

The Volunteer Voice

Relationships



Service



Accomplishments

October 2019

Volume III Issue 25

VOLUNTEERS
DON'T FORGET
TO SIGN UP!



MERCEDES-BENZ
CORAL GABLES
GALLERY NIGHT

FRIDAY NIGHT
OCTOBER 4, 2019
6-10 PM



VOLUNTEERS ARE
NEEDED FOR THE
FOLLOWING ON-GOING
TOURS:

“Creating the Dream”
Saturdays
October 5 & 19, 2019
1:00 PM

THE
GALA
IS
COMING!

SAVE
THE
DATE

SATURDAY,
NOVEMBER
23,
2019

CGM To Host First Volunteer Opportunity Fair



Jude Alexander, our Volunteer Coordinator, has organized and implemented our first Volunteer Opportunity event.

The goal is to draw potential volunteers to experience a gathering of community groups covering a wide variety of interests and skill levels. Each of these groups rely on the help of volunteers.

Participating organizations include Actors Playhouse at the Miracle Theatre, Adult Activity Center, Alzheimer's Association, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Miami, Books and Books, Coral Gables Art Cinema,

Coral Gables Crime Watch, Coral Gables Woman's Club, Crafting Confidence, Fairchild Gardens, Friends of Gables High, HandsOn Miami, Kristi House, LEAP, Merrick House, National Alliance on Mental Illness, PAWS4you, Ronald McDonald House Charities of South Florida, The Barnacle Historic Park, The Cat Network and SCORE.

The fair is open to anybody who is interested in volunteering – to support a good cause, to participate in an interesting activity, to pursue a passion or just to make new friends. Participating organizations will describe what they do, how they involve volunteers and what is expected from them. The Fair, scheduled for Sunday, September 29, 2019, will be open from 1 to 4 PM.

INVITE YOUR FRIENDS AND FAMILIES TO COME TO THE FAIR!

JOHN ALLEN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

JUDE ALEXANDER, VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

285 ARAGON AVENUE, CORAL GABLES, FL 33134

WWW.CORALGABLESMUSEUM.ORG

Phone: 305 603-8067

Exhibits & Highlights



The Caribbee Club: “Body Landscapes”: Designs by Andrea Spiridonakos

Friday, September 6, 2019 through Friday, November 22, 2019

“Body Landscapes” brings together over 15 sketches and two garments by local fashion designer, Andrea Spiridonakos. As the creative force behind her brand and a former ballerina, Spiridonakos uses her knowledge of the human body to design pieces that highlight the female figure, accentuating the way it moves through space. During her celebrated career as a soloist dancer, she performed leading roles to critical acclaim throughout the US and Europe.

In 2015 she graduated as a YMA scholarship recipient and was honored as Critic’ Choice winner for Outstanding Design from NYC’s Fashion Institute of Technology.

Spiridonakos was chosen to create two original garments that were exhibited in Paris at Le Musée des Arts Décoratifs at the Louvre, in collaboration with Les Métiers d’Arts CHANEL. She has, additionally, developed hand-painted textile work for Isabel and Ruben Toledo’s newly created “Nutcracker,” and was recently awarded part of the inaugural NEW WORK grant from the Knight Foundation in 2018.

The debut pieces from her conceptual American luxury label, Spiridonakou, will be sold at Bergdorf Goodman this fall.



“Peruvian Beauty: The Photographic Work of Yayo Lopez

Monday, September 20, 2019 through Sunday, November 17, 2019

This exhibit gathers over 25 portraits by Peruvian photographer Yayo López. Throughout his career, Lopez has traveled his country capturing female faces that, in some way, have attracted his attention, women of diverse ages and

social and geographical backgrounds. His interest is in the intrinsic concepts of beauty that determine how Peruvians perceive and value themselves. Those concepts provide a very plural image of the identity of that nation. According to the artist, “We have grown up in a racist and alienated society; in a country with imported models of beauty where a woman’s body is seen as an object. This phenomenon affects women’s self-esteem and creates a climate that favors violence against them.”

