

Museum and Cultural Advisory Board - Meeting Minutes

The Museum and Cultural Advisory Board met in a regular meeting at the Arizona Museum of Natural History, 53 N. Macdonald Street, on May 29, 2014.

Members Present:

Merlin Ellis
Melissa Sue Johnson
Karina Wilhelm

Dr. Robbi D. Venditti
Peggy Wilson
Robert Valverde

Members Absent:

Dilworth Brinton, Jr.
David Dean
Nancy Aposhian
Alyssa Yingling

Staff Present:

Cindy Ornstein Rob Schultz
Tom Wilson Jean Kaminski

Dr. Robbi D. Venditti, Chair, called the meeting to order at 4:01 p.m.

Approval of Minutes

Dr. Robbi D. Venditti, chair, called for any corrections/additions/deletions to the minutes of January 28, 2014. There being none, Melissa Sue Jonson made a motion to approve, and Karina Wilhelm seconded. The Board members present unanimously approved the minutes of January 28, 2014. They will be posted on the City's website.

Public Comments: No members of the public were present.

Discussion: Two Volunteers Needed on August 11 for the National Geographic Live School Shows – Rob Schultz

Rob Schultz requested two volunteers, on behalf of Mandy Buscas, to serve on a panel to review the applications from Title I schools throughout the Valley who have applied for a ticket/bus waiver for their students to see a National Geographic Live School Show. Mr. Schultz reported that we are usually able to accommodate all the schools who apply each year, but there are no guarantees. The National Geographic School Shows bring in thousands of students to Mesa Arts Center for a \$2 ticket. The panel will meet on August 11 from approximately 1 – 4 p.m. The waiver program is sponsored by National Geographic Live.

Peggy Wilson and Robert Valverde volunteered with Dr. Robbi Venditti, chair, volunteering as an alternate.

Staff Reports

Arizona Museum for Youth – Rob Schultz for Sunnee O'Rork

- Since opening as the i.d.e.a. Museum, revenue, attendance, and memberships are up.
- Just closed "Art of the Robot" and staff is in the process of installing "Bon Voyage: Art Goes on Vacation."
- Dr. James Chung of Reach Advisors donated a follow-up survey after opening as the i.d.e.a. Museum in May. It revealed that the rebrand was a striking success backed by the following data:
32% increase in attendance; 31% increase in memberships; doubled in paying customers; 22% were more likely to participate with their children; 27% were more likely to say their needs were met; 37% were more likely to say the Museum is a good value; and 51% were more likely to say the Museum brings the community together. The survey covered a few other smaller factoids as well. The Arts and Culture Department, the City, the Museum Board, visitors and members are happy with the transition and their success. Dr. Chung was quoted as saying, "You have nailed the execution of the brand!"
- The Museum is well on its way to greater sustainability by having renewed community relevance, securing expanded support to deliver greater impact, and serving a broader audience more meaningfully.
- The Museum co-sponsored the Association of Children's Museum's Annual Interactivity Conference in Phoenix, which brought over 1,000 people to the Valley. The conference was co-sponsored by the i.d.e.a. Museum and the Children's Museum of Phoenix, with an evening event at the i.d.e.a. Museum for the conference, with 360 attending. Feedback from the attendees was glowing, and it was wonderful to hear from museum peers. The guests enjoyed the activities and many said they have never seen such activities in a children's museum like they experienced at the i.d.e.a. Museum.

Dr. Robbi Venditti prepared, on behalf of the Board members, a commemorative collage for Sunnee O'Rork. The collage contained actual items that pertained to the opening of the i.d.e.a. Museum. Because Ms. O'Rork was unable to attend the Board meeting, Rob Schultz accepted on her behalf and will deliver the collage to her.

