

Date: _____ Approved: _____

THE VIRGINIA MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS
Minutes of the Art and Audience Committee Meeting
Held, pursuant to due notice, Theater Level Conference Suite Room #1
Wednesday, 16 May 2012, 12:00 pm

Presiding: Susan S. Goode, Acting Chair
Secretary: Ms. Suzanne Broyles

There were present:

Ms. Susan S. Goode, Acting Chair
Karen C. Abramson
Dr. Elizabeth F. Harris
Keith R. Kisse
Mrs. Deborah H. Quillen
Charles H. Seilheimer, Jr.
Dr. Lindley T. Smith
Thurston R. Moore, Ex-Officio
Mrs. Suzanne T. Mastracco, Ex-Officio

By Invitation:

Alex Nyerges, Director
Stephen D. Bonadies
Ms. Suzanne Broyles
Dr. Lee Anne Chesterfield
W. Birch Douglass III
Ms. Joan W. Murphy
Robin Nicholson
William A. Royall, Jr.

Absent:

Thomas F. Farrell II, Co-Chair
James W. McGlothlin, Co-Chair
Mrs. Whitt W. Clement
G. Moffett Cochran
Michael M. Connors
Marlene A. Malek
Mrs. Stanley F. Pauley
Dr. Alvin J. Schexnider

I. CALL TO ORDER

Acting Chair, Susan S. Goode, called the meeting to order at 12:05 pm and welcomed the group.

II. MINUTES

Motion: proposed by Ms. Goode and seconded by Ms. Abramson that the minutes of the last meeting of the Art and Audience Committee held on the 15th of February 2012 be approved as distributed on the 5th of April 2012. Motion carried.

III. COMMUNICATIONS MEDIA FOR PROMOTING EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

Robin Nicholson, Deputy Director for Art and Education, explained that when Alexis Vaughn left last year, the Sales and Marketing Division was split between his Division and the Finance and Administration Division, with Marketing, Communications and PR becoming part of the Art and Education Division. This interim model has now become permanent and is working well, allowing all programming activities and their promotion to be under one umbrella. He went on to say that one of the central elements in our Strategic Plan this coming year is to develop an ongoing structure for understanding our audience, enabling the Museum to know their expectations and ramp up our ability to communicate with them. Mr. Nicholson introduced Bob Tarren, Director of Marketing and Communications, who provided a presentation on Improving Communication and Promotional Messaging to our Audiences. Mr. Tarren explained that the goal for our audience research is to improve our understanding of our visitors' and non-visitors' perceptions, demographics, and media consumption habits. To meet this goal we give an ongoing SurveyMonkey questionnaire to exhibition visitors and recently almost 5,000 surveys have been completed. In development are face-to-face intercepts with visitors, and online panels of visitors and non-visitors in keeping with the Strategic Plan. He noted that we have support from the Virginia Tourism's Vice-President of Research who has been including VMFA in occasional *Virginia is for Lovers*'s surveys.

Mr. Tarren showed ways we plan to improve communication about educational programming with multiple delivery platforms such as sending pdf's of education programs by e-mail to teachers, members, and non-members; placing two special exhibition sections in *Style Weekly* and *Richmond Magazine*; having three *Style Weekly* Studio School sections with more educational programming; sending four new tri-fold mailings to members; and posting high-importance programs on social media. Other ideas include replacing the panels behind the Visitors Services desk with television monitors for post-*Maharaja*; adding more exhibition-related educational content in MyVMFA magazine and decreasing its straight program listings; and posting exhibition-related and general educational content on the VMFA website. He went on to describe the evolution of our e-mail program. Recent improvements in the main page of our website include having a two box format with strong visuals showing educational programming and enterprises. Improvements on the VMFA website include a new callout for e-news registration, adding links to events on the calendar section, and improving the Twitter feed. To acquire non-member e-mail he suggests use of a dedicated and secured iPad in one or two Museum locations keeping it simple, only gathering names and e-mail addresses.

The Director of Marketing and Communications indicated that work has just begun on a short video on membership. The goal is to use visuals to present the "story" of membership. It would highlight the free benefits of the social aspect of membership, philanthropy of a world-class institution, the educational aspect, and the value of being part of a community. This video could be used on the website, in presentations by volunteers or community ambassadors, and has potential to be used for "Membership Moments" in the Museum on busy days. The presentation would be followed by closing the sale.

IV. MUMMY EXHIBITION VISITOR SURVEY

Bob Tarren described the on-line SurveyMonkey surveys that have been taken by visitors attending *Mummy*. The results showed that no-cost promotional messaging is effective for members and the *Mummy* television spot was the second ranked trigger for non-members. In fact VMFA just won an award for the *Mummy* television spot. The survey showed that most members and non-members alike visited the exhibition with their spouse or partner. Mr. Tarren pointed out that *Mummy* may have triggered stronger “children with family” visits from non-members due to the subject. He felt we will gain more perspective with the experience of the *Maharaja* exhibition.

Robin Nicholson said we are headed in a more comprehensive direction internally and as we realign the support groups we will dig deep down and find out the needs of those members. We plan to form an internal committee to prioritize for example, permanent collection programs, musical programs, etc. so that we have a more comprehensive multi-tier selection for a broader audience. He added that you will hear more of our findings as we go forward and report back to the Committee.

V. OTHER BUSINESS/ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:45 pm by the Acting Chair, Ms. Goode.

Suzanne Broyles
Secretary of the Museum