WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. - Kay and Bill Puchstein, new owners of the West Palm Beach Antiques Festival, reported great attendance and brisk sales at the inaugural event of the season Nov. 6-8. An early buyers admission feature was popular and will become a permanent feature of the festival.

The next event, Dec. 4-6, will have a holiday theme. Special presentations will provide gift-giving ideas.

As has been the case since 1996, Bob LeBlanc will be set up displaying an extensive collection of Florida art with a heavy concentration on the Florida Highwaymen. The market for Highwaymen art has been cyclical in the recent past, and while LeBlanc says prices for the better works remain strong, current conditions in the market present a good buying opportunity for investors in that segment of Florida art.

LeBlanc claims to have handled the first Highwaymen work to sell for more than $10,000 and has bought and sold more than 3,000 Highwaymen paintings his career.

The Highwaymen are more popular than ever. There are now eight books available on these mostly African-American artists who sold their paintings of Florida scenes by the roadside. LeBlanc has two Internet sites. His regular website http://www.highwaymen-buy-sell-trade.com, where viewers can browse his inventory and find more information on the subject. His recently instituted blog at http://highwaymenart.blogspot.com/?zx=1aa981dfe3f5da4b presents a running commentary on events and ideas in the art world in general and Florida art in particular.

One of the entries in the blog concerns a work by Donald Rust, an artist whom LeBlanc carries in his inventory. Work by Rust has been purchased by the Smithsonian and has been featured in the National Gallery. Other featured Florida artists include Eleanor Blair, Gordon Hall, A.S. Eltemtamy and Walter Tate.

The inaugural presentation of the Florida Modernism Show will be held in conjunction with the January edition of the West Palm Beach Antiques Festival on Jan. 1-3. The show will feature more than 50 of America's top dealers specializing in 20th-century design ranging from Art Nouveau to Mid-Century Modern and will include American and European furniture and accessories such as jewelry, art and glass.

The Americraft Expo Center at the South Florida Fair is located off Southern Boulevard in West Palm Beach, 1.5 miles west of the Florida Turnpike and 1 mile east of U.S. Route 441/State Route 7.

Show hours are noon-5 p.m. Friday, Dec. 4; 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 5; and 10 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 6.

Early buyers admission from 9 a.m. to noon Friday is $25 and is valid for the entire weekend. Adult daily admission is $7, seniors $6 with a 1$ discount coupon for adult admission available on the website. Anyone younger than 16 is admitted free. There is no charge for parking at the fairgrounds. For more information contact the West Palm Beach Antiques Festival at 941-697-7475, email info@wpbaf.com or visit the website at www.wpbaf.com.