

Virginia Museum of Fine Arts
Transcription of the Education Committee Meeting
Tuesday, January 12 , 2021, 1:30pm
Video Conference

Meeting called to order at 1:30pm.

Full attendance listed in the meeting minutes.

Jil Harris: I will call the meeting to order. I want to welcome everyone who is with us. I appreciate your time. I also appreciate this. I was thinking about this a little while ago. I think one of the benefits of these virtual meetings is that for people who are not in Richmond, it is so much easier for them to attend, so to speak. For that, I am grateful. Now I do wish I could be with all of you, and I think you probably share that sentiment. Anyway, thank you all for being here. The first order of business is to approve the minutes. I will ask for a motion to approve the minutes of the Wednesday, September 16, 2020 Education Committee Meeting as distributed. Do I hear a motion?

Carol Ann Bischoff: So move.

Ken Dye: Second.

Jil Harris: Thank you. That is Carol Ann, and was that Ken that seconded?

Ken Dye: Yes.

Jil Harris: Great. Okay. Thank you very much. We need your names for the record. We sent out a request for public comment, and we received none. In that case, we are clear there. I do want to remind everyone that according to the rules of virtual committee meetings, this meeting will be recorded, so just know that whatever questions you may ask, or whatever comments you may make will be recorded for posterity. Thank you. Now if there is nothing else, I think Celeste is with us, correct?

Celeste Fetta Neff: Yes, hi, everybody.

Jil Harris: Celeste is going to give us an update on what has happened since our last meeting in September. Wow, it has been a year for you and all of the staff, and I know you have worked hard. I went on the *Virginia Learn* tab of the website today, and there is so much there. I urge anyone who has not done so to do that. It is right there on the museum web page and shows you all of the great things that Celeste and her team are doing. Thank you very much for that. I will let you take it away.

Celeste Fetta Neff: Great. Thanks so much, Jil. It is great to be with you all virtually here today, and Happy New Year to everyone. I am pleased to share some updates with you. The first thing I am going to talk about is actually a project that we have been working on since November 2019 which seems like a century ago. We did a retreat as an education team, along with Statewide in November of 2019 to start thinking about strategic planning. Another thing that came out of that was to establish our core values and our statement of purpose leading up to the strategic plan. In January 2020, we had a really great discussion coming out of that retreat where we identified values and

started working on draft definitions. Then the Pandemic put some things on hold. We resumed our discussion in June of 2020, splitting into small working teams on those definitions and refining those. I am so happy that Caprice agreed to help us in that final run-through and lead a discussion around values and our statement of purpose, again keeping strategic planning in mind. We have now finalized and adopted those in October of 2020, so about a year. I was hoping that it would have taken less time, of course. We had to pivot and focus on other things, obviously, like we all did last year. I am pleased to share these values and statement of purpose with you today.

We have three core values. Quality. We thoughtfully create experiences that consider and respond to the different motivations and needs of audiences while proactively contributing to field leadership. Collaboration. We value working together, collaborating, sharing, and listening to multiple perspectives within the museum and externally, in order to create a supportive learning environment for all. Lastly, but not least is community-focused. We recognize our communities as partners in furthering our shared understanding of art. Through facilitating diverse and wide-ranging programs and interpretation, we strive to meet communities where they are - actively seeking, honoring, and empowering their unique voices and perspectives - to provide welcoming, accessible, and engaging experiences. These three values roll up into a statement of purpose for the education team. Through art and shared experiences, we invite an exchange of diverse perspectives to uncover layers of meaning and in turn, support discovery, learning, and deeper connections.

As we think through these values and statement of purpose, we are really seeing these as touchstones to our work. They will inform, on the HR side of things, our evaluations as we think about our roles individually within the team and then collectively how we support the museum's mission. These are also really helpful as we think about upcoming projects or programs, making sure that at every turn, whether it is through the concept of that program, logistics, delivery, or evaluation, it all touches upon these values and the statement of purpose. We intend to share these out on the website, shortly as we work with our web development team here and thinking about how we could be even more external with these. In the start space, for example, posting them on the wall. Of course as we dive deeper into strategic planning, these will underpin our goals and objectives over the next five years. We also took these and overlaid them on training that we worked with the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities on in the fall around unconscious bias. I had taken one of those trainings through VAM, the Virginia Association of Museums, and thought it was so helpful. That was in January of last year, and I really wanted my entire team to experience it. Again, I was working with HR and with Michael to get approval for that training. We had that in October and it was really helpful to share these values with the trainer. She was able to adapt the training to work in the values and statement of purpose, so it related directly to what our goals and metrics were, which was really exciting. We are continuing that relationship with the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities and hoping to do another training with them in a couple of months. A sort of train-the-trainer around facilitating constructive dialogue.

