

Virginia Museum of Fine Arts
Minutes of the Resources and Visitor Experience Committee
Wednesday, 9 December 2015, 8:30 am
Theater Level Conference Room #1

There were present:

W. Birch Douglass III, Co-Chair
Karen C. Abramson
Anne L. Battle
Dr. Betty Neal Crutcher
Cynthia Kerr Fralin
Margaret N. Gottwald
Terrell Luck Harrigan
Dr. Monroe E. Harris, Jr.
Judith A. Niemyer, MD
Michele Petersen
Charles H. Seilheimer, Jr.
John R. Staelin
Shantaram Talagaonkar

By Invitation:

Alexander Nyerges, Director
Allan Altholz
David Bradley
Claudia E. Keenan
Alex McGrath
Cameron O'Brien
Megan Reilly
Jayne Shaw
Tom Zydel

Absent:

Tyler Bishop, Co-Chair
Mary Anne Carlson
Barbara Noble Howard
H. Eugene Lockhart
Dr. Claude G. Perkins
Pamela C. Reynolds
Mary Gray Shockey
William A. Royall, Jr.
Dr. Lee Anne Chesterfield

I. CALL TO ORDER

Birch Douglass, Co-Chair, called the meeting to order at 8:34 am.

II. MINUTES

Motion: proposed by Dr. Harris, and seconded by Ms. Abramson, to approve the minutes of the September 16, 2015 Resources and Visitor Experience Committee Meeting as distributed. Motion carried.

III. COMMITTEE MISSION STATEMENT

Mr. Douglass introduced the Resources and Visitor Experience Committee Mission Statement and requested feedback from the committee on how to best help carry out this mission and serve as ambassadors to VMFA.

Per the Mission Statement, Ms. Keenan encouraged the committee to share their ideas regarding policies, strategies, and actions of the Resources and Visitor Experience Division. She provided an example of an idea furnished by Ms. Petersen that has since come to fruition—engaging out-of-market audiences using bus trips.

Dr. Harris pointed out that participation in behind-the-scenes activities (such as taking part in the previous evening's Art Acquisitions Sub-Committee Meeting) makes board members more effective ambassadors for the museum. Ms. Battle agreed that having advance knowledge of museum happenings allows the committee to serve as better representatives to VMFA. Dr. Harris added that all Trustees and Foundation Directors would benefit from taking part in Art Acquisitions Sub-Committee activities. Mr. Nyerges offered to consider this idea of enlarging the experience of these meetings and including both boards with Dr. Michael Taylor.

Ms. Keenan highlighted the two upcoming cultivation opportunities for board members to bring prospects to see *Rodin: Evolution of a Genius*: February 3, 2016 (lunch followed by a tour) and February 11, 2016 (tour followed by cocktails).

Mr. Douglass requested that the committee come prepared to the next meeting to discuss further ideas about carrying out the Mission Statement.

IV. ADVANCEMENT REPORT

Ms. Shaw reported that the Development team is well on track to meet its FY16 goals, with 39% of the \$5.9 million fundraising goal having been raised as of November 30, 2015.

Ms. Shaw announced the recent launch of VMFA's December Annual Fund initiative, for which overall giving has been successful so far. However, online giving trends have not increased; Ms. Shaw pointed out that online giving rarely provides the largest source of support for most charitable organizations.

Mr. Douglass inquired about VMFA's current state with online giving and whether there is room for improvement. Ms. Shaw and Mr. Zydel agreed that there are certainly inefficiencies with online giving, but that the additions of automatic renewal and recurring payment options have improved the online giving platform in the past year.

Ms. Keenan provided a status report on Change Capital, the funds currently being raised from board members to fuel the 2020 Strategic Plan. To date, \$4.1 million in pledges have been confirmed. Ms. Keenan thanked all committee members who have committed to help support the Plan, and shared the goal of attaining 100% participation from both boards.

