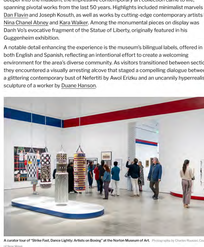


Accumulation view of GMAC's third exhibition, "Hap Tivey: Perception is the Medium." Photographed by Charles Roussel; Courtesy of Nina Mann

Sunday was for collective meditation and museum visits

On Sunday, GAYLAK and New Wave hosted a breakfast event, offering participants the chance to explore the exhibitions and connect with the artists and recent residents. The visit began with a guided meditation led by artist Lita Albuquerque, encouraging attendees to ground themselves and embrace a heightened awareness of their presence within the vast universe. Under the theme "Cosmic Currents," the pairing of Albuquerque's work with that of *Jose Alvarez (DJ/PA.)* created a contemplative space to reflect on humanity's purpose within an interconnected cosmic system.

Primordial and tectonic forces come alive in Alvarez's visionary watercolors and mica-based circular works, which radiate energy and depth. Alongside these, Albuquerque's celebrated *Auric Field paintings* evoke the collision of a star, bridging the celestial and the earthly in a dazzling interplay of form and light. Together, the two artists blur the lines between science, mysticism and aesthetic expression, posing essential existential questions about our place in the universe.



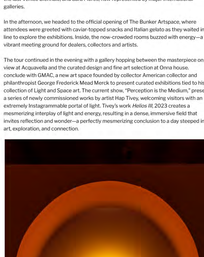
An artist branch at GAYLAK / New Wave Gallery included Vista in "Cosmic Currents," an exhibition of works by Lita Albuquerque and Jose Alvarez (DJ/PA.). Photographed by Charles Roussel; Courtesy of Nina Mann

Sitting down with Sarah Gavlak, it's clear why she has made Palm Beach the cornerstone of her gallery's operations, even as she recently closed her Los Angeles location and now maintains only an office in New York. "I've been here twenty years," she tells Observer. "Other dealers came during COVID because Florida was open, and they wanted to be in front of their clients. So, you know, I was excited to have peers and colleagues here."

Gavlak attributes her success to the personal relationships she has cultivated over the years, plus a steady stream of referrals. "People often have just bought a house and need art. They're sent to me because I won't be a snob or try to take advantage. I want to educate people and get them some good art." Her approach, rooted in art history and humanism, prioritizes cultural value and the broader existential conversations art can evoke.

Over the years, Gavlak has played a key role in fostering Palm Beach's cultural community, but she saw a gap a lack of artist presence. In 2018, she launched a residency program to address this. "It's important that artists come here and can connect directly with the great collectors," she says. Intent on maintaining the residency's independence from the gallery, Gavlak has relied on a network of former residents, advisors and curators to select artists without existing gallery representation. Each resident receives a $5,000 stipend, accommodations, a studio and coverage for essential expenses. Proceeds from any sales of work produced during the residency are divided, with 75 percent going to the artist and the remaining 25 percent funding future residencies.

When asked about her vision for growth, Sarah Gavlak remains grounded yet open-minded. "I'm open to all ideas as long as the prime focus remains on the artists," she asserts.



New Wave's current artist-in-residence, Tiffany Alfonseca, explores Black and Afro-Latinx diasporic culture in her work. Photographed by Charles Roussel; Courtesy of New Wave

The New Wave Art Wend concluded on a high note with a visit to the breathtaking Norton Museum of Art, housed in a striking building designed by Norman Foster. Visitors strolled through galleries showcasing timeless masterpieces, including Claude Monet's iconic waterlilies and an entire room devoted to the sculptures of Auguste Rodin. Moving deeper into the museum, the impressive contemporary art collection came to life, spanning pivotal works from the last 50 years. Highlights included minimalist marvels by Dan Flavin and Joseph Kosuth, as well as works by cutting-edge contemporary artists like Nina Chanel Abney and Kara Walker. Among the monumental pieces on display was Danh Vo's evocative fragment of the Statue of Liberty, originally featured in his Guggenheim exhibition.

