FINE ART CONNOISSEUR

2026 COLLECTORS' GUIDE TO FLORIDA ART DESTINATIONS

January/February 2026

Doug Foltz (b. 1955), *All She Hoped It Would Be*, 2025, oil on canvas, 36 x 36 in., Gardner Colby Gallery (Naples)

THE SUN SHINES ON FLORIDA'S ART

BY KELLY COMPTON, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Urban Larsson (b. 1966), *Still Life with Shells*, 2024, oil on canvas, 21 ⅜ x 43 ⅓ in., available on the artist's stand at the *Palm Beach Show* (February 12–17)

It's no secret that Florida is America's third most populous state, nor that several of its cities are among the fastest growing in the nation. The Sunshine State has gained steadily in population since Standard Oil magnate Henry Morrison Flagler (1830–1913) began building hotels and housing along its Atlantic coast 150 years ago, yet it's only comparatively recently that Floridians have focused in earnest on the visual arts. This development — a key indicator of increasing sophistication — is surely related to the fact that part-year residents are spending more time at their Florida homes.

Florida's cultural vitality has been enhanced further by worldly part- and full-year residents not only from Canada, the Caribbean, and Latin America, but also from Europe and Asia — thanks particularly to the availability of direct long-haul flights into its booming airports. Moreover, refugees from the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns and states with high income taxes have come in large numbers since 2020. Taken all together, these factors have made a huge difference in Florida's artistic life.

As is usual this time of year, the state is bustling with people enjoying its mild climate and natural beauty. It would be impossible to cover every art-related site in Florida, so here we'll take a tour of its coasts, starting in the southeast, crossing to the southwest, moving north along the Gulf, and then east again to the Atlantic coast. We have intentionally bypassed the state's largest city, Miami; although fun and lively, it already gets lots of art media coverage, and its venues generally focus on cutting-edge contemporary art of less interest to readers of *Fine Art Connoisseur*.

PALM BEACH

Located on a barrier island between the Atlantic Ocean and Intracoastal Waterway, Palm Beach has been famous for the wealth and panache of its winter residents since 1902, when New York architects Carrère & Hastings completed Whitehall, the 55-room mansion now known as the Henry Morrison Flagler Museum, a trove of late 19th-century paintings and sculpture. The opening of his

Jussi Pöyhönen (b. 1975), *Hawk's Bluff Sand Dunes*, 2014, oil on linen panel, 28 x 24 in., Mary Woerner Fine Arts (West Palm Beach)

winter palace spurred the construction of hundreds more villas nearby. The oldest of those homes are found near Flagler's elegant resort hotel, The Breakers, where visitors can enjoy a drink or meal overlooking the sea.

A stay on Palm Beach Island is best begun at the Flagler Museum. After touring the mansion — as gilded as the age in which it was built — allow time to see the current temporary exhibition. On view now through January 18 is *May I Help You, Madame? The Making of the Modern Department Store*. Of more interest to art lovers is the next show (February 10–May 24), *Golden Hour: Charles Courtney Curran and the Romance of American Impressionism*. It traces the life journey made by this gifted painter (1861–1942) from Ohio to Manhattan, Paris, and finally the mountaintop artists' colony of Cragsmoor, New York, where he spent four decades depicting sunlit gardens and women wearing white dresses.

In 1936, Palm Beach's winter denizens established the Society of the Four Arts, situated on a verdant multi-building campus and renowned for the exhibitions, lectures, and performances it presents from November through April. On view through February 1 is *Edgar Degas, The Private Impressionist: Works on Paper by the Artist & His Circle*, which sheds light on the French master's personality by displaying his drawings and prints alongside his contemporaries'. All are from the collection of Robert Flynn Johnson, who co-curated the show with Louise Siddons (Oklahoma State University); he will give a lecture about it on January 21. Up next (February 14–April 4) is *The Triumph of Nature: Art Nouveau from the Chrysler Museum of Art*, which features 120 (primarily French and Belgian) pieces including furniture, paintings, sculpture, mosaics, books, posters, prints, lamps, and glass.

