



ARTS SCENE by Maggie Duffy

HERE COMES THE SUN

Post-impressionist painter Paul Cézanne famously said, “Art is a harmony parallel with nature.” This is especially true of the nature celebrated at Sarasota’s “living museum,” Marie Selby Botanical Gardens.

In the past, the gardens’ exhibition series has translated famous works of art into stunning horticultural displays. But its latest installment celebrates legendary musician George Harrison’s somewhat surprising passion for gardening itself. “George Harrison: A Gardener’s Life” is on view now through June 29.

In 1970, after The Beatles disbanded, Harrison purchased the estate of Friar Park in Oxfordshire, England. The estate was built in the late 19th century by a lawyer named Sir Frank Crisp, but by the time Harrison bought it, it was in extreme disrepair. Along with his wife, Olivia, Harrison completely replanted and revived the property.

Selby Gardens’ horticulture team recreated highlights from Friar Park throughout the gardens. Using the archaic vernacular taken from a 1914 plan from the garden, vignettes are named “Ye Dial Garden” (a topiary display filled with ornate sundials); “Ye Alpine Garden” (an impressive water feature); “Ye Kolam Garden” (an ornate nod to the South Indian art form); and “Ye Treble Garden” (the best photo-op with views of Sarasota Bay). Try not to get lost like I did among the Clusia in “Ye Maze for Losing Ye Bodies.”

Harrison’s music, which plays at each



“Ye Kolam Garden,” in Marie Selby Botanical Gardens’ exhibition, “George Harrison: A Gardener’s Life,” is ornate and colorful. Photo by Ryan Gamma Photography.

display, is woven together by decorative screens with excerpts of Olivia’s flowery poetry describing their lives as gardeners. Historical photographs also ground the experience with wonderful shots of Harrison, sometimes being very playful.

The exhibition ends at the Museum of Botany & the Arts, where there are more photographs and ephemera. Harrison used part of the home as a recording studio where famed musicians, including

Ravi Shankar, visited.

Enlarged on one wall is the image of Harrison’s handwritten lyrics to his ode, “Ballad of Sir Frankie Crisp (Let It Roll).” The song plays in the museum, bringing it all full circle. selby.org.

On exhibit at the Morean Arts Center

Every year I highly anticipate the “Fresh



Tampa artist Norbert Gonsalves’ fluid ceramic sculptures are featured in the Morean Arts Center’s “Fresh Squeezed” exhibition. Courtesy of the Morean Arts Center.



Caroline Crawford’s paintings of figures in bodies of water are featured in the Morean Arts Center’s “Fresh Squeezed” exhibition. Courtesy of the Morean Arts Center.

Squeezed: Emerging Artists in Florida” exhibition at the Morean Arts Center in St. Petersburg. Chief curator Amanda Cooper always finds Florida’s best and brightest emerging artists for this show, now in its ninth year. It’s on now through June 26.

New this year is the addition of gallery space in the Chihuly Collection right across the street. Not only does it add more to see there, but it helps to bridge the spaces.

Two artists are featured in the Chihuly: Caroline Crawford (Gainesville) and Norbert Gonsalves (Tampa). I just want to dive into Crawford’s figurative oil paintings of women swimming in sparkling turquoise pools. They’re the epitome of summer.

Gonsalves explains in his bio that in his work he tries to capture *rass*, a Hindi word that refers to the sap of a tree. He tries to render the essence of a subject by arranging the clay into abstract compositions.

At the Morean Arts Center, look for the work of Benedicta Opoku-Mensah (Gainesville). Originally from Ghana, where sculpture is considered a male-dominated discipline (according to the artist’s bio), Opoku-Mensah uses sculpture, performance, poetry, video and installations to narrate her “journey of self-discovery” as she negotiates her reality versus society’s expectations of her. That’s a shining example of the boundary-pushing work I’ve come to expect with “Fresh Squeezed.” morean-artscenter.org.