V. SALES REPORT

Mr. Alholz provided a final report on exhibition sales for *Japanese Tattoo: Perseverance, Art, and Tradition*. The exhibition ran 27 weeks (extended from its original 16 week run) in the Evans Court Gallery, and succeeded in increasing exposure to a younger audience and attracting visitation from members. Mr. Alholz reported that *Japanese Tattoo* was particularly successful when it overlapped with our primary exhibitions *The Art of the Flower* and *Rodin: Evolution of a Genius*.

Dr. Harris reinforced the idea of tying smaller exhibitions with larger ones, citing the success of the *Ife Art in Ancient Nigeria* exhibition in 2010 when coupled with *Picasso*. Dr. Harris suggested that we continue to use smaller exhibition programming to target and attract new audiences.

Mr. Alholz reported on visitation and media coverage for *Rodin: Evolution of a Genius* since its opening in late November, highlighting media attention from *The Washington Post*, NPR, *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, and *Style Weekly*. Visitation numbers were reported as slightly under projection as of November 29, 2015. The group discussed current practices for promoting exhibitions through partnerships with local cultural organizations (such as with Maymont and Lewis Ginter for *The Art of the Flower*).

Mr. Douglass inquired as to whether the Evans Court Gallery is used to display exhibitions from our permanent collection. Mr. Nyerges cited *Water and Shadow: Kawase Hasui and the Japanese Landscape* as a recent example of this, but stated that we hope to do more of this in the future and then send the exhibitions out into the marketplace as statewide traveling shows.

Dr. Talegaonkar inquired as to our plans for manuscripts and rare books. Mr. Nyerges responded that we have requested \$2.5 million from the Commonwealth of Virginia to renovate and make accessible the Frank Raysor Center for the Study of Works on Paper, which would have a tremendous impact for our small works and rare books.

Ms. Gottwald requested a status update on the ArtMobile, allowing Mr. Nyerges to share the good news that the HistoryMobile from the Virginia Sesquicentennial of the American Civil War has been signed over to VMFA, eliminating significant investments of time and money from the original budget. The ArtMobile is expected to hit the road in 2017, and will feature curated exhibitions generated mostly from the VMFA collection and digital interactive technology components.

The group discussed the idea of VMFA having a physical presence in Northern Virginia and the opportunities that this would bring.

VI. GOVERNMENT RELATIONS REPORT

Mr. Bradley reported that we submitted budget decision packages to the Governor's Office this summer requesting funding for six critical needs for the institution, including the National Center for Advanced Study in Art Conservation, National Center for Learning in Museums, and the ArtMobile. The museum also submitted capital outlay requests related to climate control and renovation of the Raysor Center.

Mr. Bradley outlined several important dates on the legislative calendar: December 17, 2015 (recommendations for Governor's budget announced); January 13, 2016 (opening day of the General Assembly); January 15, 2016 (deadline for budget amendments); and February 17, 2016 (General Assembly Family Day at VMFA).

VII. CUSTOMER SERVICE TRAINING

Mr. Zydel provided an update on the museum's comprehensive customer service training initiative launched on October 1, 2015. So far, 121 of 180 front-line staff members have been trained using a curriculum developed in partnership with the Community College Work Force Alliance. After the full front-line staff has been trained, the rest of the VMFA staff will be trained.

Mr. Zydel also presented the results of a partner project with a graduate class at VCU this fall. Graduate students in a Service Quality Management seminar mapped the VMFA visitor experience from start to finish, identifying 65 "touch points" for the museum visitor from planning their visit online to exiting the museum campus. This data is being used to analyze opportunities for improvement in the visitor experience and will be reported in greater detail at the next meeting of the Resources and Visitor Experience Committee.

VIII. STRATEGIC PLAN REPORT

Due to time constraints, Ms. Keenan deferred her update on the Strategic Plan until the next meeting of the Resources and Visitor Experience Committee.

IX. OTHER BUSINESS/ ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:08 am by Mr. Douglass.

Recorded by: Megan Reilly
Executive Assistant to the Deputy Director for Resources and Visitor Experience