

VANITY FAIR

At the Parrish Art Museum's Midsummer Gala, John Leguizamo, and More Celebrate Art in the Hamptons

On Saturday, the “epicenter for the art world in the summer” held its annual gala, raising \$1.7 million for programs that serve the whole Hamptons community.

BY VANESSA GRIGORIADIS
JULY 21, 2026



Allegra Sky Leguizamo, John Leguizamo, Sanford Biggers, Arana Hankin-Biggers [BRE JOHNSON/BFA.COM](https://www.brejohnson.com)

“Check out the intensive labor and work here,” says actor John Leguizamo, peering at a series of brightly colored, gridded Tony Bechara artworks at the Parrish Art Museum in Water Mill. He stood before it motionlessly, grinning a little. “It seems unfathomable!”

This type of close-up and unhurried viewing was happening throughout the Parrish’s annual midsummer gala, which, instead of taking place in the museum’s meadow, as usual, was moved indoors due to the flash floods

drenching New York on Saturday night. A jaunty bar now found its place in a gallery featuring Sanford Biggers's installation of graffiti-inspired cloud sculptures, and guests moved slowly through a gallery of contemplative Emmi Whitehorse paintings as well. "The rain plan has given people a chance to see the art," says dinner cochair and trustee Charlotte Lucas Pilaro. "Sometimes they don't get to see it, since they're heading straight through" to the party.



Arana Hankin-Biggers, Sanford Biggers BRE JOHNSON/BFA.COM

"Straight through" is the way one tends to ambulate through the Parrish, with more than 12,000 square feet of flexible exhibition space filling its exquisite, low-slung longhouse of sorts. But the gorgeous building is only part of what makes the Parrish unusual. The museum is a unique institution in the Hamptons, serving several local school districts with a majority of Latino and Hispanic students, while mounting a remarkably high caliber of shows. Founded in 1898 by Samuel Longstreth Parrish, a Quaker attorney with a collection of Italian Renaissance paintings and reproductions of sculptures, it was originally located on Jobs Lane in Southampton, but relocated to this former tree nursery in Water Mill next to Duck Walk Vineyards in 2012, commissioning Herzog & de Meuron for its new home.

Each side of the Parrish's building is interesting, and guests entered from an unexpected corner on Saturday night, under the double-peaked roof. Dancers from Parsons whirled around in their stocking feet, finding their way through a crowd that included Astrid Hill, Chris and Christina Cuomo, and Lisa and Richard Perry. Clouds, which for the artist Biggers symbolize potential and mutability, formed the theme of the evening, hanging over dinner on the museum's terrace in synthetic cotton and wire constructions from an event designer.



PETER ZWOLINSKI/BFA.COM

Throughout the evening, the Parrish’s executive director, Mónica Ramírez-Montagut, could be found greeting guests, radiating positive energy and enthusiasm. “The legacy of this region goes from American Impressionists to abstract expressionists to pop artists to the most relevant contemporary artists living and working today,” she says. “Historically, artists came for the type of light we have here, and the natural environment, plus the proximity to New York City. Currently, it’s an epicenter for the art world in the summer. Artists want to show their art at the Parrish, to dialogue with our collection.”



Jonathan Simkhai, April Hennig Karras BRE JOHNSON/BFA.COM

The Parrish has a permanent collection of more than 3,600 works from both little-known and venerable local artists, like Jackson Pollock and Lee Krasner, the de Koonings, Ross Bleckner, and many more. It’s these legends that contemporary artists often measure themselves against, and want their work to be seen alongside. Artist Enoc Perez, standing near the entrance to the dinner banquet with his family, explains that he bought a house in the Hamptons during the financial crisis in the late 2000s —“back when it was possible to buy a house here,” he says. Perez also has a new art studio in the Hamptons. “I took the dog to the veterinarian, and I was looking at the space near him, and thought, This is really cool. I asked, who do I call to rent here? And he said he was the landlord.... I have three

floors, like a birdhouse.” Perez has enjoyed the Parrish for years, but now finds himself here often. “Since Mónica took over, even more artists want to show here,” he says. “The museum is vibrant...It’s in a renaissance.”

Nearby, the irrepressible older artist Nina Yankowitz, who completed a retrospective of her six-decade-long career at the Parrish earlier this year, was talking to Joan Semmel, 93, in a dress adorned with stars. Both have had homes in the Hamptons for decades, and Semmel will have her first major show on the East End at the Parrish in 2027. Amy Oppenheim also talked about the enjoyable process of working with the museum on a show by her husband, Dennis Oppenheim, the conceptual and land artist who passed away in 2011. And Swiss artist Ugo Rondinone, who showed a wealth of farm tools and kitchenware he spray-painted gold at the Parrish a few years ago, was chatting at a tall table about his experience making art at his home and studio on the North Fork, in Mattituck. “It’s just quiet,” he said. “Over there, there are only artists.”

It’s true that the South Fork is increasingly inhospitable to those without enormous fortunes, but on Saturday, Capital One acted as a presenting sponsor, and collectors and patrons of the museum raised more than \$1.7 million for programs that truly serve the whole Hamptons community, including funds for programming for individuals with a range of disabilities. The museum operates all year, and sometimes that means tumbleweeds could fly through the galleries, but on other chilly days, as when I visited in the spring, it’s bustling. On that day, locals were gathered near a large Tschabalala Self painting, *Adam and Eve*, created for a museum in Australia and on view for the first time in the US as part of the Fresh Paint exhibition series from the Parrish and the FLAG Art Foundation. FLAG is deepening its partnership with the museum as well, committing to multiple shows each year until 2030, and was presenting a show comprising roughly 20 Ellsworth Kelly works created between the 1940s and 2010s. Strikingly, these great works coexisted in the museum with an enormous exhibition of art from schoolchildren on the East End, a tradition at the museum for more than 70 years, with contributors from Flanders and East Hampton.



John Leguizamo, Allegra Sky Leguizamo, Justine Leguizamo DAVID BENTHAL/BFA.COM

This fall, some of the shows will go back to the museum’s roots. “Abstract Expressionism: The East End, 1940 to Today” will present work from the permanent collection, some from the 1940s around when Pollock and Krasner had Willem and Elaine de Kooning stay with them in the Springs, and continuing on through the eras to include works by Suzanne McClelland and Stanley Whitney. There’s an upcoming historical show of Walter Granville-Smith and William Merritt Chase (the museum holds the largest public collection of Chase works, along with an extensive archive). But there will also be newer works in juxtaposition to the shows, proving that at the Parrish, there is always a new artist’s legacy to create.