A notable detail enhancing the experience is the museum's bilingual labels, offered in both English and Spanish, reflecting an intentional effort to create a welcoming environment for the area's diverse community. As visitors transitioned between sections, they encountered a visually arresting alcove that staged a compelling dialogue between a glittering contemporary bust of Nefertiti by Awol Erizku and an uncannily hyperrealistic sculpture of a worker by Duane Hanson.

A curator tour of "Strike Fast, Dance Lightly: Artists on Boxing" at the Norton Museum of Art. Photographs by Charles Roussel; Courtesy of Nina Mann

The engaging group show "Strike Fast Dance Lightly Artists on Boxing," mounted in collaboration with The Church in Sag Harbour and the FLAG Art Foundation, expands on the first iteration of the exhibition, which debuted in New York and explores the broader symbolical implications of the figure of artists as boxers in relation to their role in the society. Works by ninety artists filled the Norton Museum of Art's galleries, showcasing a diverse array of contemporary talent. Established names like Glenn Ligon, Jeffrey Gibson, Hernan Bas, Derek Fordjour and Amoako Boafo were featured alongside rising stars such as Esteban Ramon Perez, whose hanging boxing gloves and feathers command attention, and Caleb Hahne Quintana, whose poignant depiction of a defeated boxer was previously included in last year's Flag Foundation exhibition dedicated to the same theme.

Although the Norton Museum has only recently turned its focus toward contemporary art, its rapid strides in collecting, displaying, and engaging with this genre are remarkable. The museum's contemporary collection, one of its fastest-growing, reflects a deliberate effort to address some of the most pressing issues of our time. The breadth and depth of the works speak to the multifaceted interests of patrons, curators, and visitors cultivated over the last eight decades, aligning with the museum's vision of becoming a hub for "the art of our time."

A prime example of this commitment is "Surroundings – Video Encounters with Nature," an exhibition located upstairs that features videos by contemporary artists Donna Conlon, Carolina Caycedo and Nadia Huggins. Presented in an eight-week rotation, each video offers a poetic meditation on environmental themes, enriched by the artists' insights and supported by compelling climate statistics and data.

A guided tour of the exhibitions at the Norton Museum of Art. Photographs by Charles Roussel; Courtesy of Nina Mann

As we ascended to the upper floors, shimmering bubbles adorned the stairwell walls, part of Rob Wynne's enchanting installation "I Remember Ceramic Castles, Mermaids & Japanese Bridges" (2010-2018). Composed of poured and mirrored glass, the work evokes poetic connections to the ocean and its enigmatic creatures, setting a dreamlike tone for the journey upward. On the third floor, and continuing downstairs, the Norton Museum showcased a portion of its extensive Chinese Art collection, which spans from the Neolithic period to the Han Dynasty and now features over 700 works. Begun by Founder Ralph H. Norton in 1942 with the acquisition of more than fifty carved imperial jades from the Qing Dynasty, the collection's foundation grew with the Norton family's donation of 130 objects. Many pieces currently on display were sourced in the early 1950s from the renowned Paris-based dealer C.T. Loo, organized by themes tied to significant archaeological discoveries.

Up one more flight, visitors are greeted by a veiled bust carved in white tranian onyx by contemporary artist Barry X Ball. This striking work serves as an elegant segue into the museum's European art collection, which includes masterful 18th-century portraits by Van Dyck and Reynolds, Baroque masterpieces by Rubens and Annibale Carracci and religious depictions from the Late Middle Ages and Renaissance. Rounding out the visit, the Norton Museum's outdoor spaces provide a final, immersive encounter with art. Sculptures by Louise Nevelson, George Rickey, Joel Shapiro, Franz West, François Xavier Lalanne, KAWS, Keith Haring and Antony Gormley populate the open-air space, which was a 20,000-square-foot parking lot prior to 2019 and has since been transformed into a 37,200-square-foot garden, creating a verdant oasis where art and nature coexist.

While mega galleries like Pace, Paula Cooper Gallery, Lévy Gorvy, and Lehmann Maupin may have retreated from their Palm Beach locations after their pandemic-era openings, New Wave Art Wend demonstrates that beneath the swaying palms and sunny-winter skies, a vibrant community of collectors and passionate art enthusiasts remains firmly rooted.

Keith Haring, *July, 1987*, outdoor sculpture in the Norton Art Museum. Courtesy Norton Art Museum

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