Presented in different venues in Peru, and internationally, this exhibition has become a reference for the documentary photography in that country as it represents the rich ethnic and cultural diversity of Peruvian people.

Exhibits & Highlights: Continued

Fewell Gallery: "America Weaves"

Friday, June 7, 2019 through Sunday, November 10, 2019



"America Weaves" gathers a group of artists that expand the borders and possibilities of the action of weaving, embroidery, and interlacing throughout the entire American Continent, from Argentina to the United States. Some works are formal inquiries into the possibilities of the medium, others merge different epochs, resorting to the technique of palimpsest; yet others pose critical and conceptual appropriations of different sorts. Making art with textiles is, ultimately, a possibility that is as playful as it is culturally vital.

A MONTH IN PROVENÇE: A LETTER FROM OUR FRIEND, HENDRIK WOODS



Hendrik at home

With the beginning of September, France is back at work. August vacations are almost an inviolable right in the country but there are mitigating factors in Aix-en-

Provence, a serious tourist destination. As an example, local merchants hang in to cash in. I'm sure they still get time off, just not in August. Following the exodus of tourists, there is the influx of students now, over 40,000 of them, strutting around as if the world is their oyster. An uplifting sight, actually.

I first saw this part of the world over 50 years ago and found it so enticing that I vowed to eventually experience it more fully. That is my reason for leaving Coral Gables, a beautiful city where we were fortunate to make good friends. At my age,

the future is a shrinking proposition and it was time to make a dream come true. Aina has a special fondness for Europe where we spent half of our married life. Our beloved son Nate was repulsed by the whole idea of being pulled out of his comfort zone but we were sold on the idea of broadening his horizons.

So, has Provence changed since I first saw it? Of course, it has - as is true almost everywhere. The American influence is especially visible. Supermarkets the size of Walmart's, Five Guys on the main square, super-highways larger than ours, folks constantly texting and even chicken nuggets on kid menus but beneath that surface there is a wrestling match between forces of modernity and tradition, and, if I read it right, tradition has more clout here than in the US. The family, and especially the extended family, is more of a social glue, the village is the dominant model for social life even in big cities which actually function as an agglomeration of villages. My supposition is this confirms the strength of an agrarian-based culture more pronounced than ours.

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The French know by whom and how their bread is made and how it is buttered. Reading Emile Zola is a reminder of an anti-urban streak in French literature in which the city is linked to degradation and despair, while Jean Giono is more explicitly insistent that the good life is all about living close to nature. On the other side is the power of urban-shaped trends. For example, there has been a surge in “natural-style” clothing for both men and wom-

The great aspect of living in an unfamiliar place is that it can spark curiosity, learning and discovery. In my case that means, struggling to re-learn French, a language I love; exploring French literature (how good Balzac was as a writer), and delving into travel writing in general. An important discovery for me is works by and about MFK Fisher, mostly remembered as a food writer for the New Yorker. Her book Two Towns in Provence about Aix and Marseilles is a knock-out. Provence

She, in other words, double checks one’s notions of reality, meaning that shared personal experience is the only reliable guide to knowing a place. So equipped by her example, I’m trying to come to terms with our new home. I’m very well aware that when we walk in Aix we follow not only the footsteps of Cezanne and Zola but the impressions of MFK Fisher.

What is the region like? When Aina’s good friend from Kazakhstan was with us, we checked out most of the highlights of Provence but avoided Cote d’Azur, only an hour from here but it takes three hours to cope with the coastal traffic. Marseilles, France’s second largest city is intriguing but does it deserve its reputation as the Chicago or Miami of France -not meant as compliments; Avi-

en. Designers from mega-city Paris have successfully conflated looking “natural” -whatever that means-with being closer to nature. At any rate, this is all very different from 50 years ago. I feel confident in claiming that conflicting influences have created contradictions and uneasy accommodations which make France so interesting for an outsider.