Next, I am going to talk about two projects that really illustrate these values and our statement of purpose very well. The first one is the Museum Leaders in Training (M.Lit) program. Thank you, Jill for bringing this up as a topic item for today's meeting. We had a discussion about this program a couple of sessions ago. As a quick reminder, M.Lit is a career development opportunity for students in grades eight through twelve to introduce them to museum work and also connect them with the community and the museum. That is one of our most diverse programs in education. It is actually the 10th anniversary of M.LiT this year. You can see some of the students working on this project this year, which is *Rumors of War One Year Later*. We had 25 students. Here on the left they are on a

walking tour with the Valentine, looking at Monument Avenue. On the right they are working with Studio Two Three on a zine project, so collaborating there. Again, community focused and working with community partners here. We adapted this program to a hybrid model, so some things happen virtually. You can see the screenshot here of Finn Bradley, our Teen Programs Coordinator, in the upper left. On the upper right is one of the artists that the teens interviewed. They interviewed VMFA staff, artists who are responding to the social unrest movement and look at representation, gender and race in their work. The artist pictured here is Louise Vasquez LaRoche. They also interviewed Dustin Klein and Alex Criqui, who are the artists who did the projections on the Lee Monument over the summer. I think because of that great relationship that Finn and the students had with those two artists, the museum was able to approach Dustin and Alex, working through Audience Development and our colleagues in Marketing, for the projection as part of the Wiley Anniversary. This really laid great groundwork for that. The culminating output of the program is a video that the students put together using clips from interviews with artists, VMFA staff like Valerie, and community members and activists who talk about the impact of *Rumors of War* in the community. That actually will premiere. We have a Zoom presentation on the 22nd and then the video will be placed on the *Learn Site*, like Jil referenced before. We are hoping to share that out for students and teachers to explore this theme of *Rumors of War One Year Later*, and this idea of gender, race, and representation in works of art.

I would like to read a couple of quotes that speak to the impact of the program overall, and again, this particular topic. This year we have had some students who repeat the program over from earlier. This is a great one from Grace, who is now in 12th grade. “I could go on and on about how wonderful this program is, but the most special part of M.LiT is that it exposes teens from around the Richmond (and now Virginia) area to one another, creating lasting friendships with people who are similar to you...” I love this part. “...will always have a place in the heart for the VMFA.”

Then Mikal, who is in 10th grade, is speaking specifically to the topic they are addressing. “While I have only been to see Kehinde Wiley's *Rumors of War* once in-person, I have driven past it countless times and each time has given me a feeling of hope. This past year so much has happened in this country.” Then he says, “Seeing a statue as grand and respected as *Rumors of War*, that represents African-Americans like me, gives me hope that change is coming.” Again, speaking to the impact of that sculpture.

Then another project that really to me illustrates those three core values and statement of purpose, and really, the work that we did in response to the Pandemic in rethinking how we fulfill our mission is the VMFA at Home Kit sponsored by Chase. This is a great picture that Sandra Sellers, our awesome photographer, captured at one of our distribution sites of students receiving the bags in their car. We worked in great collaboration with audience development, our colleagues there. Here I am on the left with PPE, and on the right is Paula Saylor-Robinson, Director of Audience Development, my colleague in marketing. Then we have some Chase volunteers in the other photos helping distribute the bags. This really came out of an idea in April, how do we continue to fulfill our mission and reach members of the community, giving them access to arts and creative expression? This was the idea to package materials and resources, again from the *Learn Site*, and put it in the hands of families. We reached out to our great colleagues at RPS (Richmond Public Schools), again the community that the museum is within, really identified what the need was there, what would be helpful to students and teachers, and asked for them to identify which schools were in the greatest need, the timing, and how to distribute them. We worked with them very closely and created 3,000 bags. Each bag had color pencils, a glue stick, construction paper, and then two

resources from the *Learn* Site pre-printed with instructions. One was related to *Cosmologies*, and we actually mentioned *Dirty South* to get people excited for that exhibition. One was related to the *Kamoinge: Working Together* exhibition. We handed them out. In this case, this is at Broad Rock Elementary as part of their school supply luau. That is why I have my flower crown and lei on. It was a very fun theme. We were out there for about three hours to hand out the bags. The other five schools that were selected by RPS, all in the south side, were given out on the meal distribution buses or at pick-up with meal sites. That is what we were doing in the community.

I also wanted to give you, in terms of supplies and making art, what we are doing onsite. We restarted onsite classes in September. I had mentioned this in the last session that we are really working closely with the Governor's guidelines for Phase Three reopening. We are also working closely with our colleagues in HR and housekeeping. I would like to give a shout out to Megan Endy, who coordinates our youth studio programs, and Mary Holland, who is at the Studio School and oversees all studio programs, for really implementing a safe plan. It worked beautifully and this semester we had all the classes nearly full again. We decreased capacity, people have to be masked obviously, everything is cleaned over and over again. The bottom corner there is one of our studios in our Education Center. You can see the plexiglass dividers there. We keep everything safe and clean and really worked with our faculty understanding our audience's needs. Those are going very well. Classes will start back up again. There is a workshop for youth on the 14th of January and in February adult studio classes will recommence.