Once dismissed as Palm Beach's homely backyard on the mainland, West Palm Beach has grown livelier over the past 25 years. Indeed, it's home to the Norton Museum of Art — the region's largest such museum. Founded in 1941 by Chicago steel magnate Ralph Hubbard Norton (1875–1953) and his first wife, Elizabeth, it now owns more than 8,200 European, American, Asian, and contemporary works. On view through March 29 is the exhibition *Art and Life in Rembrandt's Time*, which features more than 75 works from the Leiden Collection, the foremost private holding of 17th-century Dutch art. (It contains more than a dozen Rembrandts and the only painting by Johannes Vermeer in a private collection.) Opening soon (January 24–July 5) is *That's Entertainment: Japanese Prints and the Art of Leisure*, which presents 28 of the Norton's woodblock prints by Utagawa Kunisada (1786–1864) and other leading artists of the Edo period.

Just down the street from the Norton is, somewhat confusingly, the Ann Norton Sculpture Gardens. The modernist sculptor Ann Weaver (1905–1982) married Ralph Norton 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 granite figures and brick megaliths. On view through January 11 is *Imperiled: Florida's Wildlife and Habitats*, which features more than 30 new paintings by Paul Gervais. He highlights the delicate beauty and fragility of Florida's natural environments, especially its native birds.

Not far away you can visit the studio-home of yet another artist, Reuben Hale (1927–2018), who worked in various media and transformed Palm Beach Junior College (now Palm Beach State College) into a cultural hub. Also nearby 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 lectures and mounts exhibitions of contemporary art. If you're in town on February 6, buy a ticket for its *Art Throwdown* fundraiser, during which four artists must produce compelling pieces in 90 minutes. Attendees cheer them on and then choose the winner, who will get a solo show at the center later in 2026.

Before you arrive in West Palm, pre-book inexpensive tours of two private collections of cutting-edge contemporary art, both housed in warehouse-like buildings. The Whitespace Collection was created by the late Baltimore physician Marvin Mordes and his wife, Elayne, while The Bunker Artspace is still growing through ongoing acquisitions by its New York-based founder Beth Rudin DeWoody.

More famous worldwide than any of these excellent venues is Worth Avenue, lined with designer boutiques, bistros, and galleries. Many are housed in charming Spanish Revival spaces designed from the 1920s onward by architect Addison Mizner. Among the firms on and near the avenue are Jennifer Balcos Gallery, which handles works by living artists including film actor Pierce Brosnan; DTR Modern with its 20th-century and contemporary pieces; Findlay Galleries' modern and contemporary work, with particular strength in 20th-century French paintings; Gallery Biba, which handles 20th-century masters with a few 21st-century stars like Julian Opie and Gavin Turk; and Surovek Gallery, with American art dating from the 19th century through today. Noteworthy here is Edward and Deborah Pollack Fine Art, not only because Florida scenes pop up among their 19th and 20th-century American paintings, but also because in 2016 Deborah C. Pollack published the 200-page book *Palm Beach Visual Arts*, still useful as an introduction to the region's cultural history. Located away from this district, but worth the drive, is Contessa Gallery, which offers a range of modern artworks.

Folks wanting to adorn their homes head to West Palm Beach to explore a stretch of South Dixie Highway called Antique Row, where they find more than 50 shops, interior designers, and decorators. Among the impressive galleries located here are Gavlak, which handles cutting-edge contemporary work; The Peach, a collective of six studios and a gallery; and Mary Woerner Fine Arts, with top-notch contemporary art. If you're in town on April 11, buy a ticket for the annual *Evening on Antique Row,* which closes part of Dixie Highway to traffic so guests can enjoy music, cocktails, and snacks while benefiting the Historical Society of Palm Beach County. Five miles south — in Lake Worth Beach — is 33 Contemporary Gallery, which represents top-quality realist painters from around the world.

In the last three decades, Palm Beach's artistic profile has soared

TOP: A.E. "Beanie" Backus (1906–1990), *Royal Poinciana on the Indian River, Florida,* c. 1960, oil on canvas, 20 x 24 in., Edward and Deborah Pollack Fine Art (Palm Beach)
BOTTOM: Gary Bukovnik (b. 1947), *Amaryllis*, 2019, watercolor on paper, 41 ½ x 20 ¾ in., Harmon-Meek Gallery (Naples)

thanks to its lively fairs, which are mounted at the enormous Palm Beach County Convention Center in West Palm. First up this winter is *Art Palm Beach + Contemporary* (January 28–February 1), which prioritizes modern and 21st-century art. The season's highlight is the *Palm Beach Show* (February 12–17), which brings in exhibitors from around the world and is renowned for antiques, design, and fine jewelry. The convention center is so large that this show's organizers also present there — during part of the same week (February 13–15) — the *Palm Beach Fine Craft Show*, focused on artists working in ceramics, glass, fiber, wood, and metal.

