

# 4 Must-See Art Shows in Palm Beach This Winter

A scene emerges  
BY ANNABEL KEENAN  
JANUARY 22, 2024



Nigerian painter Nengi Omuku's 'Scattered Sunbeams,' 2023, on display at Kristin Hjellegjerde's West Palm Beach gallery this winter. Image courtesy of Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery West Palm.

While South Florida becomes a cultural hub during Art Basel Miami Beach each December, a vibrant art scene is thriving year-round in Palm Beach and West Palm Beach. The area is home to acclaimed institutions, including the Norton Museum of Art, the Ann Norton Sculpture Gardens, and the National Historic Landmark-listed Flagler Museum, as well as internationally renowned resorts, such as the Breakers. Top galleries operate permanent spaces there, including Gavlak and Acquavella Galleries, while others have seasonal spots, such as TW Fine Art and Ben Brown Fine Arts. As a new year begins, cultural leaders who have committed to working in the area reflect on what brought them there and the flourishing scene that keeps them going.

The tri-county area of South Florida has been synonymous with luxury and sophistication since the early 20th century. As Palm Beach and West Palm developed, galleries opened to provide locals with work by leading artists of previous generations, but it wasn't until the arrival of Art Basel Miami Beach in 2002 that interest in contemporary art began to grow. Just three years after the fair launched, dealer Sarah Gavlak opened Gavlak in West Palm Beach to fill this gap.

"I met collectors in Palm Beach and realized there wasn't a gallery showcasing international emerging artists with a full exhibition program," she tells *Avenue*. "I had a feeling that given the level of sophistication and knowledge among the few collectors that I had met, even though they may not yet know an artist I am presenting, they have been collecting art for long enough and sitting on museum boards, they have a trained eye." Indeed, there are several prominent collectors and philanthropists with homes in the area, including Jane Holzer, Howard and Judie Ganek, and Beth Rudin DeWoody.

Gavlak focuses primarily on women, BIPOC, and LGBTQ+ artists. "Although I did have a few people say I would not be able to show a program of mostly women artists, I stayed true to my passion of supporting women and, finally, the art market caught up," Gavlak says. The gallery was an early supporter of artists who are now some of the biggest names in contemporary art, including Betty Tompkins, Marilyn Minter, and Simone Leigh. Their January and February exhibitions feature works by Deborah Brown and Maynard Monrow.



Chanel, Gucci, Fendi (2023), part of the show "Deborah Brown: Street Smarts," on view at Gavlak Palm Beach until January 14, 2024. Image courtesy of Deborah Brown/Gavlak Palm Beach/NNAW.

Several other galleries operate alongside Gavlak, including Adelson Galleries, Brintz Gallery, Findlay Galleries, and Holden Luntz Gallery. Many of these are interspersed amidst Palm Beach's renowned shopping along Worth Avenue and the picturesque, historic streets memorialized in glossy monographs like Assouline's best-selling *Palm Beach* (2019). To further support the artists she collects, DeWoody opened a private art space called the Bunker Artspace in West Palm in 2017.

In 2020, when art fairs were canceled during the pandemic, several major galleries opened spaces to stay connected with their collectors who had relocated temporarily and permanently to Florida. While some were intended as pop-ups or have since closed, such as Paula Cooper and Pace, other dealers maintained their locations. Part of the latter group is the storied, century-old Acquavella Galleries, which opened its Palm Beach space in 2020 and has continued to stage exhibitions year-round that complement their New York gallery's focus on modern and postwar masters, and has helped them expand their expertise by exhibiting more mid-career contemporary artists.



Andy Warhol's *Four Jackies*, 1964, acrylic and silkscreen on linen, which was on view in Acquavella's "Painted Pop" show in 2023. Image courtesy of The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc./Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

"The art scene in Palm Beach is a very tight-knit and enthusiastic community, with the galleries and museums frequently collaborating together," gallery co-owner Eleanor Acquavella tells *Avenue*. "Many of our clients and visitors come by frequently to see our exhibitions, often visiting each of our shows more than once each month."