Lastly, I want to give you a general update on virtual programs. Those continue, and we know that they will continue in some form, even when we get to the other side of this Pandemic. We have had a really good response and enthusiasm around our virtual program offerings. Here is an image that we used to promote Virtual Family Day for *Sunken Cities*. That specific program had almost 3,000 attendees over views, but also who picked up art supply bags that went with it. We did a great promo as part of Archaeology Day to promote the exhibition and the event, so reaching 3,000 over a virtual program is basically around what we would get in-person for this subject. We are really pleased with that response. Chinafest is coming up, so I am going to put a plug in for that. It will be virtual in February, and I will be sure to get that link out to you to sign up for that. Now, I know we will not get 10,000 people for that, but you never know where people will be for February. Overall from July to December, we have done 128 virtual programs with close to 25,000 participants served. Again, we are very pleased with the way that has turned out. Our *Collections* Site from July to December has had 270,000 views. The *Learn* Site has almost had 72,000 views. We are seeing an impact there on digital use. In performing arts, our *Jazz Café* has had 23 programs since July with 9,500 viewers reached, which is more than we can do in person. That is the update for Education. Maybe we can take questions now or towards the end after I turn it over to Jeffrey?

Jil Harris: Yes, we will come back to you. Thank you.

Jeffrey Allison: Statewide updates. I am going to give a brief overview of some of the things that we have been doing since the last meeting. One of the things that I was most excited about was the Pocahontas Reframed Film Festival, which I know Lynette supports and knows all about. We have been a part of the festival for the past four years, but last year we decided that VMFA would be the sole partnering organization and host the festival for the entire three days. We had some great plans, and in June, we had to talk about canceling it, period. We decided that we would not do that. That we would have a virtual Pocahontas Reframed Film Festival. We have wonderful board members including Sam Bearclaw and Michael Horse who is probably best known for his role as Deputy

Hawk on Twin Peaks. One of the things we did was a promo and a preview video. We shot part of it in Cheek Theater, so that people really got a sense that it was at VMFA. Then Michael and Sam produced clips from their homes. It was incredibly moving. Sam was in Monument Valley, you know, the site of so many Westerns and walking along the road. Both of them really address the issues going on in America today. We had over 10,000 people attend this virtual event. That is insane. We probably would have had 1,000 over the three day period if it had been held at the museum because that is capacity, really. It was throughout the United States, throughout Virginia, but also throughout Canada, Mexico, and France. It became a truly International Film Festival. We are certainly looking forward, hopefully next year, to producing it on campus, but we will also continue to do part of it virtually to continue the momentum that we have gained.

VMFA on the Road residencies. I am so thrilled to say that we were actually able to get the Artmobile back on the road, following the same precautions that we have here at the main museum. We are still running on a limited residency schedule, as you can imagine. We are working with partners, so it is kind of like shuffling a deck of cards. We schedule things, and sometimes they get postponed again. We have been both out in the state, and we have been able to really accomplish some things locally. We have been to Pine Camp, for example, which I think was just a great day for us. We have been to the YMCA and places like that. Then I am so excited that we were at the Virginia Peanut Festival in Emporia. We had some incredibly special and important guests show up, including Mr. Peanut who, if you really think about it, has probably the best virus protection of all because he does not really have a mouth or nose. He was excited to see this show, as was the current Miss Virginia. We saw a lot of people out there. We are limiting it to six people onboard the Artmobile at one time and six feet apart, unless they are families. People are so thrilled. They become so emotional that we are bringing art to them and their communities during this difficult time. Everybody follows all the protocols beautifully.

Another big thing that we did, I do not think we talk enough about how we sometimes work with our statewide partners, particularly our museum level partners. We put a long-term loan of a Rubin Peacock sculpture to the Museum of the Shenandoah Valley for their brand new nature trail, which is huge. If you have ever been up to Winchester to the Museum of Shenandoah Valley, you know that it is an old estate and there is a beautiful, brand new, very large, state-of-the-art museum there. There is also the original home that is an art center and then there is just acres. When they first built that museum 10 years ago, there were still cows, and now it has been turned into a beautifully landscaped trail. Here is the piece, Rubin Peacock's *Pentangle*. As you can see, this is 12 x 6 x 4 feet. It is huge. This is it in place up there. They have had thousands and thousands of people see it already. It just went on view right before Thanksgiving.

