

# Artis—Naples

*Home of The Baker Museum  
and the Naples Philharmonic*

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## **Artis—Naples, The Baker Museum Announces *George Gershwin and Modern Art: A Rhapsody in Blue* exhibition**

**Groundbreaking show marks first major  
museum exhibition devoted to the composer's  
passion for visual arts**

**Exhibition accompanies a season-long  
multidisciplinary celebration of George Gershwin**

***On view February 10 – June 16, 2024***

**Naples, FL (December 12, 2023)**—Artis—Naples, The Baker Museum announces the opening of the exhibition *George Gershwin and Modern Art: A Rhapsody in Blue* on February 10, 2024. The exhibition, which takes visitors on a tour through Gershwin's visual dimension, will be on view through June 16, 2024. Gershwin is widely known and beloved for his innovative work as a composer, songwriter and pianist, but his passion and talents extended to the visual arts as well. Before his untimely death from a brain tumor at the age of 38, he produced numerous paintings, drawings and photographs, and his collection of modern art was one of the most significant of his day. The exhibition will feature paintings, sculptures and other artworks from George Gershwin's collection of modern art; paintings, drawings and photographs created by Gershwin himself; and art by leading contemporary artists who were inspired by Gershwin and his music.

The culmination of more than 20 years of research, the exhibition is curated by Olivia Mattis, Ph.D., guest curator, and Courtney McNeil, museum director and chief curator. It was made possible through loans from museums around the world and important private collections, including those of the descendants of the various branches of the Gershwin family.

The Baker Museum Director and Chief Curator Courtney McNeil said she anticipates that the exhibition will open visitors' eyes to the importance of visual art to Gershwin's creative process. "Visitors will witness a convergence of artistic practices, where Gershwin's boundless creativity leapt from composing to painting and back again," McNeil stated. "Just as Gershwin was influenced by the works of leading modern painters and sculptors, so too did he inspire visual artists, both during his life and for generations to come." Artists featured in the exhibition who were inspired by Gershwin and his music include Miguel Covarrubias, Isamu Noguchi, Andy Warhol and contemporary artists Kara Walker and Jeffrey Gibson.

The Baker Museum presents this exhibition in conjunction with a season-long multidisciplinary celebration of George Gershwin by Artis—Naples on the 100th anniversary of *Rhapsody in Blue*, the composer's genre-blending masterwork that effortlessly combined the sounds of classical music and jazz. An original *Rhapsody in Blue* manuscript, loaned from the Library of Congress, will be included in the exhibition.

“George Gershwin excelled in a multitude of fields, and yet maybe his most defining characteristic is that of *collaborator*,” said Artis—Naples CEO and President Kathleen van Bergen. “He partnered with others to blend musical genres, broadened the perspective and possibilities of classical music and experimented with the visual arts as a painter, collector and wildly cultured eye. George Gershwin embodies our organization’s multidisciplinary mission, and through this centennial celebration of *Rhapsody in Blue*, we hope to inspire the public through the visual arts, orchestral concerts, chamber music, popular presentations, dance offerings and lectures.”

“Few composers have so indisputably captured and defined the spirit of their own era and culture more successfully and enduringly than George Gershwin,” said Artis—Naples Artistic and Music Director Designate Alexander Shelley. “This exploration of Gershwin as an art collector, artist and composer is precisely the sort of multidisciplinary artistic celebration that inspires us all and opens doors to new knowledge, experience and fulfillment.”

As a multidisciplinary arts organization, Artis—Naples is uniquely equipped to celebrate the multitalented legacy of George Gershwin through the visual and performing arts. In addition to The Baker Museum’s *George Gershwin and Modern Art* exhibition, Artis—Naples celebrates Gershwin all season through a wide array of musical and educational programming, with highlights including a Naples Philharmonic Masterworks program featuring two versions of *Rhapsody in Blue* with esteemed conductor David Robertson and pianist Orli Shaham, Great American Songbook luminary Michael Feinstein performing a George Gershwin tribute concert and participating in a moderated conversation about Gershwin and his family, a lecture by curator Olivia Mattis on the groundbreaking *George Gershwin and Modern Art* exhibition, a Naples Philharmonic program featuring Gershwin’s *An American in Paris* conducted by Artistic and Music Director Designate Alexander Shelley and more. The exhibition is accompanied by a major publication by Scala Arts Publishers, which includes new scholarship and never-before-published archival materials, photographs and correspondence.

*This exhibition is generously sponsored by the Collier County Tourist Development Council, Commerce Trust, Roger and Kathy Marino, Waterside Shops and Jeri L. Wolfson.*

### **Celebrating Gershwin Programming**

#### ***George Gershwin and Modern Art: A Rhapsody in Blue Exhibition***

George Gershwin is widely known and beloved for his innovative work as a composer, songwriter and pianist, but his passion and talents extended to the visual arts as well. Before his untimely death at the age of 38, he produced numerous paintings, drawings and photographs, and his collection of modern art was one of the most significant of his day. This will be the first major museum exhibition devoted to the composer’s passion for the visual arts, featuring paintings, sculptures and other artworks from Gershwin’s collection by leading modern artists; paintings, drawings and photographs created by Gershwin; works by noteworthy artists inspired by Gershwin and his music; and select ephemera.

