Discover Art!

Palm Springs Art Museum Opens in Palm Desert

By: Maggie Downs

The posh boutiques,
upscale restaurants and glitzy galleries of El Paseo in Palm Desert couldn't have asked for a better new neighbor.

The Palm Springs Art Museum in Palm Desert, located at the corner where Highway 111 and El Paseo meet, now forms the welcome mat for several blocks of art, food and entertainment. With exhibitions that include cutting-edge contemporary artists and world-renowned masters, the museum has elevated an already top-tier area into an undeniable cultural hotspot. This is the perfect place to put some beautiful things in your head, not just in your shopping bag.

The museum opened in March 2012 as a way to broaden the reach of the Palm Springs Art Museum's main facility in downtown Palm Springs. The extension — called The Galen in honor of a one million dollar gift from desert resident Helene Galen — makes art more accessible to residents and visitors throughout the Coachella Valley.

The building itself, designed by Palm Springs architect Reuel Young, seamlessly meshes with the area's Mid-Century Modern architectural roots. Small galleries shoot off like spokes from the main, circular-shaped building. Floor-to-ceiling glass allows four acres of landscaped gardens to organically become part of the artwork, while the San Jacinto Mountains provide a dramatic backdrop. This is likely the only place on earth where barrel cacti share the same air with Auguste Rodin, Pablo Picasso and Edgar Degas.

The 8,400-square-foot structure was also the first new building construction in Southern California to receive the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) silver certification, given to buildings that meet high sustainability standards.

Currently, the museum features a fashion-forward exhibition, Make It Work: Material and Form in the Passionate Pursuit, which is open until January 20. This collection showcases significant modern and contemporary artworks from the museum's collection, alongside the fashion designs they inspired.

Coming this February is Beg Borrow and Steal, the first exhibition to show simultaneously at both the Palm Springs and Palm Desert locations. This exhibition, created with paintings, sculptures, photographs, videos and installations by 58 artists from the Rubell Family Collection/Contemporary Arts Foundation, reveals how artists from several generations are influenced by one another.

"The collection of appropriated imagery is like looking at a visual dialogue between artists," says Daniell Cornell, the deputy director for art and the senior curator for the Palm Springs Art Museum.

"They are artists who abandoned the search to come up with their own creative imagery. They're borrowing from other artists instead," says Cornell. "It becomes a comment on the past while making something new."

The exhibition, which places an emphasis on West Coast artists, is a fascinating and layered look into art, because it can be approached from two directions.

"Either you know the older artist and you get to see who they are influencing, or you're interested in the young, new artists and you see who influenced them," Cornell said. "You can look at this both ways."

The Palm Springs Art Museum in Palm Desert
Where 72567 Highway 111, Palm Desert, CA 92260. Located at Entrada del Paseo at the westernmost intersection of Highway 111 and El Paseo.
Phone 760-346-5600
Online www.psmuseum.org/palm-desert.php
Hours Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday to Sunday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Thursday hours are noon to 8 p.m. with free admission from 4 to 8 p.m. The museum is closed on Mondays and major holidays.
Admission $5 regular; $4 seniors (62+) and students with ID; free to members, children 12 and under, and all active military and their families.

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