1970 by her grandnephew Luke Barr says nothing about either city but draws from Fisher’s journals and correspondence thus fleshing out her personality. I know her strengths, curiosity and empathy, and weaknesses, she can be quite snobbish. But she is one hell of a guide. Her claim is that a tourist, however well prepared, only brushes up against the reality of a place and it is only by interacting with locals at a deeper level, that one can arrive at understanding.

gnon is very in your face historic but requires too much climbing of stairs. Cassis and la Ciotat are nice seacoast towns but finding parking close to their beaches is a drag. Manosque and the Luberon National Parc are worth a detour although the town, once a favorite destination of anthropologists because of its quintessentially Provencal character is much altered due to a population influx from a nearby energy research center. (Talk about the modern versus the traditional tension). A lesser known destination is Lourmarin, a picture-perfect village in a lovely rural setting where Albert Camus had a home and is buried. Then there is spectacular Les Baux which looks like a massive modern sculpture masquerading as a village.

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We have just returned from a visit to the hamlet of Ansouis, with a tour of its chateau given by the owner. Very informative experience. Provence looks like a mix of verdant West Virginia and parched New Mexico. It gets a lot of sunshine but it cools down at night. The climate is dry and dusty; rain is rare, so far. Signs of Autumn are already in the air but I don't exactly know the weather will change. Another mystery for me is how people get their water. I know about aqueducts, cisterns and the like but what does specific science and civil engineering tell us?

Aix-en-Provence is the definite sweet spot of the region. It is a sassy place, wealthy and experiencing growth and has high expectations for its future development. It is largely inured from the troubles that plague many French cities. In the past, it was an academic, legal, and administrative center but in recent years tourism, finance, and high-tech industry have been added to the mix. Aix is well served by modern infrastructure ranging from rail to highways which have made it far more accessible. It has always been a market town for produce and inexpensive items. These now co-exist with the latest Parisian haute-couture and other high-end item boutiques. Aix also has an exceptionally lively cultural scene especially in music, theater and film. It doesn't have the Louvre or Broadway but it does have plenty of more modest offerings that quickly add up. I am fascinated by the town's multi-layered history, often troubled but a tribute to human resilience. Its architecture and layout reflect history, the so-called Old Town is a medieval maze, the Mazarin quarter is gracious and orderly in a French Enlightenment way. I still can-

not get over the fact that beneath the road on which I walk to town lies a Roman necropolis.

We live in a small (cozy? cramped?) apartment in a nice setting with a park, swimming pool and tennis court next to us but which is still within walking distance to the Center and even closer to the region's main east/west highway which enables us to by-pass the city. To the east of us is the village of Le Thonolet which has most of the necessities we would ever want in Aix and is beside Cezanne's famous Mont St. Victoire. Cezanne is buried next to our park; Picasso lies on the other side of the Mont. What about Fischer's point about personal connections? Locals have been uniformly polite and kind. The person to whom we are most indebted is a ten-year old Hindi-French-English speaking girl who volunteered to be Nate's translator at school. They have been close since that first day. She lifted from his shoulders the many anxieties of being an English speaker in a new, predominantly French speaking school. This has made huge, positive difference for all of us. Also imagine a car salesman who went out of his way to give us a good deal, a banker who carefully guided us through the intricacy of complex French insurance schemes and, a personal favorite, the podiatrist downstairs. After normal working hours, she treated my very sore big-toe painlessly, kept me laughing throughout and only charged me a pittance for her services. I am becoming friendly with some of the members of my weekly French language class. The Brits, however, are preoccupied with their political mess and Americans here are scarce.

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My hopes are set on stronger French connections that result in enjoying the company of a few good friends hanging out together such as I experienced in Coral Gables. Fischer refers to feeling like an “invisible phantom” in Aix. I have such moments as I wonder what I am really doing here and how I miss “home” and friends. But I also am attracted to French-style camaraderie. It offers the benefit of increasing my local knowledge, of course, but its appeal is mostly about having real dialogue and fun. Cracking the language-barrier is the biggest challenge. I hope that with time and a little bit of luck all this will move things forward.

