



Sarasota's public art legacy now curated on walking tour

Thursday, Jan. 27, 2022 | Arts Advocate docent Stephenie Frasher speaks about the Music mural by Chor Boogie on the fourth floor of the Palm Ave. parking garage. (Photo: Spencer Fordin)



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Arts Advocates has developed a series of walking tours that educate people about the history of public art in Sarasota — and the stories behind them.





You know a city takes art seriously when it decorates its intersections and parking garages.

Five Points, a historic anchor of downtown Sarasota, is now so full of public art that it seems like you're seeing another mural or another sculpture on every corner. And sometimes even in the crosswalks.



Arts Advocate docent Nanette Crist talks about the murals painted by Nate Baranowski at Florida Studio Theatre. (Photo: Spencer Fordin)

Enter [Arts Advocates](#), which has developed a walking curriculum of the city's public art treasury.

The local group is now running three tours where its docents discuss the pieces on display and the public proliferation of local art, and the Five Points walk recently brought a group to enjoy the scenery around the Art Ovation Hotel and the Florida Studio Theatre.

The tour, led by docents Nanette Crist, Judy Levine and Stephenie Frasher, started right in the shadow of the Art Ovation Hotel, and the talk began at the beginning of Sarasota's local art scene.

The first contributions to Sarasota public art occurred through John Ringling back in the 1920s, and the sculptures he donated still decorate St. Armands Circle.

Decades later, Sarasota began its own [public art](#) program, and it now has more than 80 pieces of

public art on display.

Starting at Art Ovation and walking up Cocoanut Avenue, the tour finds three highlights within the first block.

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The mural reads "Love One Another" and is festooned with rainbow bright lines and colored hearts.





and to foster an air of inclusivity.

You won't have to walk too far, like literally across Cocoanut Avenue, to find the next hub of activity.

There are a group of murals and sculptures around the Florida Studio Theatre campus, and the area is dominated by the work of muralist Nate Baranowski.

Baranowski contributed three murals that take up the entire side of a building, and he also worked on a smaller and more intimate piece of William Shakespeare in the theater's inner courtyard.

Two of the Baranowski murals are re-creations of pieces by Eugene Ivanov, and another was inspired by a piece made by Robert Evans Hughes. That last piece, an ethereal woman, evokes the style of "A Midsummer Night's Dream."

"There's a lot going on. The colors are very saturated. It's a complex painting," says Crist of the mural. "It's a beautiful work of art. You don't really need to study it to look for some deeper meaning. You just get to enjoy it."

The tour also makes a stop at a lovely sculpture with a long history in Sarasota called Butterfly Lady that graces the front courtyard of Florida Studio Theatre, and another sculpture arranged in the intersection of Cocoanut Avenue.

That latter sculpture — dubbed Jumping Fish by Jeff Laramore — is intended to evoke the image of fish breaking through the surface of the water, and Levine said it was commissioned with a \$150,000 grant by the city.

"It's here in the roundabout. It stands 16 feet tall, 12 feet wide," says Levine.

"Look how open the design is. The artist has to think about safety, visibility of traffic and things we never really consider an artist doing."

Jumping Fish is one of three roundabout projects that have already been brought to completion, and there are roundabout art improvement projects in the works at four additional locations.

The Five Points walking tour winds back past the Art Ovation hotel and includes a brief lesson on sculpture

Arts Advocates Walking Tours

City Hall: 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Feb. 14

Rosemary District: 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. March 11

Tickets: \$30; members \$28

Info: [ArtsAdvocates.org](https://www.ArtsAdvocates.org)

Contact: NCrist17@gmail.com

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Muralists Marco Bell and Monica Spain stand in front of their mural on the fifth floor of the Palm Avenue Parking Garage. (Photo: Spencer Fordin)

There are five distinct murals in the garage dealing with the disparate elements of the Sarasota art scene: theater (sixth floor), opera (fifth floor), music (fourth floor), film (third floor) and dance (second floor).

The murals were completed as part of the "Going Vertical" edition of the 2012 Sarasota Chalk Festival, and they each choose fitting subjects to illustrate their theme.

Muralists Marco Bell and Monica Spain, who painted the opera mural, chose a Madame Butterfly motif to underline that the garage empties into the Sarasota Opera facility.

"Musicians and artists always say, 'It's nice to get work,'" says Bell of the mural. "Originally, I think we thought we were going to be the one on the floor below.

"We had originally planned for this to be on one facade, but it turns out that it turns right here. It worked out in that our design didn't have to be modified; it just took a bend in it."

The interesting part is that the tour, which takes about 90 minutes, only covers part of Sarasota's public arts

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Arts Advocates also conducts tours of the [City Hall](#) area — which will next be held on Feb. 14 — and of the [Rosemary District](#), which is scheduled for March 11.





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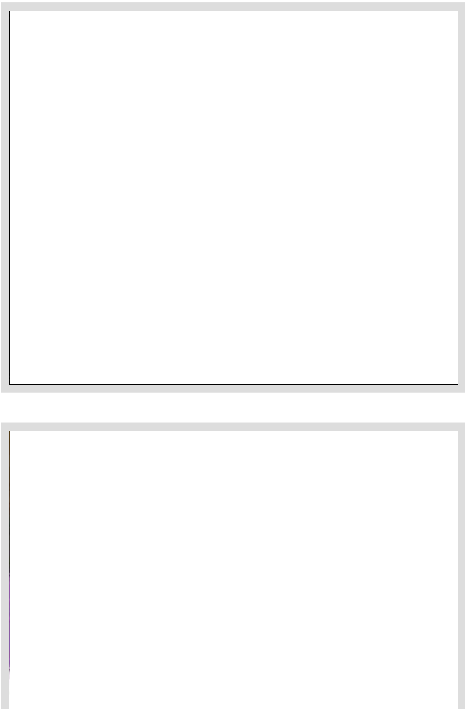
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