New Shade of Green

Environmental initiatives take root on the island

By William Kelly
Daily News Staff Writer

Green is a color long associated with Palm Beach, whether for its lush landscaping or vast wealth.

Now you can paint the town green for another reason: its expanding environmental consciousness and growing interest in eco-friendly practices.

Environmental awareness has been on the upswing in recent years. Beach cleanups regularly spotlight the tons of trash that wash onto the town’s shores each year. A Palm Beach Civic Association campaign has been asking businesses and shoppers to end their addiction to single-use plastic bags, which hurt marine life and the environment.

The spiraling whitefly epidemic has forced the town to reconsider its dependence on pesticides and herbicides that are toxic to wildlife, people and pets. Blue-green algae blooms, meanwhile, have illustrated how the fertilizers placed on our lawns can end up blighting our lagoons and waterways while killing fish.

See GREEN, A10
Setting their ‘sites’ on the future

Cultural groups flourish with round of improvements

By Jan Sjostrom

The 2018-19 season was a milestone for many cultural organizations with projects and plans that will shape their futures for years to come. The Norton Museum led the way with its bold $100 million expansion, a project far more ambitious than any the institution had embarked on before. The Society of the Four Arts, Ann Norton Sculpture Gardens and the Kravis Center also focused on improvements designed to keep pace with changing times and community needs. Here’s a rundown.

Norton Museum of Art

Elliot Reedwick Davis, the Norton Museum’s new director, has been banking in preparation for the museum’s setting its ‘sites’ on the future. It’s possible that the Norton could be a model for the national arts scene.

Foster + Partners—designed expansion should be heard since its unveiling in February from everyone from young families to museum board chairmen.

Attendance has soared, totaling 15,010 in February and March, more than double the 7,000 for February and March 2018, the last full year the museum was open before construction.

But where does the insti-
tution go from here?

“We must keep our pro-
gramming at a high level,” Davis said. “We’ve raised the bar here.”

See ARTS, B5

Stage director Kristine McIntyre conceived her black-and-white film noir-inspired version of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart’s Don Giovanni for the Lyric Opera of Kansas City’s 2015-16 season. [PHOTO BY CORY WEAVER FOR LYRIC OPERA OF KANSAS CITY]

PALM BEACH OPERA: MOZART’S DON GIOVANNI | FEB. 22, KRAVIS CENTER

A new take on the greatest opera ever writ-
ten: Director Kristine McIntyre went with the 1940s Hollywood film noir. It was pretty prosymp-

The play follows God of Indecent.

Dani Marcus, left, portrayed Rifkele and Kathleen Wise played Manke in Palm Beach Dramaworks’ production of Indecent. [PHOTO BY SAMANTHA MIGHDOLL]

INDECENT | OCT. 19-NOV. 11, PALM BEACH DRAMAWORKS

Paula Vogel’s play recounting the story of Yiddish writer Sholem Asch’s 1923 play God of Vengeance unfolds on a bare stage with minimal props. Dramaworks’ production spin its magic with lighting, a trio of on-stage musicians and performance that were both real and ethereal. The play follows God of Vengeance’ parallel journeys as an inspiration to Jews in a Polish ghetto during the Holocaust and an offense to censors in the United States. [PHOTO BY SAMANTHA MIGHDOLL]

David Marcus, left, portrayed Rifkele and Kathleen Wise played Manke in Palm Beach Dramaworks’ production of Indecent. [PHOTO BY SAMANTHA MIGHDOLL]

CHOICE PROGRAMS

Our critics name their favorite shows and exhibitions from the 2018-19 season

Vintage, one-of-a-kind jewelry, an array of exhibitions celebrating the possibilities opened up by the Norton Museum’s expansion, Mozart’s Don Giovanni re-imagined through a film noir lens and theater that gripped the heart and mind - the 2018-19 season offered many peak cultural experiences. • Our critics make a case for their favorites.