Other things that we have been doing. We have been doing virtual lectures in partnership with our partners in addition to the ones that as the museum, we send out on our own. Peter Schertz at the Norfolk Society of Art with an attendance of over 300. I did a program at Cedarfield Senior Living which was fascinating because it was me and Fionna Ross, who was my host, and a videographer in a very large auditorium. I broadcast live to all of the TVs in the center. We had a wonderful response to that. Then I did a members' talk for the National Sporting Library and Museum with an attendance over 50, which for them is really very good. The Virginia Children's Book Festival with an attendance over 10,000 from the United States and Canada, something we could never have done holding a festival in Farmville. The important thing to remember about the Children's Book Festival is that we continue that work all year round. In November and December, we actually distributed thousands of books appropriate for K-12 students, not just around the Farmville and Richmond

area, but we really reached out to Fredericksburg, Lynchburg, and beyond. These are donated books, and we work together as a team to get them out there. Like when we are handing out the art supplies here in Richmond, it is an incredibly important thing to be known, particularly right now. Then the other thing I would like to mention is that in addition to the museum level exhibitions that we share with our museum level partners, we also have a large number of educational exhibitions that are basically reproductions but very high quality and come with text panels. It is a complete exhibition in a box. *A Horse, of Course: The Equine Image in Art* is one that I curated through the Mellon Program, and The National Sporting Library and Museum opened it in October. It runs through March 28, so the lecture I did for them was in connection with *A Horse, of Course*. One of the images that was included in that is *Shark with his Trainer, Price* by George Stubbs. I always get excited about sharing that painting with our audiences. It is even more special perhaps having at least a reproduction in Middleburg, because Stubbs painted this image when Shark was the winningest racehorse in England, both in terms of number of races won and he had one of the largest purses. They put him out to stud, and he was basically a dud. They said, "Oh, what can we do? We will sell him to the stupid Americans, because they would not have heard this yet." Sharp arrived at the docks of Virginia, looked at the beautiful Commonwealth blue sky, breathed in the sweet Virginia breeze, and saw all the wonderful horses that were here to greet him. He became one of the most important founders of thoroughbred blood in the American racing history. The people who bought him took him to their estate, which was in Spotsylvania County, which is sort of halfway between Middleburg and Richmond. It is so great that Mr. Mellon purchased this piece, placed it at the museum, and we get to tell that story. We are continuing to be very active. We are doing a lot of virtual lectures and hands-on workshops. We are also doing in-person workshops when possible. We are working very closely with the Rappahannock Area Art League and a few other places. Depending on what happens we are scheduled to just increase as we move into February. We had sort of a hiatus with the Artmobile from before Christmas to now, but we are also scheduled to start doing residencies, both locally and regionally, in February. We are continuing to do site visits, to plan future residences, and the team is working hard. The last thing I will say is we are in the middle of jurying our fellowships for 2021, and Natasha Campbell is doing a great job of coordinating that. When we have our next Trustee meeting, we will know who the winners are. I am very excited. We will see how that all goes. I think that may be it. It was a short update.

Jil Harris: That is great, Jeffrey. Thank you. It may have been a short update but certainly not short on content. I want to applaud and speak for all of us when I say that you and Celeste have done great work. We really appreciate what you have done for the education area for the museum. Very impressive. Thank you, both.

Jeffrey Allison: Thank you. I always want to highlight that Celeste and I, our teams work hand-in-hand together on everything. We were involved in all the meetings, developing our goal statement and mission statement, and it is really important. I think that the partnership we have with our departments under Michael's leadership, particularly is just fantastic. So thank you all.

Jil Harris: You are welcome.

Michael Taylor: Thank you, Jeffrey. It is a great team effort. To imagine that you have accomplished all this during a Pandemic, it is just truly amazing. Watching your presentation, I wanted to give a special shout out to Birch Douglass who is on this Zoom meeting. He probably recognized that enormous sculpture by Rubin Peacock used to sit in the garden of Jeanette Lipman's house, and Birch was the one who was so instrumental in bringing that collection here. I know he was on the

call.

Birch Douglass: I am here.

Michael Taylor: Do you remember that piece, Birch?

Birch Douglass: Definitely, I was getting ready to email you and find out from Jeffrey how long the long-term loan is, because I have been talking about getting it in the sculpture garden here soon. That way I could have a reception including Rubin Peacock.

Jeffrey Allison: That would be wonderful. I guess long-term loans vary, and that would be a Michael question.

Michael Taylor: Yes, we can find out. I mean, this was a special request that came in. I have to credit Jeffrey, because they really wanted to have a signature sculpture. This just made so much sense. The attention that the press has given it, and the joy that piece is giving visitors has just been amazing. I will get back to you on that one, Birch.

Birch Douglass: Okay, thank you.

Jil Harris: Shall we open up the floor for questions? I will start us off with one question for both of you, Jeffrey and Celeste. The numbers of people who are attending some of these virtual programs is incredible, the tens of thousands you talk about. I am curious as to how most of your participants find out about the programs? Is it through the website? Is it an email? What are the different ways? And to that point, the most important way that people are getting or finding out about these programs.

