Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

Minutes of the Joint Operations and Art & Education Committee Meeting

Wednesday, 21 September 2016, 10:30am

Reynolds Lecture Hall

There were present:

W. Birch Douglass III, Acting Chair

Tyler Bishop

Cindy Harman Conner

Dr. Betty Neal Crutcher

Jil Womack Harris

Steven A. Markel

Judy Niemyer

Sara O'Keefe

Dr. Claude G. Perkins

Charles H. Seilheimer, Jr.

Monroe E. Harris, Ex-officio

Michael J. Schewel., Ex-officio

By Invitation

Alexander Nyerges, Director

Maggi Beckstoffer

Stephen D. Bonadies

Dr. Lee Anne Chesterfield

Claudia Keenan

Laura Keller

Dr. Johanna Minich

Cameron O'Brion

Dr. Meghan Rosatelli

Hossein Sadid

Bob Tabor

Dr. Michael R. Taylor

Kimberly Wilson

Absent:

Susan S. Goode, Co-chair

Ivan P. Jecklin, Co-chair

Thomas F. Farrell, II, Co-Chair

Satya Rangarajan, Co-Chair

Karen C. Abramson

Cynthia Kerr Fralin

Richard B. Gilliam

Margaret N. Gottwald

Terrell Luck Harrigan

Kenneth Johnson, Sr.

Keith R. Kissee

Dr. Paul S. Monroe

Stanley J. Olander

Michele Petersen

Pamela Reynolds

William A. Royall, Jr.

Mary Gray Shockey

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Birch Douglass called the meeting to order at 10:30am and welcomed the committee members.

**Motion:** proposed by Mr. Markel and seconded by Dr. Harris that the minutes of the June 23, 2016 Joint Meeting of the Operations and Art & Education Committees be approved as distributed. Motion approved.

1. OPERATIONS REPORT

Chief Financial Officer Hossein Sadid reported that certain departments within the Operations Committee’s oversight, including Buildings and Grounds, Capital Outlay, and Technology, have moved to the Finance and Administration division. He explained that he would be working with Stephen Bonadies, Senior Deputy Director for Conservation and Collections Management, to provide committee updates going forward.

First, Mr. Sadid updated the committee on the Robinson House project. The original budget was $3.3 million, but the bids were significantly higher than projected. The museum has received an additional $1.9 million for the renovation and expansion of the building, which will be used for gallery space, a tourism center, and offices.

Mr. Bonadies provided a report on the Fabergé Gallery expansion. He said that the project has moved to the art installation phase, and he encouraged the board members to stay for a tour following the Full Board meeting. The total project cost, $3.7 million, includes the renovation of the adjacent catering kitchen and the removal and reinforcement of part of a weight-bearing wall. The project was funded by collecting exhibition loan fees for the travelling Fabergé exhibition and with donations from The VMFA Council and Mrs. Edie Cabaniss.

Next, Mr. Bonadies explained that the Pauley Center roof replacement is underway, with active leaks repaired and damaged plaster restored. Upcoming projects include repairs to the sculpture garden waterfall, addressing stonework damage in the motor court, and installing changing stations in the men’s restrooms. The museum will conduct a space study to see how to better use the existing square footage on the campus and a facility assessment to identify and prioritize upcoming repair needs.

He also reported on the latest developments in the Conservation and Collections Management division. Using the $1.5 million Andrew Mellon grant, the museum has purchased digital radiography equipment and hired several positions to support the African Art conservation project.

Lastly, Mr. Bonadies expressed excitement that Google Gigapixel has worked with the museum to digitize forty-two objects from VMFA’s collection in extremely high resolution. Mr. Sadid also reported that, as part of the museum’s effort to improve technology at the museum, the leadership team has invited two Chief Information Officers, Jane Alexander from the Cleveland Art Museum and Tom Catalini from Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, to meet with the technology-related staff throughout the museum. They will visit September 22 and 23 to provide feedback on the state of technology at VMFA.

1. ART & EDUCATION REPORT

Chief Curator and Deputy Director for Art & Education Michael Taylor commended the staff for making *Kehinde Wiley: A New Republic* such a tremendous success. He noted that the exhibition not only exceeded revenue goals, but also supported the museum’s 2020 Strategic Plan objectives to attract more families and African Americans to the museum. He encouraged the committee members to see *Gordon Parks: Back to Fort Scott* before it closes on October 30th. There have been more than 40,000 visitors to the exhibition. The exhibition is on loan from the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and includes an additional section featuring Gordon Parks’s work in LIFE magazine, organized by Sarah Eckhardt.

Next, Dr. Johanna Minich provided an overview of the upcoming exhibition *Hear My Voice*, exploring the dialogue among Native American artists. The exhibition will feature art from across North America and includes artwork from at least six centuries, with many contemporary Native American artists.

Lastly, Dr. Meghan Rosatelli reported on several educational technology projects. The department has used interactive technology in the exhibition galleries and in the education gallery. Most recently, the *ArtCycle* exhibition featured a video tour of the museum activated by bicycles. Visitors to *Kehinde Wiley: A New Republic* interacted with touch screens illustrating connections from artwork in the exhibition to artwork in the museum’s permanent collection.

She explained that the museum has created an open access policy, pledging to digitize all artwork in the collection and make it available online. The digitization project has included works from the rare book collection which have been digitized using page turning software developed for the museum, making it possible to show the books to visitors without risking damaging the fragile pages.

She updated the committee on six digital projects for the Fabergé Galleries:

* Mobile Application: Five Pathways of Fabergé and Russian Culture
* In-gallery Interactive: Design Your Own Fabergé Egg
* In-gallery Interactive: The Tale of Ivan and the Gray Wolf
* Digital Didactics: Interactive didactic screens in the egg room
* Website: faberge.vmfa.museum website and Pratt archive search
* Online Interactive Videos: 360 degree views of the imperial eggs

She explained that many of the technology initiatives have been funded by the Evans grant for digital learning, including distance learning, open access, and ongoing digitization. She provided an overview of some upcoming projects related to *Jasper Johns and Edvard Munch: Love, Loss, and the Cycle of Life* and several pilot programs for engaging families visiting the museum. She also discussed the future of technology aboard the ArtMobile. The museum hopes to purchase 360° technology for interacting with objects and to develop tours using virtual reality systems like Google Cardboard.

1. MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

Interim Deputy Director for Marketing & Communications Maggi Beckstoffer introduced herself and gave a report on her division. She explained that Paula Saylor-Robinson, Director of Audience Development, has worked to build relationships with churches and other community organizations to help make their members feel more welcome here. Ms. Saylor-Robinson will also be working with schools statewide who cannot afford field trips to VMFA to help connect them through digital tours.

She reported that her division has been working to advertise *Jasper Johns and Edvard Munch: Love, Loss, and the Cycle of Life*, the reinstallation of the Fabergé galleries, and *Yves Saint Laurent: Perfection of Style* both through print advertisements and through the press.

1. OTHER BUSINESS/ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:03am.

Recorded by: Laura Keller

Assistant to the Secretary of the Museum