See MORE CRITICS’ PICKS, B2, B4 AND B5

Palm Beach Daily News
Sunday, May 5, 2019
B1

B2

B3

B4

B5

B6

B7

B8

B9

B10

B11
The Norton’s $100 million overhaul should make this make. The project boosted exhibition space to 50,000 square feet (a 15 percent increase), established coherent connections between galleries, added a sedum colonnade and garden, created linking community spaces, bathed the museum in natural light and established a dramatic new main entrance on Dixie Highway framed by an 80-year-old banyan tree and Claes Oldenburg’s and Coosje van Bruggen’s 10-foot “Typewriter Farm.”

The project has been christened by public plaudits ranging from London’s The Times, which named it one of the top buildings of 2019, to the Vancouver Sun, which called it “a stunning transformation.”

“People will take us more seriously as a repository for their collections and we can make a great case with our space and our programming,” said Davis. “We can make a perfect platform for artists and the public to interact.”

The transformation also has made the museum more inviting, with spaces such as the Great Hall, with its vintage warmth, restored, bringing the facility compliant with ADA rules. On the west loggia, up a vista to the gardens’ visibility was rehoned and made more up-to-date, with a more serviceable sound system, and chairs and tables on casters that can be reconfigured as needed. That’s enabled the library’s 30,000-seat auditorium to host guests more comfortably and offer classes such as its free series on digital selections.

The library now welcomes about 40,000 people a month, about twice as many visitors it had before the expansion; said topaz skipper.

Ann Norton Sculpture Gardens

Striking this year include building an outdoor classroom, adding a waterfall, exposing the bulletin board and Meditation pools, revitalizing the palm and plant collection and making pathways more wheelchair, walker and stroller-friendly.

Two of founder Ann Norton’s nine monument sculptures were restored, bringing the total conserved during the past two seasons to six. Thanks to a grant from the Max M. and Marjorie S. Fisher Foundation, the art & Healthy Hearts in the Gardens program served 750 students from Title-I schools, triple the number reached last season.

Annual attendance jumped to 20,000, nearly a 77 percent increase over last season, and memberships soared.

The late Ann Norton was inducted into the Florida Artists Hall of Fame, and the gardens joined the FiDi Artists’ Homes and Studios network. Both should boost the gardens’ visibility and help attract new visitors, said Fisher, chairwoman of the sculpture garden board.

The organization also participated in a year-long capital campaign strategy training led by the DeVos Institute of Arts Management and under the direction of the Cultural Council of Palm Beach County.

Next comes a strategic plan, which the board plans to complete by October.

“The strategic plan will provide a basis for future projects by articulating a vision and needs for the future,” Fisher said. “That’s what we may need to do for yet more improvements, such as adding an indoor gallery space and future Norton house and archive projects.”

Kravis Center for the Performing Arts

If all goes according to plan by this time next year the Kravis Center will have a new valet parking garage, a bigger lobby, a restored Okeechobee Boulevard, a pedestrian-friendly plaza opening onto Okeechobee Boulevard, and Faster access to garage parking’s fourth and fifth floors. A new entrance ramp from Okeechobee Boulevard.

That’s on top of technology upgrades to improve security, customer communications and traffic flow.

Construction got under way in April.

“This is a very fast track schedule for a project like this,” Chief Executive Officer Judy Mitchell said. “Especially given that work had to stop during Marchas so as not to shut down appearances. But we’ve pushed it. And the Okeechobee Boulevard entrance will be closed from May 29 to Nov. 1 to accommodate construction.”

The center has raised about $18.1 million of its $32 million goal, 40 percent of which has been earmarked for the project and the rest set aside for future improvements.

Meanwhile, the Norton has had a very good season. It’s already hit its $6 million annual fundraising target with two months to go in the fiscal year.

“On Your Feet!” The Elmi & S. G. Dubiner Broadway Musical” stunned box office records for a Broadway season show. Altogether performances were sold out.

Overall, the center’s ticket sales were “really good,” Mitchell said.

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