**February 10 – June 16, 2024**  
**The Baker Museum, third floor**

#### ***Reflections on George Gershwin and Modern Art: A Conversation with Michael Feinstein***

Michael Feinstein, lecturer  
Courtney McNeil, host

Early in his career, Michael Feinstein worked as an archivist for Ira Gershwin. They later became close friends, and Feinstein went on to become one of the premier interpreters of the music of George and Ira Gershwin. Join Feinstein and The Baker Museum Director and Chief Curator Courtney McNeil for a discussion on the Gershwin family and their legacy.

**Sunday, February 11, 1pm**  
**Signature Event Space**

**Michael Feinstein: A Tribute to George Gershwin**

Michael Feinstein, vocals and piano

In conjunction with Artis—Naples' season-long honoring of Gershwin's multidisciplinary artistic legacy, Feinstein reprises his acclaimed show *A Tribute to George Gershwin*.

**Monday, February 12, 8pm**

**Hayes Hall**

**Masterworks: Rhapsody in Blue**

Naples Philharmonic

David Robertson, conductor

Orli Shaham, piano

Schoenberg — Chamber Symphony No. 1

Gershwin — *Rhapsody in Blue* for Piano and Jazz Band

Schoenberg — Five Pieces for Orchestra, Op. 16

Gershwin — *Rhapsody in Blue* for Piano and Orchestra

In celebration of the 100th anniversary of George Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*, the Naples Philharmonic presents a program of two versions of the masterpiece: first in its original form for piano and jazz band—a quintessential example of the American jazz age with its syncopated rhythms, bluesy harmonies and virtuosic piano solos—and then in the more well-known version for full symphony orchestra that brings out new colors and nuances in the music.

**Thursday-Saturday, February 15-17, 8pm**

**Hayes Hall**

**Musical Paris in the Early 20th Century**

Fred Plotkin, lecturer

Some beloved cities become musical capitals when many of the best and the brightest composers and performers flock there. Such was the case in Paris in the early 20th century, when it also attracted the finest visual artists and writers. These creators inspired French musicians (including Debussy, Poulenc, Ravel and Satie) and foreigners such as Gershwin, Prokofiev and Stravinsky. Join Fred Plotkin to discover cultural Paris when it sizzled.

**Wednesday, February 28, 10am**

**Rowe Center**

**Piano Talks: All Gershwin All the Time**

Jodie DeSalvo, piano

Mark Sanders, tenor

Jodie DeSalvo celebrates the 100th birthday of Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* with tenor Mark Sanders, performing classic songs such as *Embraceable You*, *Someone to Watch Over Me* and *I Got Rhythm*. Also featured on the program will be a solo piano version of *An American in Paris* and the beloved *Rhapsody in Blue*.

**Thursday, February 29, 7pm**

**Daniels Pavilion**

**Giordano Dance Chicago**

Hailed by *Chicago Tribune* as "American jazz dance royalty," Giordano Dance Chicago now celebrates 60 years as an integral member of the performing arts community. Giordano Dance Chicago brings their lively style to Hayes Hall, dancing to a selection of jazz music, a number of new works by Emmy-winning choreographer Al Blackstone danced to some of Gershwin's most beloved melodies, including *Embraceable You*, *I Got Rhythm* and *Rhapsody in Blue*.

**Friday, March 8, 8pm**

**Hayes Hall**

**The Baker Museum Lecture: Gershwin's Eye**

Olivia Mattis, Ph.D., curator

George Gershwin—the legendary composer of *An American in Paris*, *Rhapsody in Blue*, *The Man I Love*, *Porgy and Bess* and so much more—had a refined musical ear. But audiences are unaware that he also had an eye — as both a collector and a practitioner of art. This talk takes a tour through Gershwin's visual dimension to open up new ways of thinking about the composer and his creative impulses.

**Wednesday, March 13, 2pm**

**Signature Event Space**

### **Masterworks: *An American in Paris* and *The Firebird Suite***

Naples Philharmonic

Alexander Shelley, artistic and music director designate

Jess Gillam, saxophone

Gershwin — *An American in Paris*

Anna Clyne — *Glasslands* for Saxophone and Orchestra

Ravel — *La valse*

Stravinsky — *The Firebird Suite*

Artistic and Music Director Designate Alexander Shelley returns to continue an exploration of the art of George Gershwin in a Masterworks program showcasing a range of musical styles. Opening with Gershwin's *An American in Paris*, the orchestra takes audiences on a stroll through the bustling streets of the French capital, with its jazz-inspired rhythms and lively energy.