Arizona Museum of Natural History – Tom Wilson

- As the dinosaurs on Dinosaur Mountain continue to deteriorate, The Museum's Foundation raised \$60,000 to replace some of them. Staff reviewed several companies who manufacture animatronic dinosaurs, and the Foundation has given permission to go ahead and purchase three new ones.
- Discussions continue about a dinosaur facade that protrudes from the outside of the building making it visible from a distance; planning continues.
- Shortly, an article will appear in the *Arizona Republic*, regarding the significant donations the Museum has received over the last few years. Staff is preparing and installing an exhibition featuring these collections called "Cultures of the Ancient Americas." The objects came from three - five donors and are generally from the areas of south to southwest Mexico and Central and South America. The donations are quite significant and expand the scope of what the Museum is able to do with public interpretation in these areas.

Dr. Wilson brought an array of artifacts from a recent donation that included: from Mexico, a magnificent translucent stone mask from the great site of Teotihuacan (c. A.D. 400) and two Maya polychrome vessels (Late Classic, c. A.D. 700). From South America, A Moche portrait vessel from the north coast of Peru (c. A.D. 500), a Nazca double spouted jar with hummingbird designs from the south coast of Peru (c. A.D. 200), a Wari seal effigy vessel with attached beaker (A.D. 600-900), and a Chancay large female figurine from the Lima area (c. A.D. 1250).

Gary Nelson, *Arizona Republic* reporter, when doing research for his article commented, where else would you see these items? The Museum is grateful to its donors for these priceless objects.

Dr. Wilson also commented on their invaluable, knowledgeable volunteers who assist the Museum in providing educational experiences that engage their visitors.

Mesa Arts Center/Mesa Contemporary Arts – Rob Schultz

- Rob Schultz attended an Artspace Immersion Event in Minneapolis, the home of Artspace. He was able to explore some Artspace projects in Minneapolis similar to those planned for Mesa. He saw a standard approach project that was a four-five story building that housed artists, with studio spaces attached and ground floor community spaces (art galleries). He was able to meet and speak with artists that live there and the administrators that work in the creative businesses that are also housed there. Mr. Schultz said it was an eye-opening trip and energized him even more for Mesa's Artspace project. He also met people from five other communities around the country that are involved in Artspace projects in various phases of development. At this point, we are in a fundraising mode. We are starting to plan and prepare to formally alert City Council of the plans to-date. Terry Benelli, new Councilmember and executive of NEDCO, and two other NEDCO staff, accompanied Mr. Schultz on the trip to Minneapolis.
- Americans for the Arts annual conference will take place in June in Nashville. Mr. Schultz sits on the Arts Education Council for Americans for the Arts, which provides the opportunity to meet and network with world renowned educators. This year, a pre-conference was planned specifically for arts education, raising the profile for arts education nationally. Mr. Schultz is chair of a sub-committee that will revamp the criteria for the annual national arts education award that will meet during the conference.
- The Arizona Celebration of Freedom will take place on Friday, July 4, 6 – 10 p.m. located near the library/convention center/amphitheater area. The celebration will have live music, food, games, activities with fireworks being shot off around 9:45 p.m. Arts and Culture Department will have a presence at the event again this year, with a booth for each Museum's education staff providing family and children's activities; the Mesa Arts Center will provide two chalk artists to create a mural.

Merlin Ellis asked if the i.d.e.a. Museum is a lot different from when it was the Arizona Museum for Youth. Cindy Ornstein said, "Yes," the entire left side of the Museum feels new and has a different feel. The HUB is totally different from ArtZone, which is now gone, and ArtVille was refreshed with a new interactive train added. The building was painted inside and out, and new interactive instruments along the outside sidewalk as you enter and/or leave the Museum were added.

Melissa Sue Johnson commented that she loves the added technology. She is an elementary school teacher and some of her students attend on free Sundays and come back saying they had so much fun there – they love it.

Director's Report – Cindy Ornstein

We have an opportunity to apply for a new grant program through the Flinn Foundation. The Foundation made applications available to the 19 largest arts and culture organizations in the Valley. Anyone, of the 19, who sent a letter of intent were given up to \$10,000 for a planning and research grant to make the strongest, possible proposal for the grant, and we were one of those 19. If successful, three to five of the 19 organizations will be selected for grants up to \$100,000. Our proposal

will focus on building deeper and longer-term relationships with patrons under 40. In the bigger picture, it should also help shape our organizational practices in terms of listening to our community, engaging them more deeply, and adapting based on trial, learning, and research.