Jeffrey Allison: Well, I will start because my microphone is still on. We are very fortunate in that so many of the statewide programs, as I said, we do in partnership with other organizations, so we automatically double the effectiveness of whatever we do, particularly with the Pocahontas Reframed Film Festival. We did a lot of social media, mostly pushed out by Brad Brown and his organization, at the film festival. We have built a really good mailing list, because we use not only Pocahontas Reframed but also the French Film Festival, which has been around forever. We garnered a lot of support from people in, as I said, France and Canada, particularly because they are very supportive of that film festival as well. That film festival is the largest Native American Film Festival on the East Coast, so it really has gotten a big reputation. We also sent out emails, posted it on our Facebook, and all those relevant places through the museum. We did a story on it in the VMFA Magazine as well. We did the same with the Children's Book Festival. They have an amazing mailing list, so it is a true partnership. We also spread the word through every way possible, again, including the VMFA Magazine which I think helps. Frankly, during the Pandemic to have live interactive opportunities to work with children's authors and illustrators is just the kind of free activity that I am sure every mother and father in the world are looking for. It really pushed those numbers up, although we traditionally get about 10,000 students in Farmville. They get bused in from all over the state. We are glad we maintained that number. Then the last thing I will say is we do a lot of programs that Celeste and I do not get to talk about. Celeste developed a wonderful one called *The Art of Wine*, and we have been doing that for how many months now? I had the wonderful opportunity to be the art person this past Friday. We talked about Virginia wines and we talked about *Landscapes of Virginia*, the featured exhibition on the Artmobile right now. We had about 70

people participate. All of those people got so excited and immediately went to watch the virtual tour of the Artmobile and the interviews with the artists that are in the exhibition currently. Sometimes having a program like that multiplies by getting people involved in other things. So, Celeste?

Celeste Fetta Neff: I think you covered it. I would say similarly, and thanks for that *Taste of Art* plug, Jeffrey. That is on the second and fourth Fridays of the month at 5:30pm, and it is free. It is a webinar sponsored by Chase. The next one is on the 22nd. We will be talking about *Virginia Arcadia* connected to beer, because why not? I will say that also is an opportunity for us to collaborate with our colleagues in Amuse and the Café to drum up revenue sales for VMFA2Go, so all of what we feature is available for sale through that service. That has been a great way to really deepen the connections and bonds that we have with our colleagues in those departments and think of ways to highlight the skill and craft that they bring to their jobs every day. That has been another great benefit to that program. Again, not just externally, but internally. I would say that the support that we get from our colleagues in marketing and communications is really crucial to promote these virtual programs. We work with them to develop a plan to get the word out, and that includes the emails that go out weekly both to members and non-members. Also anytime a program is connected with an exhibition, obviously that is going to get a boost as that exhibition is talked about. Those viewers are getting driven to the exhibition page which features the programs and links to those programs that way. That is another way that is really vital for us. I would also say again, like Jeffrey said, it is like a domino effect or, as we all know, we go down the rabbit hole that is the web. Sometimes it may lead to other discoveries, so linking as much as possible to other programming or other parts of the website is really important. Our followers are people who come to something and hopefully, they will come back. That has been the case for *Taste of Art*, for example. They will automatically sign up for the next one, especially if we put it in a survey that they complete after they have done the program. I think talking about it as much as possible, getting the word out via those email lists or social media, and doing a great job so that people want to come back and tell their friends about it.

Jil Harris: That is great.

Birch Douglass: This is Birch. I have a question. I know the *Cocktails with Curators* is recorded. I cannot recall whether the wine and art things and others are recorded, but I know that with some of them whoever is leading it, maybe it is you will say that it is being recorded. Occasionally, I have heard people say, "Well, it will be on the website." Well, it is not on the website. It is not on Facebook or YouTube. There is some issue there at the museum, I think, with getting it from the recorded piece to actually getting it where it is accessible. If somebody participates on time, live with the program, then they go to tell their friends how good it was. Their friends cannot access it at this point, is that correct?

Celeste Fetta Neff: I would say yes and no and sometimes. If it is a recorded Zoom session like for *Taste of Art*, we record those, and that does not take editing. I think that is where we hit a wall a little bit and a delay. The sessions that are recorded via Zoom, we can get those up within a week on our YouTube channel. That is where those live. The other ones that are maybe a lecture that we are recording or a panel that is a very multi-pronged program takes a lot of editing. That is where we really, as a museum need some investment in terms of staffing to really boost the capability. Like you said, Birch, we want to give access to this as soon as possible, but it really takes time to edit and get it together so it is presented in a way that is enjoyable right like you are watching it as a recorded session. I will say for performing arts, we have a model where we are pre-recording now. Those are

turned around very quickly. We work with an outside editor to do that who is focusing just on that project. I know with our team here there is just so much to do. I know that is a big challenge to try to answer everyone's needs with a very limited staff, but I do feel like we need that boost as an institution, if we are going to keep doing these things. I know we want to, and I know Michael wants to do that.

Birch Douglass: One last thing. When I have looked, I have not found anything on the museum's website itself that tells you to go to YouTube or links to YouTube. You have to know intuitively that you would go there and look for VMFA.