BOCA RATON & FORT LAUDERDALE

Driving south from Palm Beach, consider stopping in the resort town of Boca Raton. Here the Boca Raton Museum of Art has built a fine collection and a track record of exhibitions of 20th-century and contemporary realism. On view through May 3 is a rare show devoted to the groundbreaking modernist couple Theresa Bernstein (1890–2002) and William Meyerowitz (1887–1981), best known for paintings of daily life similar to the Ashcan School's. Also on view (through March 1) is a national touring exhibition devoted to the Czech-born, Paris-based pioneer of Art Nouveau graphic arts, Alphonse Mucha (1860–1939).

Once you reach Fort Lauderdale, visit the Art Museum of Nova Southeastern University (NSU), which has a wing devoted to the Ashcan painter William J. Glackens (1870–1938) and his circle, including John Sloan, George Bellows, Maurice Prendergast, and Glackens's wife, Edith Dimock. It's also rich in expressionist art by post-war Europe's CoBRA movement, as well as Latin American and contemporary art. If you have extra time, visit Bonnet House Museum & Gardens, the 35-acre estate that served as the winter home of early 20th-century artists Frederic and Evelyn Bartlett. Their spirits endure in its eccentric rooms and atmospheric grounds, and also in exhibitions of regional art mounted here. (A separate article about Bonnet House will appear in the next issue of *Fine Art Connoisseur*.)

NAPLES

From Fort Lauderdale, follow I-75 ("Alligator Alley") west straight across the Everglades for about an hour into the heart of Naples, capital of Collier County. (More than 80 percent of this county, Florida's largest, is held as nature preserves.)

Its cultural epicenter is Artis-Naples, a campus of buildings that encompasses — among other things — two performance halls and the Baker Museum, which organizes and hosts intriguing exhibitions. On view through February 8 is a touring retrospective devoted to Tamara de Lempicka (1894–1980), whose paintings of angular figures epitomized Art Deco glamour and theatricality, as well as *Florida Contemporary*, the 13th edition of a series presenting three notable artists from the Sunshine State. Always available are displays of glass by Dale Chihuly, paintings by René Magritte, and an enormous sculpture by Louise Nevelson. Located nearby is the Naples Art Institute, which is presenting (through March 29) *Joan Miró: Fire in the Soul*. It highlights the Catalan modernist (1893–1983) who blended abstraction with playful, dreamlike imagery, usually featuring bold colors, organic shapes, and symbolic motifs.

Thanks to the wealth of its residents and visitors, Naples has become home to an array of commercial galleries. Leading the way has been the dealer William Meek, who launched what is now Harmon-Meek Gallery in 1964, which makes it Florida's second-oldest gallery. The firm represents such gifted artists as Gary Bukovnik, Gabriela Gonzalez Dellosso, and Richard Haas, as well as the estates of titans like Will Barnet, Herman Maril, and Robert Vickrey.

Elsewhere in Naples you'll find modern and contemporary pieces at Aldo Castillo Gallery, East West Fine Art, Gardner Colby Gallery, Shaw Gallery (including superb works in glass), Sheldon Fine Art Gallery, and Sweet Art Gallery. More contemporary art is available at Art on Fifth Ave Naples, which is operated by the photographer Michael Procaccini, who also has locations in Sarasota and Key West. Handling not only modern art but also an unusual array of historical paintings, especially from 19th-century Europe, is The Englishman Fine Art.

SARASOTA

Moving north on Interstate 75 along the Gulf Coast, art lovers are always enchanted with elegant Sarasota. Much of this city was the brainchild of John Ringling (1866–1936), the famous circus impresario who was one of the last great art collectors of the Gilded Age. Within a few years after World War I, he amassed a superb trove of Baroque and Renaissance art, including masterworks by Rubens, Van Dyck, Titian, Tintoretto, Veronese, Velázquez, El Greco, and Tiepolo. These are available to enjoy — along with works of other periods and regions — at the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art.

