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**For Immediate Release**

## **FLORIDA NOW Brings Together Artists Shaping Craft Today**

**A look at contemporary craft across Florida, from process to idea-driven work.**

**Exhibition Dates:** May 2–June 13, 2026

**Opening Reception:** Saturday, May 9, 6–8 pm

**Location:** Florida CraftArt, 501 Central Avenue, St. Petersburg, FL

St. Petersburg, FL — Florida CraftArt presents *Florida NOW*, an exhibition highlighting the depth and diversity of contemporary fine craft being produced across the state today. The exhibition will be on view May 2 through June 13, 2026, at Florida CraftArt in downtown St. Petersburg.

*Florida NOW* is co-curated by Holly Hanessian, recently retired Head of Ceramics at Florida State University, and Florida CraftArt CEO Jorge Vidal. The exhibition brings together artists working in clay, glass, fiber, metal, wood, and mixed media. It reflects a wide range of approaches, from a deep focus on materials and process to work that explores ideas, stories, and personal experience. Together, these works offer a vivid snapshot of how artists across Florida are working in craft today.

Participating artists include Wendy Bruce, Cheryl Dunnigan, Marty Fielding, Samantha Freeman, Dominique Labauvie, Jillian Mayer, Milton Mizell, Charles Parkhill, Evelyn Politzer, Lauren Shapiro, and Rob Stern.

Presented as part of Florida CraftArt's 75th Anniversary, *Florida NOW* is also connected to Handwork 2026, a nationwide effort recognizing the enduring cultural impact of craft in America and reflecting on the nation's 250-year history through the work of makers.

"Craft isn't just a category. It's a place where artists are actively experimenting," said Hanessian. "You see incredible skill with materials, but also artists pushing those materials in new ways, blurring the lines between craft and fine art."

Milton Mizell, a Miami-based artist, creates marquetry portraits from carefully selected veneers, using the natural color and grain of wood in place of paint. His subjects, drawn from the Black community, emerge through subtle shifts in tone and the direction of the wood grain, which becomes line, shadow, and texture. From a distance, the work reads as a portrait. Up close, it resolves into a mosaic. In *Untitled 2*, the subject meets the viewer's gaze directly. His expression is both defiant and at ease, steady and self-possessed. The bold pattern of his shirt contrasts with the stillness of his face, its

complexity unfolding piece by piece. The result is a portrait that feels both immediate and enduring.

Wendy Bruce, based in Largo, Florida, creates intricate fiber works that function as drawings made entirely of thread. Built through a process of stitched lines on water-soluble material, her compositions emerge gradually, shaped by intuition and revision. In *The Pieces You Put Back Together*, the image feels less like a place and more like the interior of a memory. There are hints of storm and rising water, blossoms adrift from their stems and suspended in space, and birds moving through the scene as quiet signals of hope. Rooted in themes of resilience and recovery, the work lingers in the space between disruption and repair.

Miami-based artist Lauren Shapiro's contribution to the exhibition explores the intersection of ceramics and technology, using her practice to examine the natural world and the fragile ecosystems of South Florida. In *Spectral Nature*, she brings that sensibility into dialogue with history, creating an object that feels both ornamental and slightly uncanny. Set on a reflective base inspired by 18th-century bracket legs, a coral-like ceramic form supports a glass enclosure, recalling a bell jar. Within it, a faint, hologram-like image of subtropical plant life appears, drawing on a Victorian illusion technique known as Pepper's Ghost. In doing so, Shapiro reflects on the tension between preservation and change, drawing on historical ways of observing and containing nature to consider what may be at risk today.

Rather than pointing to a single direction, *Florida NOW* makes clear that contemporary craft in Florida is moving along many paths at once. What connects the work is a shared attention to material and a willingness to push beyond it, whether through technique, concept, or a combination of both. The result is an exhibition grounded in tradition while remaining open to new ways of thinking and making.

In addition to the exhibition, Florida CraftArt will host a statewide virtual panel discussion moderated by Hanessian and featuring participating artists. The public is invited to join the conversation and gain insight into the ideas, processes, and perspectives shaping contemporary craft in Florida. More information about the panel discussion will be available at [floridacraftart.org](http://floridacraftart.org).

Florida CraftArt is a nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing Florida's fine craft artists and engaging the community through exhibitions and educational programming. All exhibitions and programs are offered at no charge to the public, made possible through the generous support of sponsors.

## **CUTLINES**

- 1 Untitled2.jpg — Milton Mizell. A marquetry portrait where wood grain becomes line, shadow, and presence.
- 2 Wendy Bruce\_The pieces you put back together\_thread\_2026\_32H x 28L\_\$2200.jpeg — Wendy Bruce. Thread as drawing, forming a shifting landscape of memory, resilience, and repair.
- 3 Spectral Nature.PNG — Lauren Shapiro. A ceramic form and glass enclosure conjure a spectral image of subtropical plant life, reflecting on preservation and what may be at risk.