Celeste Fetta Neff: Okay, that is a really good observation. That is something I can definitely pass along to Kenny who manages our website. I think Jan is here too and can note that. I would say the *Learn Site* is also a place, if it is a resource that we feel will benefit teachers and students and learners that connects, obviously we are going to be linking up to that. Anytime it is an artist video that goes on our *Learn Site*, that is another avenue to explore. I think we could definitely work on cross-promoting. Thank you for making a great suggestion and observation, Birch.

Birch Douglass: Okay, I will be quiet and go back to mute.

Michael Taylor: Well, I was going to say that is excellent feedback, and we will definitely follow up on YouTube. On the videographer side, this is one of the things that we are learning in real time with the Pandemic. We have one dedicated videographer, and the volume of online work we are doing just means that we need to increase capacity there. This is one person who is making the videos and editing the videos, and we are very much aware that this is a strategic need of the museum. This person reports to Stephen. Stephen and I have spoken with Alex about this. We have to give more resources there. In answer to your question, Celeste, even with the vaccine this is not going to change. I think we are moving more and more to a world where in the future a visit to the museum may be online. We are definitely addressing that, but the YouTube thing is definitely something we want to look at. I must admit, I think with the *Cocktails with Curators*, I am not sure they went on YouTube. I think they were for the upper level membership, and we are now talking about editing those and packaging them, but it is a great point of feedback.

Jan Hatchette: I will just add to that, Michael. There is a button on the website where you can find all of the videos that are recorded and on YouTube. You are correct, *Cocktails with Curators* were only made available to our high level donors, so those are not a part of it. Any of the videos that are on YouTube can all be found on the YouTube link on VMFA's website.

Michael Taylor: Maybe we should send that around. Jan, you and I and Celeste should chat afterwards. If Birch cannot find it, it might be just difficult to navigate on the website.

Jan Hatchette: Yeah, it is a button at the bottom, but absolutely, we can definitely share that.

Michael Taylor: Thank you.

Lynette Allston: This is Lynette Alston. I have a question. Are the linkages to the virtual offerings being shared with the partners throughout the state? I am thinking about our Museum of Art here in Southampton County. We have a website, but I am not sure those linkages are being shared on our website. I think that would be another way to get the word out.

Jeffrey Allison: I think you are absolutely right, and it is not 100% obviously. With the specific partners that we work with, there are links there, but that would be something that we can easily start accomplishing. I think that is a fantastic idea, and we will get on that.

Lynette Allston: Okay, and one other thing. I think you all know I am a studio school person, and the COVID cleanliness, safety part has been superb at the museum school. I have been very happy attending pottery classes with my pottery buddies. I just want you all to know that. Then from the Virginia Native American community, the Pocahontas Reframed Festival was wonderful, because it brought it right into our homes. I think the partnership with VMFA is where we need to be. This is just perfect, so thank you. That is all.

Betty Crutcher: Following with that, this is just beautiful. I was thinking during the Pandemic and especially now I have a wish. I know it will not come true, because we only have one person in technology. Wouldn't it be wonderful to have in Virginia a time out every day during the Pandemic where our children and adults could have an art experience in their lives? Having the option to really learn how to just feel happy and have a sense of happiness through art every day. If I had enough money, that is where I would want to give more to, but I think that we have heard how art can really have a positive impact on the mental health of all of us. If there is a way for us to really strengthen that through technology, hopefully we could even increase our membership instead of decreasing it, because of the ways that we can imagine giving more education to people who might never have thought they could engage with us in the way that they can through Celeste and Jeffrey's area.

Michael Taylor: There is a beautiful idea, Betty. You know when you were talking, I was thinking about our mutual friend Chester Higgins. He often shares his photographs with me and Alex, and you open that attachment, and it just makes your day. Art does have that power to transform and to heal. These are wonderful ideas. I actually think our membership level is going to grow in this online world. We certainly found with the *Kamoinge* Symposium that we were reaching people who would never have come to the Cheek Theater and sit for two days. I think that is something that I know Tom and his team have been thinking very hard about, is how to get all those people involved. Because the onsite visitation, which is so important, is one factor, but there are a lot of people now who have fallen in love with this museum, who maybe will only come here once a year. But those are beautiful words. Thanks for sharing.

Mary Frediani: I just had a question sort of in that same vein, but a little bit different in terms of reaching audiences. I wanted to know where we were with distance learning. I know obviously that has been a challenge with kids not in school and not knowing when they are going to be when they have not been. Where is that at the moment and the thoughts going forward with that?