Our days start with Nate feeding a bunch of feral cats in the woods, a task he inherited from our landlord. There has been a great leap forward in his willingness to take on responsibly. He is our trip navigator, IT trouble shooter, and dish-washing partner, all of which he does cheerfully. I take him on a brisk walk to school, a happy environment where he greets his friends and caring teachers. Then he comes back home late in the afternoon after we have done chores, errands, screen watching, trips to town, reading and just lounging around. He doesn't have school on Wednesdays which gives us a chance to re-group and do things with him. We are especially focused on week-end excursions just now while the weather is still nice. The real star of this narrative is Aina. While I was freaking out over the move, she took control of the process and did the important work. Even now she does all the driving and handles the important IT side of life such as managing our on-line banking ,a major feat, and satisfy-

ing the local bureaucracy's demand for documents, on top of running the household. Aina is simply the best wife and Mother. She has begun to chill out by re-connecting with her friends in Europe as well as staying in touch with her Coral Gables friends. Living in Aix also has the advantage of being literally closer to her family in Kazakhstan to which she is devoted. In her own good time, she will start looking for work.

I am tempted to write about food and drink here but that will only make you jealous.

It's only been five weeks but so far, life is good. I think about buying property here but that is on hold until we sell our Coral Gables apartment, the weakness of the market is a big disappointment. We may have to rent it, a better option than seeing money go up in smoke, but that also delays longer-term plans. I think our life-style has improved, it is simpler, more elemental. Life has also taught me to be wary of unexpected developments since some are bound to happen. One factor in our enjoyment of Provence is how cut-off we are from mainstream US news. I used to be a junkie for such stuff but have made the conscious decision to minimize such exposure and, in the twilight of my life, to concentrate instead on tending to my own garden, as one wise Frenchman put it. My agenda is full enough, to be a good parent and husband, to learn French, read lots of good books, resume painting, make friends and hold onto those I already have. I still have lots of views about what it takes to have a good society but don't expect me to be an activist for that cause.

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Provence: Continued



Hendrik and son, Nate at their favorite watering hole.

Please do stay in touch and include Provence when you visit France. We'll give you a warm welcome and use whatever local knowledge

we have to help you enjoy the place.



LEAP is Ladies Empowerment & Action Program.

LEAP teaches women who are incarcerated practical employment and essential life skills in order to prepare them for life after prison.

To support LEAP, Dragonfly, a thrift store was opened which not only creates money for LEAP but provides housing and employment for the women.

For more information about these programs please check these websites:

WWW.Leanormalizes.Org

WWW.Dragonflythrift.Org

✓ DONATION DAY FOR DRAGONFLY THRIFT STORE

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 2019
10 AM-5PM

FASHION, FURNITURE & ACCESSORIES.
THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROSITY

CORAL GABLES MUSEUM
285 ARAGON AVENUE
CORAL GABLES, FL 33134

No children's apparel, equipment or toys.

For Additional Information, Please Contact:
Jude@CoralGablesMuseum.Org

Hendrick, Thanks so much for your written pictures portraying your pleasures, problems and philosophies related to the major life changes you and your family have undertaken. What an adventure! Keep us informed. We miss you. (and please tell us about the food and drink. We can handle it!)



BREAKING SPECTRAL NEWS!

There has long been talk of the ghost who haunts the Coral Gables Museum, just like the one who haunts the Biltmore Hotel. The mysterious spirit of the museum has now been identified. It is John Allen, the museum's Executive Director, who spent four nights in the museum, wandering its halls, sleeping on the floor and guarding the exhibits from Hurricane Dorian's potential damage.

At the end of his four day vigil, it was unkindly suggested that he had begun to resemble the enigmatic portrait of Dorian Gray. However, after a couple of nights back in his own bed, we are pleased to confirm that he has now regained all of his youthful good looks!