With the \$10,000 the Flinn Foundation gave us to conduct research to test our assumptions for the project, we will seek to more broadly and deeply engage people under 40. The question is how do we build a more deep relationship with that audience through programming; how to help guide and inform that programming so it is responding to their needs; and how do we create opportunities for them to have on-going relationships with us? Because we asked, we were fortunate to receive six hours of extra consulting from one of Flinn's consultants, Alan Brown, a leading expert in arts marketing research, and we are working with an outside research firm that is donating a large portion of what they are spending to assist us with some focus groups. A survey went out this afternoon to a list of over 8,000 names of people who attended concerts at Mesa Arts Center (MAC) geared toward a younger audience. Tonight, May 29, two focus groups will be held; one group of users who have been to MAC before; and one group of non-users who have not been to MAC in at least two years. Nancy Wolter and Cindy Ornstein are reading a tremendous amount of research on the topic as well.

We have laid a good foundation for building more meaningful relationships with the under 40's. Many of our initiatives have involved or cross-pollinated with projects led by this age group, including Southwest Maker Fest, spark! After Dark performers, spoken word residencies, Mesa Up @ Nite, Mesa Urban Garden, Alliance Pavilion performances, and more. In parallel to our own efforts, our partner NEDCO has presented their Arts Entrepreneurship training program for two years. DMA is getting more engaged in creating opportunities downtown, and young merchants, such as Lulubells, Republica Empanada, Nebula Vape Lounge and Queen's Pizza, are motivated to build a more creative environment.

The proposal concept will enlist a core group of young people to help define, through community conversations, artist engagement and research, what people perceive is needed to make Mesa a creative community. The working title for this group is the Creative Catalysts. A facilitator for this process will be hired and serve as the administrator and coordinator to keep the project moving forward. The core group will serve multiple roles, not only identifying their wish list and the community's, but also helping to identifying Mesa as a place for creativity and innovation and assisting in the implementation of these ideas by helping to select artists, shape projects, participating, and spreading the word.

There are two concentric circles to this group. The core group is the Creative Catalyst Leadership Circle, and they will listen to and engage the community and help shape and guide several key initiatives that they have helped to identify. They will also work with MAC staff to help identify and augment a group of offerings to be built into packages for low-cost sampling by the larger Creative Catalysts Influencers group.

The second circle, the Creative Catalyst Influencers, will be invited to participate in many free activities and to help inform and engage others to participate. They and the Leadership Circle will have the opportunity to purchase affordable "choose your own" packages, with a Chinese menu style group of offerings in all areas of MAC's programming, including shows, artist talks, workshops, studio experiences, food, social events, and more.

Ms. Ornstein's Piper Fellowship work is focused on the sustainability of long-term community engagement and what is the cultural eco system that it takes to support that. Her fellowship will be looking at best practices to reach that goal, which is in line with the Flinn grant as well. Once she has completed her Fellowship, she will be able to apply for a grant of up to \$50,000 to support this work.

Regarding her Piper Fellowship, Ms. Ornstein has been reading and conducting phone interviews with key experts. Her first trip will be to look at a group of organizations in Minneapolis next week. While there, a technology digital arts event will take place and she will have the opportunity to experience how they present that. Also while in Minneapolis, they will be opening their Light Rail to St. Paul, which will be wonderful insight as Mesa begins to plan for our opening.