Celeste Fetta Neff: I can answer that. Thanks, Mary. That is a great question. It has been challenging. We were in a really good position when this started, having done distance learning and being well versed in working with Zoom. That was a big plus for us. If you know a teacher, if you love a teacher, if you have been a teacher just in regular times you know it is a rewarding job, but it is also not an easy job. I think what we have learned in speaking with teachers, it is teachers just trying to stay afloat. It is adding something else, and you know, our requests went down a little bit, obviously in the beginning because the teachers were just trying to survive, as well as, students adapting to the situation. What we did is we honored that and really listened to our TAC, our Teacher Advisory Council, on what their needs were as educators during this time. That is where we

heard, “I need materials or resources that I can give to my students to do so they can do it on their own and then we can come back together and discuss.” We really started working on asynchronous materials like video guided exercises and really ramped up those resources on our website. That is what our distance learning team worked on to complement a distance learning session. Then when the fall came along and teachers knew they were going to be in this scenario that is when we started to see a little bit more requests. We are actually back up to where we were last year in terms of numbers. Actually they are a little bit above at 5%. I think where that will continue to go, we will obviously still work in this vein, but we also expanded it to third grade. It used to be fifth grade and up, but we opened it up a little bit. Now we are serving third grade and up. Also with professional development, that is an area we are really interested in and looking at working with VDOE. I know Kelly is here. Hi Kelly. We are making sure that we share our experiences and learn from teachers about their experiences working in this format. We will be doing a lot more in that area, helping teachers who may be able to incorporate art into their curriculum, and how to talk about and teach with art across the curriculum.

Carol Ann Bischoff: I have a related question, Celeste. I would like to echo Jil. I had not been on the VMFA *Learn* Site since the spring, and I was blown away. I did notice the content on how it is labeled individually with the different courses and the grades beginning with third all the way up to college. I was wondering whether or not some of that, or all of that, or how much of that content comports with the Virginia Standards of Learning, and if it does can it be labeled? That would be particularly helpful if Virginia public school teachers knew this meets SOL 3.0. I am speaking as a former PTA president here. That would really be helpful I think.

Celeste Fetta Neff: Yes, all we do relates back to SOLs. All of that is true. I think in the intro it says that and we tried it. We list SOLs on resources. I think the other thing that we are really cognizant of is not just SOLs, but thinking about the five C's, the profiles of a Virginia graduate. Creativity, collaboration, some of these themes you will hear in our value statements as well. Creative thinking, critical thinking, teaching skills along with those standards is something that we are really starting to push again and working closely with our colleagues in the Virginia Department of Education. Cherry can speak to this as well, I am sure. So yes, we absolutely test standards, and we talk about that as much as possible to get the word out. Thanks, Carol Ann. That is a good question.

Carol Ann Bischoff: Thank you.

Jil Harris: Other questions from anyone?

Cammy Carleton: I have a quick question. Looking forward to when we are able to be back in the Cheek Theater for like a Mellon Lecture or something, will we also be able to virtually broadcast those events or is that something that is possible simultaneously?

Celeste Fetta Neff: Yes simulcast. I would love to. That is definitely a goal of ours. I think that gets back to technology needs in the theater space and staffing. Those are two buckets, and we have researched the cost of that. We actually applied for an IMLS grant, but unfortunately did not receive that grant. This is what I love about writing grants. It is always great when you get one, of course, but the process and the research you do to get there to the actual application, you can use that again and again. We have got a plan. We have got the idea of costs, so it is a matter of funding that and making that happen. Yes, I would love to. This is where we are now, and I think it is also an expectation of audiences as well as a major resource for the entire Commonwealth of Virginia and

the country. We want to be there. We want to meet that audience need. Thanks for asking, Cammy.

Cammy Carleton: Thanks.

Jil Harris: Not that I want to cold call anyone, but I wonder if Kelly or Cherry from the state education level have any comments or anything to share with us?

Kelly Bisogno: Hi. I would just love to say thank you for all that you all are doing to support teachers and students. I think the way that you all have made educational resources accessible quickly to all of Virginia's public school educators has been outstanding. We are seeing teachers that are engaging with VMFA resources that maybe have not before because there is a new sort of renewed attention to the online resources. There was a study done in London of different art museums who were putting collections online because there was a fear of losing visitor participation at the museum. What they found was that by putting the collections online, they increased in-person visitor participation because people increased their engagement with the museum and their love of art. By putting your collections online and making all these things accessible for classrooms, you are affecting all of Virginia and the love of art for our students. So, thank you all so much for all the work that you are doing.

Michael Taylor: Thank you, Kelly.

Jil Harris: Thank you.

