Visiting Ann Norton Sculptural Gardens in West Palm Beach, Florida

If my busy schedule allows, I always try to attend the annual South Beach Wine & Food Festival in Miami, Florida. The national, star-studded, multiple day event showcases today's most distinguished spirits producers, chefs and culinary personalities. Proceeds go to The Florida International University Chaplin School of Hospitality and Tourism Management - one of the top hospitality management schools in the United States.

This year, I attended numerous luncheons and dinners, and hosted several receptions. I also conducted a book signing for "The Martha Manual: How to Do (Almost) Everything". While I was in the area, I also found time to visit The Bass, Miami Beach's contemporary art museum, the Miami Beach Botanical Garden, and the Ann Norton Sculpture Gardens in West Palm Beach. It was a very busy and wonderful trip. I'll be sharing photos from this excursion over the next couple of days - enjoy.

And be sure to tune in to QVC throughout today - I am sharing many pieces from my Apparel Collection including "Today's Special Value", my Denim Ankle Jeans.

Visitors to Ann Norton Sculpture Gardens see large scale works made of brick and granite positioned throughout a lush, native landscape. Ann Norton was an American sculptor whose works were exhibited in New York and in Florida as well as in Europe. The gardens include nine of her monumental sculptures. This one is "Untitled Horizontal Sculpture", 1979.
This was the last sculpture whose construction was overseen by Ann. Its silhouette was inspired by the Himalaya Mountains, which Ann loved to visit during her trips to India and Nepal.

This installation is made of Mexican brick and has a total length of 48-feet.

The Gardens, designed by world-renowned botanist Sir Peter Smithers as a rare palm garden, represent Ann’s commitment to conservation and her desire to preserve a quiet retreat in the busy city.
Within the two-acre property, there are many places to meditate and enjoy the quiet scenery. Along with the artworks, the Gardens also keep more than 250 rare palm species of cycads and unusual tropica...
While these figures are neither male nor female, most of their faces resemble those of Mayan women.

This is “Gateway 2”, 1973 – handmade from North Carolina brick. It is 23-feet tall and reminiscent of Romanesque architectural elements. This piece is solid, without any openings whatsoever.

This is called “Gateway 3”, 1974. This was handmade from North Carolina brick and stands 27-feet tall. This has been characterized as “the cavity of a medieval tower rising over a submerged portal.”
Ann's sculptures, which she built in the gardens over a period of 15-years, are meant to be discovered “by surprise”. This is called “Gateway 4” and stands 24-feet tall. This sculpture's apertures seem similar to the characters of the Sanskrit alphabet, known as the “mother of all languages”.

Ann was fascinated with Sanskrit – it inspired many of her drawings and sculptures.

This is called “Untitled (Monument Number 8)”, 1980-1982. This piece is made from Mexican brick. With its curious design, Ann received a grant for this from the National Endowment for the Arts in 1981. It is unknown what inspired her to create this 28-foot tall installation.
This massive piece is 30-feet tall and called “Gateway 5”, 1977. It recalls the 20th century architectural pieces of Frank Lloyd Wright’s “Fallingwater” in southwestern Pennsylvania.

This piece is called “Gateway to Knowledge”, 1963-1964. It is made from Boston brick and has a height of 30-feet. This is a posthumously built replica of a sculpture commissioned from Ann in 1980. Its slender construction shows that the pathway to knowledge is quite narrow.

Shows of other artists are sometimes presented at the Gardens. This sculpture was made by Gino Miles and is called “Travels to Hania”. It is a bronze piece set on a granite base. His pieces will be exhibited through May 12th.
This is a fan palm, Pritchardia lowreyana. The solid, medium height trunk of the plant supports a crown of deeply divided arching fan-shaped leaves. The fronds were used by early Hawaiians for thatching.

This palm is called Lodoicea maldivica, or more commonly, Coco de Mer. The Coco de Mer is known for having the largest and heaviest seed in the plant kingdom and the largest female flowers of any palm species. It is native to Maldives.

Created over four-decades, many of Ann's works in bronze, stone and wood still inhabit the art studio. Guests are greeted by giant life models, armatures, and other pieces – most are early stages of her monumental works found throughout the Gardens.
Ann drew from the time she was five-years old and received her first sculpting tool at age eight. The studio contains many of Ann's chisels, hammers, and other tools, including some of those given to her as a child by her Aunt Rose.

Many of the pieces in her studio remain almost as she left them – wooden Gateways and maquettes for stone figures fill the space.

Some pieces are much smaller models of the larger pieces in the gardens, but contain just as many details, cuts and grooves.
These are model heads of the “Seven Beings” – still sitting as they did when Ann last worked in this studio.

Here are more pieces from her studio – model pieces made from various types of brick, wood, bronze and granite.

Ann’s studio and gardens are open to the public and have inspired thousands of visitors – nature lovers, art enthusiasts, environmentalists, families and students – it is a wonderful place to visit if ever you are in West Palm Beach, Florida. Please go to their web site for more information. https://www.ansg.org/
Interesting learning about Ann Norton's sculpture. Learned she lived here and the bricks were handmade. Beautiful pieces. Loved seeing slide # 20, her tools.

Loved seeing you on QVC last night. Your TSV flew Martha. Over 12K in one hour!!! Wow!! You looked great in the white pants and love the top. Great color on you.

Posted by: Joy | March 8th, 2019 at 12:10 pm

Hi Martha,

Thanks for your wonderful photos of Ann Norton's works. Norton is a well-known name here throughout WPB and Florida and I first heard it when we moved down here in 1978. I enrolled my son in Norton Elementary School where he attended while our house was under construction in Boca. It's been years since I was last at the Norton Museum but have never been to Ann Norton's Sculptural Gardens. It might be time for a visit! I caught you for a few minutes on QVC showing your beautiful sweaters and scarves and I also liked the striped poplin blouse you had on in khaki. It seems like it's also time to shop! Trish

Posted by: Trish | March 8th, 2019 at 1:59 pm