The Ringling also offers an array of temporary exhibitions. On view through January 11, for example, is a rare show devoted to the visionary Japanese painter Yoshida Hiroshi (1876–1950) and, until May 31, another highlighting a newly acquired painting by the Italian-born, Paris-based artist Juana Romani (1867–1923), *Woman on a Red Background*. Until November 2026, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, is lending a selection of its impressive 17th-century Dutch paintings, which complement the Ringling examples hanging nearby. Opening in May is a show examining the evolution of pictorialism and other forms of art photography in the early 20th century, drawn entirely from the Ringling's holdings.

Robert Vickrey (1926–2011), *The Birdcage*, 1972, egg tempera on panel, 29 x 42 in., Harmon-Meek Gallery (Naples)

The Ringling is, in fact, a campus of buildings set on 66 verdant acres, including separate pavilions devoted to Asian art, contemporary art, glass, and circus history. Ca' d'Zan, the 36,000-square-foot Venetian-style palace the founders completed in 1926, is open for guided visits. Also here is a jewel-box theater constructed in 1798 in Asolo, Italy, then reassembled here in the early 1950s. It has been lovingly restored and equipped with new technology that allows it to function as a modern performance space all year long.

Located nearby is the Ringling College of Art & Design, a leading school founded in 1931 and now equipped with six different galleries presenting contemporary art throughout the year. Many, though not all, of these shows relate to the instructors and students. Of particular interest are *Tradition Reimagined: Illustration Faculty Traditional Painting Group Exhibition* (January 23–February 28) and *Origins: Sarasota Art Colony*, 1945–1965 (January 20–April 11).

The college also runs the Madeby Gallery, as well as a former high school that has been transformed into the Sarasota Art Museum. On view there through March 29 is the exhibition *Art Deco: The Golden Age of Illustration*, which focuses on 100 posters from the Crouse Collection, all designed to promote automobiles, airlines, ocean liners, drinks, tobacco, and other modern products. Coming later in the spring (April 19–September 27) is *Something Borrowed, Something New*, which will feature modern and contemporary masterworks loaned from private collections throughout Southwest Florida.

Although its primary focus is instruction, the Art Center Sarasota has four galleries and a sculpture garden you can explore during public hours. It was founded as the Sarasota Art Association in 1926, a reminder of how comparatively early this city emerged

LEFT: Dominic Avant (b. 1965), *Walkway to the Ca' D'Zan*, 2023, oil on canvas, 16 x 20 in., on view January 16–24 in Avant's solo show at Thomsen Fine Art (Sarasota)
RIGHT: Kris Knight (b. 1980), *Tropaeolum*, 2024, oil on canvas, 18 x 14 in, Gavlak (West Palm Beach)

as a cultural hub. Less expected are the lively art exhibitions mounted by the Marie Selby Botanical Gardens, which operates a campus downtown and another at Spanish Point. On view this season (February 8–May 31) at its downtown Richard and Ellen Sandor Museum of Botany & the Arts, as well as in the conservatory and throughout the grounds, will be a show devoted to sculptor Alexander Calder.

Sarasota is home to numerous commercial galleries, most handling modern and especially contemporary art. They include 502 Gallery, Chasen Galleries (which has three locations in the city), State of the Arts Gallery, and Thomsen Fine Art. Milan Art Gallery has made a name for itself focusing on what founder Elli Milan calls abstract realism.

TAMPA & ST. PETERSBURG

Continuing north on I-75 along the Gulf, you will reach the metropolitan area of Tampa-St. Petersburg, straddling magnificent Tampa Bay. Tampa is the larger of the two cities (393,000), so begin your adventure at the Tampa Museum of Art, home to fine Greek, Roman, and Etruscan antiquities, as well as an impressive photography collection. On view through February 1 is a show of paintings borrowed from local collections that demonstrate the impact French impressionism made on American artists in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Among the artists represented are Mary Cassatt, William Merrit Chase, Childe Hassam, George Inness, Maurice Prendergast, and John Twachtman. Running until April 19 is a show of 40 photographs from the holdings of the late Tampa collector and photographer David Hall, who was particularly interested in the interwar period.

