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Want More Culture? Look on Campus

A guide to the thriving art scene at local colleges **By Michael Korb**

GULFSHORE CULTURE



Artist Theo Wujcik's exhibit ran in the spring at the Bob Rauschenberg Gallery at Florida SouthWestern State College.

IT USED TO BE THAT YOU COULD count on area colleges to deliver two subpar performances of *The Mikado* and a student-faculty photography exhibit featuring an inordinate amount of black-and-white fallen leaves. To attend either meant one of two things: You were giving someone in the cast a ride home or you had an unnatural fondness for Triscuits topped with American cheese.

But as Jacob Dylan's dad used to say, "The times, they are a-changin'." We're lucky to have three universities in Southwest Florida that offer residents the chance to partake in their arts and cultural events as if you were a 20-year-old coed happily experimenting with the "special" brownies. After all, there's not much that can compare to the raw excitement and naïf wonderment of art on campus.

Florida SouthWestern State College

Florida SouthWestern State College is the granddaddy of the region's art scene thanks largely to The Bob Rauschenberg Gallery. Founded in 1979 as The Gallery of Fine Arts at Edison Community College, it was the first guarded and climate-controlled gallery space in Southwest Florida, according to Jade Dellinger, the college's director of exhibitions and collections. Rauschenberg, who moved to the area in 1970, eventually did 15 exhibitions there. "He really used it as a laboratory for his work," Dellinger says.

Over the years, it has brought big-time art to little Southwest Florida. Everyone from Yoko Ono to Wayne White has exhibited and interacted with students here. The current exhibit (through Feb. 6) is *Keith Edmier: Edison*

Impluvium, a site-specific, full-scale sculptural recreation of the historic 1910 concrete swimming pool located at the Edison-Ford Winter Estates. The exhibit also features a first—Edison's full-head plaster cast death mask.

When visitors enter the interior walls of the "pool" (there's no water), they are greeted by 50 original life masks, most created by Edmier. Some of those masks include celebrities such as Farrah Fawcett and David Bowie. Edmier describes the installation as a reimagined ancient ruin that references both the Roman Republic-era idea of life casts as ancestral masks and the impluviums (water basins) found in the atriums of houses in Pompeii.