

Wendy Fritz opens art gallery in revamped Royal Poinciana Plaza

NEWS

By Jan Sjostrom - Daily News Arts Editor



Wendy Fritz, standing in front of Nathan Slate Joseph's pieces "Look for Me in the Stars" and "Look for Me in the Woods," opened a gallery in the The Royal Poinciana Plaza in Palm Beach. The bronze sculpture is "Galatea" by Itzik Asher.

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The past couple of weeks have been a whirlwind for **Wendy Fritz**, whose **Fritz Gallery** is the first art gallery to open in the renovated Royal Poinciana Plaza.

During that time Fritz inked a long-term lease for a 1,900-square-foot space facing the courtyard between TooJays and Serenella, and opened on March 16.

She's been around art and Palm Beach for most of her life.

Her grandmother, the late Ann Rork Light, a silent film star and longtime resident, was once married to J. Paul Getty. Her mother, resident **Donna Long**, is a painter and the half sister of Gordon and the late J. Paul Getty Jr.

Fritz spend her high school years in Palm Beach. She moved back eight years ago and lives only a short distance away from the plaza.

"This space is amazing," she said. "The energy of this center is amazing. It's the perfect time for me to come in. The restaurants are established. People are walking around. It's pretty. The location is great."

Fritz has a degree in art history, but she didn't go into the art business until about seven years ago, when her children were grown.

She was the Florida representative for the now-disbanded ArtBanc, whose services included online auctions, collections management systems and private art sales. Before ArtBanc folded, she struck out on her own as a private art dealer.

She hadn't planned to open a gallery at all when she was shopping for office space in West Palm Beach last summer. But a suite on the second floor of 1608 S. Dixie Highway "seemed like a pretty space," she said. That gallery opened in October.

"I have a lot of my own art and I started getting consignments," she said. "It evolved into a gallery."

She didn't consider expanding her business until her friend, Lori Berg, the plaza's general manager, suggested it.

More Royal Poinciana Plaza news

Fritz Gallery is one of 30 new tenants that have moved into the plaza in recent months.

"Our vision is to see the Royal Poinciana Plaza as a hub for the arts community, and Fritz Gallery is a wonderful addition to the plaza," said Samantha David, who heads Up Markets, which controls the plaza under a long-term lease.

The company plans "to grow this category in the future," she said.

Fritz's West Palm Beach space will focus on emerging artists. In Palm Beach, she will concentrate on blue-chip art from the 1970s and 80s and a handful of artists with local connections.

Her current selection includes a large screenprint on fabric piece by Robert Rauschenberg, a 13-foot tall figurative sculpture by William King and three stain paintings by color field artist Pat Lipsky. She's also begun representing artists, including Long; abstract painter Daniel Neumann, who divides his time between West Palm Beach and Maine; and Kenneth Walker, a Palm Beach Planning and Zoning commissioner and pop-art-inspired artist.

She's showing several works by **Nathan Slate Joseph**, who just installed the plaza's first public art exhibit in the east courtyard.

Fritz plans to curate shows in her Palm Beach gallery. But for now she has her hands full putting the finishing touches on her space so she can catch what's left of the season.

The West Palm Beach gallery is open by appointment and for special events. The Palm Beach gallery is open 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Mondays through Saturdays and 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sundays. For more information, call 906-5337.