Not far away is the University of South Florida Contemporary Art Museum, which mounts cutting-edge installations by visiting artists, students, and faculty. On view through March 7 is an exhibition of photographs by Irish artist Brian Maguire, who highlights the commonality of human suffering in hot spots worldwide, from Mexico and the Amazon to Syria and Sudan. A similarly dark theme is being explored nearby until January 25 at the Florida Museum of Photographic Arts, where *The Soldier's Lens* showcases the complex realities of military life. Its images were selected from hundreds of submissions sent by active-duty service members, veterans, and their families.

For insights into the early days of Florida's Gulf Coast, visit the Henry B. Plant Museum, housed in what was once the opulent Tampa Bay Hotel (1891). At the same time Henry Flagler was making Florida's East Coast a fashionable resort destination, his rival Plant (1819–1899) connected the previously isolated Gulf Coast to America's railroad system and established steamship service linking Tampa, Cuba, and Key West. (Fun fact: Plant's system tied in most thoroughly with trains coming from Chicago, which means that — until recently — most Gulf Coast "snowbirds" hailed from America's Midwest, while Atlantic Coast ones arrived via Flagler's trains from the Northeast.) Today the University of Tampa owns the enormous old hotel, still furnished as it looked during its heyday. Located half a mile away is the university's Scarfone/Hartley Gallery, which presents artworks by visiting artists, students, and faculty.

As for commercial galleries, head downtown to see Dean Street Fine Art Gallery, to South Tampa for Drew Marc Gallery, or to Ybor City for Marcolina's Fine Arts Gallery and Michael Murphy Gallery (which will soon open an annex in Old West Tampa).

When you're ready, drive west across one of three bridges offering breathtaking views of Old Tampa Bay. Your destination is St. Petersburg, a city of 260,000 that punches above its weight culturally. For historical masterworks, head to the Museum of Fine Arts, which has strong holdings in many areas, especially French art, Steuben glass, and photography. On view through March 22 are two complementary exhibitions. *In Caravaggio's Light* features Old Master paintings by the Baroque master and his contemporaries, all on loan from Florence's Fondazione Roberto Longhi. At its heart is Caravaggio's early masterpiece, *Boy Bitten by a Lizard* (c. 1597), accompanied by superb works by Jusepe Ribera, Valentin de Boulogne, Matthias Stom, and others. Running at the same time is *Baroque Continuum*, which investigates Caravaggio's impact on later artists such as Thomas Anshutz, Edward Steichen, and Reza Aramesh.

More unexpected is St. Petersburg's Dalí Museum, one of the world's largest collections of art by the eccentric Catalan surrealist Salvador Dalí (1904–1989). Initially assembled by his Cleveland patrons A. Reynolds and Eleanor Morse, the institution now owns approximately 2,400 works including oil paintings, sculpture, graphics, photographs, and manuscripts; it also operates a research unit called the Center for the Avant-garde. On view through April 19 are two exhibitions that reflect the museum's penchant for surprising aspects of the famous artist's life. One highlights the drawings and collages Dalí created for *Les Vins de Gala*, the idiosyncratic wine guide he and his beloved wife, Gala, published in 1977. The second examines Dali's close friendship with the comedian Harpo Marx, which began in 1936.

St. Petersburg's embrace of the privately initiated Dalí Museum has encouraged other local collectors to open their own institutions. In 2018, Tom and Mary James launched the James Museum of Western & Wildlife Art, which owns more than 400 works celebrating the peoples, landscapes, and history of the American West, as well as the world's wildlife. On view there through March 22 are 10 paintings by Utah-based artist Ben Steele (b. 1977), who melds art history and popular culture into his whimsical paintings; all have been acquired by the museum's founders over the past two decades.

In 2021, local collector Rudy Ciccarello opened the Museum of the American Arts & Crafts Movement (MAACM). This phenomenon arose in the late 19th-century movement — first in Britain, then the U.S. — in reaction to the onslaught of mediocre, mass-produced goods. Arts & Crafts practitioners such as Gustav Stickley, Frank Lloyd Wright, the Roycrofters, William Grueby, and Louis Sullivan sought to reform design by creating objects and buildings both beautiful and functional. MAACM features superb examples of their furniture, pottery, tiles, lighting, textiles, photography, fine arts, woodblocks, and metalwork. On view now are long-term exhibitions devoted to American frames of this period and the Massachusetts artist Arthur Wesley Dow.