**Thursday-Friday, March 14-15, 8pm**

**Hayes Hall**

### **The Musicals of George and Ira Gershwin**

Greg Brown, lecturer

From their early days writing for Tin Pan Alley to the escapist but musically sophisticated musicals of the 1920s and early 1930s and their seminal operatic work *Porgy and Bess*, the Gershwin brothers forever changed the landscape of Broadway and popular music. Join us as we examine how they brought America's great native art form, jazz, to the center of Broadway stages and made an indelible impact on the "Broadway Sound," which endures to this day.

**Wednesday, March 20, 10am**

**Rowe Center**

### **All That Jazz: *The Music of George Gershwin***

Naples Philharmonic Jazz Orchestra

The Naples Philharmonic Jazz Orchestra brings George Gershwin's iconic melodies to life with grooving improvisations, lively arrangements and a whole lot of soul—a night of unforgettable music, showcasing the enduring legacy of a true American musical legend.

**Wednesday, May 15, 6pm and 8:30pm**

**Daniels Pavilion**

For more information on this multidisciplinary season-long celebration of George Gershwin, visit <https://artisnaples.org/calendar/celebrating-gershwin>.

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### **ARTIS—NAPLES**

Home of The Baker Museum and the Naples Philharmonic, Artis—Naples is unique among cultural institutions nationwide, equally dedicated to both the visual and performing arts featuring artists of global distinction.

### **KIMBERLY K. QUERREY and LOUIS A. SIMPSON CULTURAL CAMPUS**

Led by CEO and President Kathleen van Bergen and, beginning in the 2024-25 season, Sharon and Timothy Ubben Artistic and Music Director Alexander Shelley, Artis—Naples offers more than 800 paid and free events annually across its 8.5-acre Kimberly K. Querrey and Louis A. Simpson Cultural Campus. Artis—Naples welcomes thousands of visitors each year for a broad array of artistic and educational opportunities perfect for audiences of all backgrounds and interests. The cultural campus is home to five buildings, including two performance halls (Frances Pew Hayes Hall and Myra J. Daniels Pavilion), The Baker Museum, the Toni Stabile Education Building and the Kohan Administration Building.

### **NAPLES PHILHARMONIC**

The Naples Philharmonic has long been recognized as one of the cornerstones of Southwest Florida's arts community. As part of Artis—Naples, the Naples Philharmonic performs more than 140 orchestral and chamber music concerts, as well as opera and ballet, education, community and special event concerts annually between September and June in the 1,477-seat

Hayes Hall, the 283-seat Daniels Pavilion and around the Southwest Florida region. The Naples Philharmonic has enjoyed a history of working with world-class music directors and recently announced the appointment of Artistic and Music Director Alexander Shelley, who immediately assumes the role of Artistic and Music Director Designate through the 2023-24 season. Renowned violinist James Ehnes continues as artistic partner through the 2023-24 season, working with Naples Philharmonic musicians in a variety of settings with a focus on inspiring and embodying a high level of artistry. Podium leadership includes Principal Pops Conductor Jack Everly, celebrating 14 years in this role in the 2023-24 season and bringing pops performances that celebrate music in its many forms. Radu Paponiu serves as associate conductor of the Naples Philharmonic and director of the Naples Philharmonic Youth Orchestra, and Alvin Ho serves as assistant conductor of the Naples Philharmonic.

### **THE BAKER MUSEUM**

The Baker Museum is the foremost fine art museum in Southwest Florida, presenting an ambitious slate of exhibitions annually to complement installations of works from its permanent collection. Comprising more than 4,000 objects, the museum's broad holdings of 20th- and 21st-century art reflect particular strengths in modern art of the United States and Mexico. The Baker Museum's collections reflect the generosity and commitment of area collectors, including significant gifts from the collection of the late Olga Hirshhorn.

With more than two decades of collecting and exhibiting, the museum is committed to the stewardship and scholarship of its collections and to fostering inspiring and transformative experiences with the visual arts. At the same time, The Baker Museum partners with the world's leading arts institutions to make extraordinary exhibitions accessible to the Southwest Florida community—including recently the National Portrait Gallery, London and the Helen Frankenthaler Foundation. In 2020, Artis—Naples celebrated the opening of an 18,000-square-foot expansion of The Baker Museum, designed by Weiss/Manfredi Architecture/Landscape/Urbanism, which created new spaces for multidisciplinary exploration and social interaction.

### **EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY**

In addition to creating and presenting visual and performing arts, Artis—Naples provides robust education and community activities for students of all ages in Collier and counties. Each season, thousands of Collier County Public Schools interact with Artis—Naples education programming, both on its cultural campus and in their classrooms. Beyond our commitment to youth education, the Lifelong Learning program provides engaging lectures and study opportunities for adults seeking to engage more deeply with the arts.

The Friends of Artis—Naples, comprised of more than 3,500 donor households, offers activities, travel experiences and events designed to foster a deeper relationship between patrons and the arts.

In 2017, Artis—Naples acquired the Naples International Film Festival (NIFF), expanding its film offerings and providing a platform for the festival's continued excellence and growth. In 2023, the festival's 15th anniversary year, NIFF was named one of *MovieMaker Magazine's* "20 Great Film Festivals in Vacation Destinations."

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