A colorful statement, and sparkly Webb at Norton

He decorates the way he dresses — colorfully — and somehow, Carleton Varney brings it all together into statements that are filled with life.

In the week before Valentine’s Day during a reception at Pioneer Linens in West Palm Beach, Varney, appropriately in pinks and reds with a touch of blue wrapped in a spectral tie, had a few more statements of blue wrapped in a spectral Virginia, the decorating the Carter White House. Given a great boost by Asia, the Americas, you name it. Having done grand manses such as Amway founder Richard DeVos’ sprawling estate in Manalapan, The Brazilian Court and The Breakers. In the works: The Colony. “Head to toe,” Varney said of what he calls the “truly the one iconic hotel in Palm Beach.”

Society jeweler David Webb, who has helped decorate Jackie Kennedy, Doris Duke and a few ladies who live along the beach, is the subject of an exhibit at the Norton Museum of Art, while another exhibit is featured separately in “To Jane, Love Andy,” a study of Andy Warhol’s work and his relationship with 60s supermodel and Palm Beach resident Jane Holzer. They put the “pop” in Pop Art, from the iconic Campbell’s soup cans to silent movies with actors who barely moved. The Warhol paintings that Holzer bought and the Chanel and Courrèges dresses she wore half a century ago add that extra special dimension to the show.

In addition to the special exhibits, the Norton’s permanent collection has some timely pieces, in particular King Pyrrhus, painted in 1656 by Dutch artist Ferdinand Bol. It was a gift to the Norton in 2007 by Valerie Delacorte in memory of her husband, George T. Delacorte, who founded Dell Publishing. Pyrrhus was a Greek general who twice defeated Roman armies, but lost so many troops in the process, that the victories were hollow. Hence the term “pyrrhic victory.” Bol’s Pyrrhus stands in defiant profile, hands planted against breastplate, head wrapped in a turban and topped by a crown.

Before World War II, it was owned by a Dutchman, Marcel Wolf, but as the Nazis took over Europe, they conspired to steal as many great works of art as possible. Hermann Göring, Hitler’s No. 2 man, decided he wanted King Pyrrhus. Perhaps he noticed the resemblance, but regardless, he had it stashed in his private borde at Carinhall, his country residence northeast of Berlin. As the war began to turn against the Nazis, they made plans to hide what they could and destroy the rest. They were thwarted by members of the U.S. Army’s Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives program, better known now, thanks to the new movie, as the “monuments men.”

After the war, the painting was returned to Wolf. In 1960, he put it up for auction in London. A New York gallery bought it and sold it to the Delacortes, who happened to own a winter home in Palm Beach Gardens and developed a relationship with the Norton. George died in 1991, and in his memory Valerie gave the Norton five Old Master paintings and $1 million. In 2008, she stunned museum officials with a “monumental” gift of 66 European sculptures and paintings by Rembrandt, Rubens, Tiepolo and others, including King Pyrrhus. It hangs in the Delacorte Gallery on the third floor. Now anyone can see it.

Bruce Helander could have been considered the Santa Claus of art, not because he gives things away, but because, like the old Ray Stevens song declares, “He’s everywhere! He’s everywhere!” Working in several media but best known for his collages, his talent is on display in more than 50 museums including the Guggenheim, the Smithsonian and the Norton, and in the collections of major patrons and the likes of Dennis Hopper. Ken Moffitt, former director of the Fort Lauderdale Museum of Art once said, “If there was a Pulitzer Prize for collage, Helander would surely win it.”

In Kansas, he earned a masters degree at the prestigious Rhode Island School of Design and later served as its provost and vice president of economic affairs before moving to West Palm Beach in 1982. He sets up exhibitions for other artists, writes books, and contributes to magazines and websites such as The Huffington Post. Helander also has caught the attention of the Florida Division of Cultural Affairs .... officially. In a few weeks he’ll be inducted into the Florida Artists Hall of Fame. The only other inductee this year: rock legend Tom Petty. Those nominated but not selected included West Palm Beach wildlife artist Janet Heaton and Jupiter street painter Jennifer Chaparro and singers Pat Boone (who was born in Jacksonville) and Bobby Goldsboro (born in Marniaa).
A year after the Florida Legislature established the Hall of Fame in 1986, Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, John Ringling, Ernest Hemingway became its first inductees. The roster, now at 55, includes Steve McLaughlin, Bob Hope, Ray Charles, Tennessee Williams, Zora Neale Hurston, Edward Villella, and Palm Beach County Commissioner Tilly ( toaster) Burt Reynolds (actor), Laura Woodward (artist), Ralph Nelson (arrowstron), Addison Mizer (designer) and Jackie Brice (artist).

Despite recent cold spells, Delray’s restaurant scene has been hot . . . literally. In early February, 32 East owner Butch Johnson, Table 42 and Porch announced plans to build a 4,000 square foot restaurant at 42 E. Atlantic Ave. “It’s our one phone call from the company that monitors alarms at his popular Atlantic Avenue eatery,” said Butch.

Within minutes Delray firefighters were on the scene and quickly located and doused a small blaze inside a wall near the wood-burning pizza oven. “It was spontaneous combustion,” Johnson said. “That material had been in the walls for years just heated up over time and finally caught fire. It was so close to the pizza oven that we were not able to see it.”