The momentum seems to only be growing. In October, prominent European gallery Kristin Hjellegjerde opened its first-ever space in the United States, choosing West Palm as its home.

"West Palm Beach felt like a natural choice," founder Kristin Hjellegjerde says. "The most important factor was the support of the local community, which strongly encouraged us and helped us logistically. Our intention is to showcase cutting-edge international art and to give our artists a broader audience. This place felt just right."

The gallery's December and January exhibition features stunning, figurative oil paintings by Nigerian artist Nengi Omuku and will be followed by a solo show of works by leading Belgian street artist, Joachim Lambrechts.



Belgian street artist Joachim Lambrechts's *Wonder Woman*, 2023. Image courtesy of Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery West Palm Beach.

In addition to galleries and museums, several art fairs take place annually nearby, including Art Palm Beach Show, which is holding its modern and contemporary art edition January 24 to 28. The fair stages its more eclectic version devoted to jewelry, design, art, and antiques from February 15 to 20. Later in the spring, Art Miami will host the Palm Beach Modern + Contemporary fair (March 21 to 24).

With this robust commercial support, the infrastructure for contemporary art is undeniably solid, but local galleries wanted to support the artistic community itself. To this end, Gavlak founded New Wave Art Wknd in 2018 to celebrate the flourishing contemporary art scene in South Florida apart from Miami and host programming on urgent social issues. In 2020, New Wave launched a residency that brings an artist from diverse and underserved communities to West Palm for six to eight weeks. They have hosted 15 artists thus far and became a nonprofit in 2021.



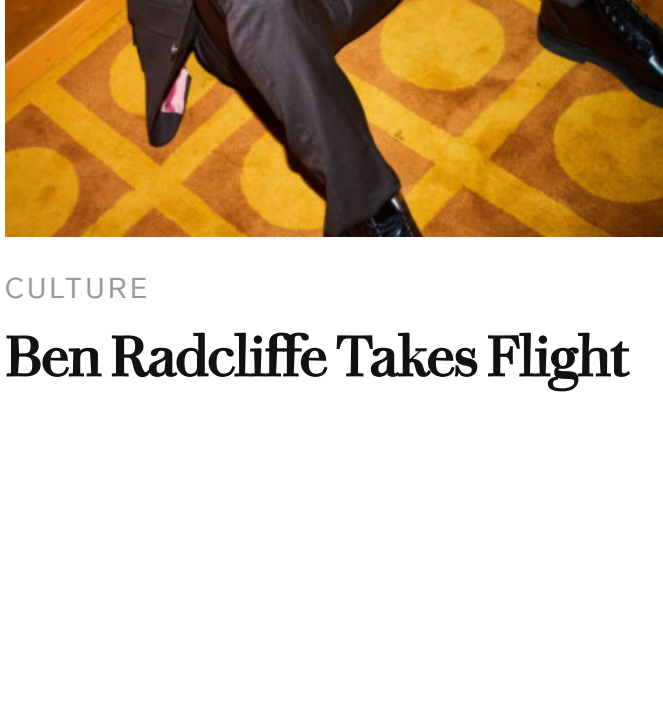
Manuela Gonzalez's *Madre Selva*, 2023. Acrylic on mixed fabrics. Image courtesy of Manuela Gonzalez: New Wave.

For previous resident artist Manuela Gonzalez, the opportunity allowed her to hone her practice while also engaging with the community. "I loved getting to teach a weaving workshop at [the children's bookstore and learning center] Rohi's Readery and talking to folks who walked into my studio, curious about what I was doing," Gonzalez tells *Avenue*. "As an artist you often work in isolation. Discussion and engagement reminds us that art can be a tool for connection and community building."

As Palm Beach and West Palm Beach continue to grow as a cultural center, locals and snowbirds alike can look to nonprofits like New Wave and the expanding list of galleries for inspiration, to discover leading names in contemporary art, and to fill their walls.

SHARE:  
 

## RECOMMENDED FOR YOU



CULTURE  
**Ben Radcliffe Takes Flight**



CULTURE  
**Will Awards Season be Even More of a Slog Than Usual?**



CULTURE  
**Last Minute Gifts for Art and Design Lovers**