Cherry Gardner: This is Cherry. I just want to piggyback on Kelly's comments and all that I have heard today. The educational sector of the museum is unbelievable. I have traveled to many state museums across the United States. We are tops, and I tell you what we offer our students is unbelievable. The only thing that I see is that we have a lot of students and parents who are not aware of the museum still to this day. I am trying to think of how we can best serve those students, especially now when we have distance learning. We have teachers, many teachers that use the museum, but many more that should be using it that are not. The resources are there, and they are just not using them. I am trying to think of ways we could get out and reach out to the public. You receive these things in your mailbox. We all do, you know windows that you can buy at half price or whatever, a one sheet little memo. Maybe there is something we need to think about across the state that we get into mailboxes, because we see it on TV. Occasionally, there is something there about the museum, but not like something they would see in black and white that would explain the museum and what it offers to students. I mean I am just throwing these ideas out, but maybe have some kind of subscription for young people that are members of the museum and in turn, they get a monthly newsletter with things for them to do. They can go online and do it on their own even, because these children today are so independent in their learning. They are having to take it upon their shoulders now, because they are not sitting in the classroom. These are just some ideas I am throwing out. Right now it is a hot topic, because people are doing distance learning, adults and children of all ages are doing it. I think it is the time now for us to do that. I agree with Kelly with the study in London. Now would be the chance for the museum to get out to everyone, and people then would come physically to the museum when they are able to. This virus will not last forever, thank goodness. We hope that they will start coming to the museum, but first we have to get them involved in the museum in any way that we can. That might be a way to think about doing that, just some of my ideas and thoughts.

Michel Zajur: I like that idea that is a subscription for students.

Cherry Gardner: Well, we have to get them involved, and the earlier we get them involved, the research has said they will follow suit through life with culture. If we can get them involved, and even maybe do a partnership with the Historical Society or Science Museum, to send out something that is a one page that lists what is there for adults and kids. Parents do not even realize there are things their children could be in tune to, and they do not even have to be involved. Most of these activities that the educational group comes up with are self-contained. I mean, they are phenomenal. They are just absolutely phenomenal. I wish that more were using those. I know we have a large calling of people who are now, but I think there are so many more that could, even outside of Virginia.

Betty Crutcher: Even in a virtual sense, we might share the information more broadly.

Carol Ann Bischoff: I would like to have an offline conversation among people, because this is something I have been interested in as well, thinking of ways to promote this, particularly in Northern Virginia through the various superintendents, their websites, and PTA websites. I would be willing to participate in a conversation with others about ways to really kickstart this to the next level.

Cherry Gardner: In the past, we at the Virginia Museum worked with the Virginia PTA very closely, and for years they would advertise the museum and what the department was doing. I said that we were holding hands and that we were for the same efforts, for our children, and that promoted to a point. I think if we all hold hands a little stronger and think a little smarter, we might get more of this information out, because it is just phenomenal information that the parents and teachers and our citizens need to know that it is there for them.

Birch Douglass: I think all of this is touched on somewhat in the draft of the strategic plan. Maybe Caprice can comment on that?

Caprice Bragg: Thanks, Birch. You are right. We certainly wanted to incorporate the importance of a number of the topics that have been discussed today; the importance of and continuity with our digital offerings, the importance of continuing to partner, and thinking in innovative ways about both our statewide outreach and our education. I am furiously taking notes as I am listening to this conversation and seeing a lot of ways in which the strategic plan, that hopefully the Boards will approve tomorrow, provides us with a very flexible roadmap to adjust and respond to these needs. It is important to focus on education. It is right at the core of what we do and to do that in a meaningful way across the Commonwealth. Thanks, Birch.

Jil Harris: Caprice, will you and Michael think about after we have all worked on the strategic plan tomorrow and hopefully approved it, will you think of some way that those of us on this Committee who are interested in putting forth Cherry's ideas and Kelly's ideas can? Would you think about what we could do in order to help with that, because I think it is important, especially now with the Pandemic.

Michael Taylor: Happy to do so.

Caprice Bragg: Absolutely, happy to do that. Thank you.

Jil Harris: Right. Thank you. Any more questions from anyone?

Carolyn Garner: I have a question. I do not know whether you all were able to catch the webinar last night with Peter Schertz. It was about marine science and underwater excavations and so forth. I kept thinking this would be something that the Science Museum might really relish. It was so full of science, and in the strategic plan we are collaborating with other institutions. I have been hearing about the Valentine on Monument Avenue, and as a donor to many of these other organizations it is like getting triple returns on your investment. I think it is very smart in these times, particularly because we want to be a community entity and to partner with other nonprofits as much as possible. Am I muted?

Michael Taylor: No, no. We were nodding in agreement. I mean, as you know, Peter has worked very closely with the Science Museum on the Pompeii Exhibition. Last night was really about marine archaeology. I thought it was a great program, too. Yes, we are always trying to find ways to reach out and partner. We do so with the ballet and so many organizations. You are right this is really part of our future, being collaborative. It is all in the strategic plan, so I think the silence was just a silence of everyone agreeing.

Carolyn Garner: Thank you.

Jil Harris: Any further questions for anyone. Well Michael, I guess you have no further questions.

Michael Taylor: We are doing good.

Jil Harris: I do need to ask if there is any new business? Anyone have any new things to bring up? Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. This, as always, is such a great meeting, and you guys are doing such wonderful work for the museum. It blows my mind to hear about everything that is being done, so many thanks to all of you.

Meeting adjourned at 2:36pm.

Transcribed by: Stephanie Cooperstein
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