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L.L. Bean may be a legend in retailing, but the Bean name didn’t help his granddaughter’s foray into Delray’s restaurant scene. That includes offering fresh seafood from the icy waters of Maine, Linda Bean’s Perfect Maine Lobster never caught on years ago on the southeast corner of Atlantic and Second. But Delray restaurants don’t stay empty for long. Area restaurateur Gary Rack, who recently opened Racks Fish House + Oyster Bar in the old VFV club just behind Bean’s, has bought the space.

“We have a plan,” Rack’s General Manager Richard Combs said of what will be the fifth restaurant in the group. That includes opening Table 42 and Racks Downtown Eatery + Tavern in Boca and Racks Italian Kitchen in North Miami Beach. “It’s a new concept but we’re not ready to divulge it yet. We’ll reveal more in about six weeks, and we hope to open in late August or early September. I can say that it will be novel for Delray.”

After working in restaurants for decades, including the popular Renato’s in Palm Beach, Henry Lowenberg decided to follow his dream to own and buy one. He and wife, Pamela, found just what he wanted in Delray just south of Atlantic on Federal. Once a two-story frame house with metal roof and a big porch, it most recently had been Cafe Lowenberg, and quickly renamed it, naturally. The Porch and brought along Willie Lopez as chef to whip up fresh seafood and wood-fired pasta and pizza.

Now the Russian national soccer team knows how the Denver Broncos feel. On Feb. 8 at FAU Stadium, the U.S. women stomped them, 7-0 — an embarrassing differential in international soccer and several top Americans, including Abby Wambach and Megan Rapinoe, former members of the now defunct Boca-based Magic Jacks pro team, didn’t play until late in the game. Although the stadium holds more than 30,000, FAU officials were tickled that the game attracted 8,857 fans. The game was the third collaboration by the university and US Soccer, and Athletic Director Pat Chun expects more. “They can’t break us,” Chun said. “They know we have a great stadium, they get a decent crowd and we make a little money.

Anyone who thinks a university survives off tuition fees and ticket sales has no hope of passing the FCAT. Every little bit helps. That’s why Chun is also thrilled that the stadium will host a football bowl game next winter, and National Lacrosse League’s Florida Launch will call the stadium home. “It’s summer rental,” Chun said as he and acting President Dennis Crudele entertained trustees,boosters and local government leaders in the President’s Suite.

Some also speculate that the stadium might offer a perfect temporary home for David Beckham’s new Major League Soccer franchise, until he builds his stadium in Miami — that is, if he can raise the money to build it.

Crudele, incidentally, will stay on in an advisory position to help incoming President John Kelly settle in, but he’ll leave no later than December, because he is enrolled in the state’s deferred retirement option program.

The next big event in the stadium will be FAU’s Making Waves Gala in the Greenberg Tower. The fundraiser provides scholarships and support for veterans and first-generation students. Tickets are $125 and sponsorships already have raised nearly $500,000. Auction items include hot laps in a Porsche at Sebring Raceway, an Oceana Cruise and a $10,000 Saks gift card.

Incidentally, three members of the U.S. women’s soccer team made Rantsports’ “25 Most Beautiful Women in Sports” : goalkeeper Hope Solo and forwards Sydney Leroux and Alex Morgan, plus Jupiter Island’s recovering skier and Tiger Woods’ muse, Lindsey Vonn.

Here and there: Boca’s Festival of the Arts kicked off March 6 with a concert by Itzhak Perlman at Mizner Park Amphitheatre and a showcase with Forte, the operatic trio that won America’s Got Talent on March 15. In between, something for everyone: Bill T. Jones and Arnie Zane Dance Company (March 7), jazzman Arturo Sandoval with Monica Mancini and the Henry Mancini Institute Orchestra (March 8), author and historian Doris Kearns Goodwin (March 13) and Cirque de la Symphonie acrobats with the festival orchestra (March 14). For tickets and info, go to festivalboca.org.

Missing the festival will be Steve Maklasky, who suddenly resigned Jan. 31 as director of the Boca Raton Museum of Art after 2½ years. The four-paragraph news release praised Maklasky’s efforts to attract new supporters, new audiences and new money and wished him “success in all his future endeavors.” However, it offered not a hint of the reasons for his departure, which sources in the area art community suggest were not his own — that he was fired, but not for a good fundraiser and had not lived up to the board’s expectations.

Meanwhile the museum’s board of trustees has appointed Irvin Lippman as interim director. Lately residing in Fort Worth, Texas, Lippman served as executive director of the Museum of Art, Fort Lauderdale from 2003 to 2012. How do you get to Carnegie Hall? To the old saw “practice, practice, practice” add money, money, money. Especially for Dimensional Harmony, the Boynton Beach High School choir that just won the state high school competition and hopes to enter national events in Atlanta, Tennessee and New York. Total cost could exceed $60,000.

In 2010, Dimensional Harmony topped 1,000 U.S. choirs to win a Today show competition, and in 2008 at Carnegie Hall it backed up Broadway singers and Van Halen. Its first goal this year is to raise $5,000.

With the help of the Delray Beach Republican Club, the choir will perform at 3 p.m., March 15 at the Church of the Palms in Delray. Ticket donations start at a meager $25 and include a reception. To help, call Boynton Beach High School at 752-1200.

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