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**Collectors**  
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## Private collectors step in to fill institutional void in Palm Beach

Marvin and Elayne Mordes continue South Florida trend

**Jason Edward Kaufman**

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### New York

Palm Beach in South Florida lost its contemporary art gallery in 2004, but collector Marvin Mordes hopes to step in and fill that gap by opening his collection to the public.

Mr Mordes is in the final stages of converting a lakeside warehouse in Palm Beach, about an hour from Miami, into 16,000 square feet of exhibition space, with a 4,000 square-foot home attached.

The exhibition space will be used for a rotating selection of around 250 works drawn from his extensive collection of contemporary art. It will be open to the public free of charge, although by appointment only. A VIP group is scheduled to visit this month during the Palmbeach3 contemporary art fair but the public opening date is still to be confirmed.

Mr Mordes bought the building in 2004 and has spent several million dollars to install climate control, lighting and security in two large galleries. The north gallery is dedicated to photography, sculpture, and video, and includes works by the Bechers, Andreas Gursky, Thomas Ruff, Thomas Struth, Thomas Demand, Gilbert & George, Anish Kapoor, Richard Long and Sarah Sze. The south gallery is divided into installations by Juan Muñoz, Doug Aitken, John Baldessari, Rebecca Horn, Vito Acconci, Wolfgang Laib, Daniel Richter and Franz Ackermann, among others. Three rooms are showing videos by Bruce Nauman, Charles Sandison and Isaac Julien. The galleries and living space are connected by a revolving wall where a Sol LeWitt drawing will be hung.

Mr Mordes, 62, is a semi-retired neurologist who moved from Baltimore to West Palm Beach with his wife Elayne, an interior designer. The couple has been collecting since 1976, focusing on international contemporary and emerging artists acquired mainly from dealers rather than auctions. He mentions Sonnabend and Marian Goodman galleries in New York, Lisson Gallery in London, Galerie Xavier Hufkens in Brussels, Arndt & Partner in Berlin and Massimo Di Carlo in Milan as sources.

Mr and Mrs Mordes join a number of South Florida collectors who have opened their collections to the public, including Don and Mera Rubell, Martin Z. Margulies, and Rosa and Carlos de la Cruz. Norman and Irma Braman, who made their fortune through luxury car dealerships, recently revealed to The Art Newspaper that they are planning to open their collection of contemporary and Modern American art, which includes one of the most impressive private holdings of Calder in the world, to the public next year.

“My wife and I have been friends for years with the major collectors in Southern Florida,” says Mr Mordes. “But the people who most inspired me are Anton and Annick Herbert in Ghent, Belgium.” About 25 years ago they bought a five-floor warehouse where they live and exhibit their collection. “All of the collectors in Florida have benefited from their example. To me, they are the mother and father of this sort of movement,” says Mr Mordes.

“With the Palm Beach Institute closed, I hope there will still be life for contemporary art in the city. The Norton Museum has hired Mark Rosenthal as an adjunct curator, and I’m hoping that between local collectors and the museums we can foster a desire to understand and enjoy contemporary art.”

**COOKIE SETTINGS**