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'Navigating New Worlds' at the Capitol

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The Florida Historic Capitol Museum's latest exhibit 'Navigating New Worlds: Identity, Perception, and Politics in Florida' showcases rare and important maps from the Michael W. and Dr. Linda M. Fisher collection. / Lindsay Marshall/FSView

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Standing in front of a crowd in the theater of the Florida Historic Capitol Museum was Michael Fisher, a Florida native and longtime collector of rare and historic prints and maps.

"Can you imagine having something in your hands that's 500 years old?" Fisher asked the crowd.

The museum's latest exhibit, "Navigating New Worlds: Identity, Perception, and Politics in Florida" is part of a celebration of the past 500 years of Florida's history happening all across the state called Viva Florida 500. Most of the pieces in "Navigating New Worlds" are pieces from Fisher's collection.

"What's the most obvious thing about this map?" Fisher said, referring to a map called Secunda etas Mundi. "There's no America."

One of the most unique pieces in the exhibit, Secunda etas Mundi is a double-sided map that was created in 1493, just a year after Christopher Columbus landed in what was then the "New World."

"It's not a scientific map," Fisher said. "The people represented are the children of Noah. Religion is a big part of what's being shown."

Fisher has spent the past 40 years adding maps and prints to his collection along with his wife Linda whose favorite piece is an original Audubon print of a flamingo she found for \$100 and spent much more on restoration.

Another piece in their collection that is included in the exhibit is the 1628 map, Americae Sive Novi Orbis Nova Descriptio, one of five in existence. Two easily

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The Florida Historic Capitol Museum's latest exhibit 'Navigating New Worlds: Identity, Perception, and Politics in Florida' showcases rare and important maps from the Michael W. and Dr. Linda M. Fisher collection. / Lindsay Marshall/FSView

identifiable features of the map are La Florida and Cannaveral.

The exhibit contains approximately 30 different pieces, and the museum will hold a special curators tour every fourth Friday of the month until the exhibit closes on December 31 of this year.

"The maps are largely created by outsiders," Director of the Florida Legislative Research Center Tiffany Baker said. "You'll find the perception of the creators in the maps."

Baker explains that the maps are politically infused, indicating wars and negotiations that occurred during their time period.

"The exhibit celebrates the themes of Florida's identity and how the outsiders have shaped perceptions," Staff Director and Museum Curator Michelle Purvis said.

"These maps are one of the four or five in the world."

With the Navigating New Worlds exhibit open throughout the calendar year, Purvis hopes students will find time to explore what it has to offer.

"I would also invite all students to take advantage of the free resource," said Purvis. "Everyone should get involved with the museum."

The museum hires interns in a variety of areas from history-based research to customer service, education, marketing and public relations.

"Three of our FSU interns were able to get jobs within the past three years," said Purvis.

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