The Performing Live kick-off event for members took place in May. This year, only the series packages were announced, but not the single tickets. Members prefer to see the entire season at one time, so next year, we will go back to that format. This Sunday, June 1, the entire Performing Live season will be announced and appear as an insert in the *Arizona Republic* and in the next issue of *New Times*. Single tickets go on sale to members on June 1 and to the general public on June 15. This season is one of the most exciting with 57 shows to begin the season and additional shows added throughout the season. This year, a Broadway series was re-introduced, and for the first time, a Spoken World and Dance series, in addition to the Classical, Jazz, and National Geographic Live series'. This year, the classical series will have the addition of "Classical Inside Out," inspired by a concert given by Zuill Bailey last fall. People sat for three hours, memorized, as he

broke apart the music for the audience. He will be MAC's artistic guest this season presenting non-traditional classical music concerts, as he tears down barriers to help people to not be intimidated by classical music.

Three finalists presented their conceptual designs for the shade sculpture for the north plaza to a panel. The panel selected the final artist who is an internationally known public artist, but Ms. Ornstein was not able to release his name at this time.

Rob Schultz added that the proposed Fees and Charges the Board reviewed and approved to move forward were approved by City Council.

One of the Board members asked if we ever heard from the Mayor or Council regarding a letter sent in January asking for additional funding for the Creative Economy Fund, but Ms. Ornstein and Dr. Robbi Venditti, chair, said they have not received a response. Ms. Ornstein and Dr. Venditti will follow up.

Report on Conferences and/or meetings/Performances Attended: Board Members – Information only

Peggy Wilson reported that she attended Southwest Shakespeare's "Equivocation" – an interesting modern play with a beautiful set design. She also attended spark! Mesa's Festival of Creativity and the openings at Mesa Contemporary Arts Museum (MCA).

Karin Wilhelm reported that she attended spark! as well, and her children loved the Made Garden. She also took her children to see Chihuly at the Botanical Gardens and wanted to know how he makes the glass, and she plans to bring them to Mesa Arts Center (MAC) the next time artist demos are planned at an event.

Peggy Wilson and Karina Wilhelm attend an Arizona Humanities workshop that they found extremely interesting.

Dr. Robbi Venditti, chair, also attended the openings at MCA and attended and enjoyed the Natural Harp performance at MAC. She is continuing her hot shop classes this summer at MAC.

Peggy Wilson, Karina Wilhelm, and Dr. Robbi Venditti, chair, attended the opening exhibitions at the i.d.e.a. Museum and at the Arizona Museum of Natural History (both on the same night).

Robert Valverde reported that he attended a Heritage Academy dance program at MAC, which his daughter performed in; the experience was great for the students. He saw Steve Gadd at the Musical Instrument Museum and had the opportunity to participate in a meet and greet, which he thoroughly enjoyed, but was disappointed it was so poorly attended. He asked if MAC ever offers a meet and greet for artists. Rob Schultz replied that some artists will allow a meet and greet and some will not; they are not advertised. Sometimes artists will announce from the stage that they will be in the lobby; a few artists will allow for a backstage meet and greet, which is usually offered to members and big ticket holders. Some artists offer workshops to the public. The workshop events are advertised through the usual marketing approach; in the class brochure, on the MAC website, social media, promotional materials, school flyers, street team, etc. He also said what a great asset Emilio Cruz is to the Mesa Arts Center faculty; he studied bata drums with Mr. Cruz.

Melissa Sue Johnson said she brought her son to the opening at i.d.e.a. Museum for "Art of the Robot," the opening at MCA on February 14, and spark! during spring break in March. She also brought him to the most recent opening in MCA, which she thought he would hate, but he loved it. He found Boundless and Fold, Paper, Scissors to be very interesting. They also attended the Parks and Recreation event in Pioneer Park, even though it got too windy for rides it was still a fun event.

Merlin Ellis stated that he also attended spark! and his kids enjoyed it. He also attended a Ryan Shupe & the Rubber Bands concert at the Higley Center for the Performing Arts and went to a Sufi farm where they grew cauliflower and artichokes and found it fascinating.

The next scheduled meeting date is July 24, 2012, 4:00 p.m. at Mesa Arts Center, third floor, south Studios conference room.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Cindy Ornstein, Director
Arts and Culture Department