Also located in St. Petersburg is the Imagine Museum, founded by local glass artist Trish Duggan and now home to more than 2,500 pieces of contemporary glass from around the world. Still more glass can be enjoyed at the Chihuly Collection, which highlights the Washington-state master Dale Chihuly (b. 1941). This site is one of four operated by the Morean Arts Center, which has its origins in the Art Club of St. Petersburg (1917) and was renamed in 2009 to honor its benefactor, Beth Morean. Its other sites include a suite of galleries for contemporary art, a studio offering glassblowing demonstrations, and a center for clay art that is now America's third largest pottery.

Last but not least, Red Cloud Indian Arts is a downtown commercial gallery founded in 1987, handling top-notch fine artists such as Kevin Red Star, as well as Native pottery, jewelry, and basketry. And be sure to visit Soft Water Gallery, which shows great paintings by Heather Arenas, Lucy Barber, and Jay Li.

VERO BEACH

Our Florida adventure is almost complete. It's time to drive east on I-4 and then Highway 60 to the Treasure Coast along the Atlantic Ocean. This region's informal capital is Vero Beach; though its population is just 18,000, the region surrounding it is home to almost 160,000.

The area's cultural heart is the Vero Beach Museum of Art, where the exhibition *Picasso and the Progressive Proof* is on view through January 4; recent acquisitions to the collection are highlighted in another space through January 11. The museum's annual gala is set for January 30, and on February 18 designer Isaac Mizrahi will headline the "Fashion Meets Art" fundraiser. Local artists flock to the Vero Beach Art Club, where classes are offered and participants exhibit their creations for sale.

Among the commercial venues to explore in Vero Beach are the Artists Guild Gallery. Gallery 14, Gallery Veritas, and Meghan Candler Gallery. Particularly familiar to many readers of *Fine Art Connoisseur* is J.M. Stringer Gallery, which represents such talents as Stephanie Amato, Peter Layne Arguimbau, Mary Garrish, Geoffrey Leckie, Jim McVicker, Leonard Mizerek, Patrick O'Brien, John Phillip Osborne, Richard Oversmith, Claudia Seymour, Kyle Stuckey, John C. Traynor, and George Van Hook. Proprietors John M. Stringer and Caesar V. Mistretta also offer historical pieces from America and Europe, including masters like Charles Hawthorne and E.H. Potthast.

A MYTH EXPLODED

As you can see, the old chestnut that Florida is only for beach bums, retirees, and socialites is completely outdated. The Sunshine State is very much for art lovers, too.

CAVALIER GALLERIES

YVEL

WILLOW GALLERY

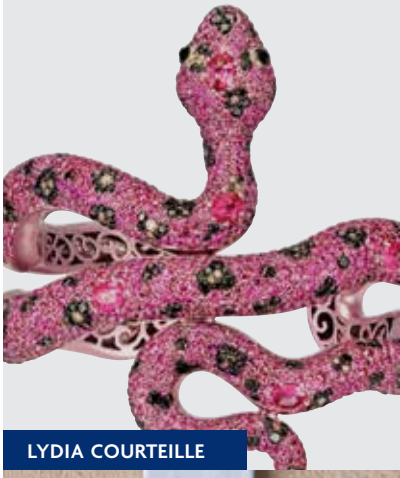
STEIDEL FINE ART

THE PALM BEACH SHOW

JEWELRY | ART | ANTIQUES | DESIGN

FEBRUARY 12-17, 2026

PRESIDENTS' DAY WEEKEND



LYDIA COURTEILLE

LESTER LAMPERT

OPENING NIGHT PREVIEW PARTY

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2026 | 2:00PM - 9:00PM

PALM BEACH COUNTY CONVENTION CENTER

650 OKEECHOBEE BLVD, WEST PALM BEACH, FL

SCAN THE QR CODE WITH YOUR PHONE TO REGISTER FOR COMPLIMENTARY GENERAL ADMISSION TICKETS FOR YOU AND GUEST.

COMPLIMENTARY TICKETS ARE LIMITED. REGISTER NOW

CHARLES OUDIN

M.S. RAU

L.E. GALLERY

PalmBeachShow.com

CALLAGHANS OF SHREWSBURY

JS FEARNLEY

LEIGHTON FINE ART