

## Museum and Cultural Advisory Board – Meeting Minutes

The Museum and Cultural Advisory Board met in a regular meeting via Zoom video conference on Thursday February 4, 2021.

### Members Present:

Ivan Martinez  
Theresa Schlechty  
Ronna Green  
Alycia de Mesa-Weeden  
Michelle Streeter  
Dilworth Brinton, Jr.  
Melvin Van Vorst  
Jocelyn Condon

### Members Absent:

Angela Buer  
Nick Willis  
Tara Phelps

### Staff Present:

Cindy Ornstein  
Sarah Goedicke  
Randy Vogel  
Jeffory Morris  
Alison Stoltzman  
Illya Riske

Alycia de Mesa-Weeden moved to start the meeting and Theresa Schlechty seconded. Alycia de Mesa-Weeden called the meeting to order at 4:01pm.

**Public Comments:** There were no comments from the public.

### Approval of Minutes from the November 19 Meeting:

Alycia de Mesa-Weeden moved to approve the minutes and Melvin Van Vorst seconded. Board members voted unanimously to approve the minutes from November 19, and they will be posted on the city's website.

### Arts & Culture Department Update – Cindy Ornstein

Cindy Ornstein stated that there have been many department successes since November 19. Sunnee O'Rork did retire in January – thank you all who were able to attend her virtual retirement party. Sunnee's job was posted and we have received the first batch of applicants. It will be posted until filled, just as the Administrator job at AzMNH is.

We held a first round of interviews for the AzMNH Administrator position. Candidates went through the first and second round of interviews but after discussions at the city level, it was decided that we would repost the position. This is because it was posted right before the holidays and before vaccines were available, which may have affected peoples' willingness to look for work. We want to ensure we get all the best candidates we can. This does not mean candidates from the first round won't continue in the next round of interviews. We hope to do more interviews in about one month. We DID have good candidates in the first round but just want to ensure we properly vet our options.

We have been working with the City of Mesa Diversity Office on two programs. One was a PBS partnership to create a Martin Luther King, Jr. Day special with participation from all east valley diversity offices. It was presented as a special Horizon program with City of Mesa as a major sponsor. City of Mesa took the lead because we are usually the ones working with the Martin Luther King, Jr. committee to organize the parade and festival each year.

The second program was the Unity Art Walk – a modification of the old Unity Walk in Tempe that brings east valley cities together to celebrate diversity and bring community together. Arts & Culture departments from east valley cities created the Unity Art Walk for January, which was a very broad collaboration with an online map and guide around the equity and diversity theme. This art walk had many art offerings ranging from temporary art, murals, in-person exhibitions, and online/virtual offerings. Big kudos to Tiffany Fairall for creating a pop-up exhibition for January called *Human Contrasts*, curated by Clottee Hammons in the MCA project room. She also organized a four week online art contest juried by Clottee.

Learning Reimagined launched, with all Arts & Culture departments contributing. This is an educator's portal with free resources. So far, 455 of users are educators, 40% are homeschooling parents, and the rest are general public parents. This resource is in partnership with Southwest Shakespeare and Mesa Historical Museum. We are adding new material all the time and see this having the potential to be exciting and valuable post-COVID. This experience has allowed for a stronger staff bond. Our amazing staff has done a fantastic job and Cindy Ornstein is very proud.

### Staff Reports

#### Mesa Arts Center (MAC) Update on Programs and Operations – Cindy Ornstein

Illya Riske gave an update on the Save Our Stages act (now called The Shuttered Venue Operating Grant) and MAC is eligible, administered by Small Business Administration in the federal government. It covers up to 45% of

revenues from FY 19, which is about 2.3 million dollars for MAC. We will submit our application as soon as we can after it becomes available. We will use the funds to offset expenditures (the funds must be spent on specific things), offset some budgetary pressures across the department, and provide a cushion if our revenues fall short of projections for this fiscal year.

Ilyia Riske then updated the Board on current capital projects. MAC is replacing seats in the Ikeda & Piper theaters, starting with the Piper, starting later this month. Fabrics have already been selected. We are using our downtime to get Piper replaced by August and will pair the Ikeda seat and floor replacement while the theater is dark. Funding for this comes from the restoration fund, which is supported by ticket sales. Alycia de Mesa-Weeden asked if there will be any changes in seat spacing or if this is just a cosmetic upgrade. Ilyia Riske explained that it is cosmetic but also resolving some comfort issues with some seats. A higher quality of seat was chosen so they will hopefully last longer and save money long-term.

Cindy Ornstein stated that Studios classes and MCA visitation are going very well. Both are open with limited capacity for safely distancing. Many classes are full and most sold well. MCA is having excellent visitation, especially after the New Year, and is finishing installation of the Contemporary Craft exhibit (opening the second week of February).

The Store at Mesa Arts Center is closed again after a soft opening in December. Things leading to this decision were a volunteer contracted COVID (not at MAC), concerns about filling volunteer slots for cashiers, it's a small space even with reduced capacity, and traffic was very slow. The cost benefit analysis led the Steering Committee to determine they should close and reopen in the fall when the theaters reopen.

MAC's volunteer appreciation event will be virtual this year on March 8. We are working to make sure our volunteers still feel valued.

Last week, thanks to Randy Vogel's efforts and a sponsorship from Boeing, MAC presented a panel on Race, Culture, and Jazz with Ted Nash and Wynton Marsalis. It was a great conversation and is available to re-watch on MAC's website. Alycia de Mesa-Weeden said the conversation was very rich and she enjoyed it.

MAC Theaters are still not open, with that status technically being reviewed on a month to month basis. We are moving forward with a full season for next fiscal year and Randy Vogel is working hard on that lineup. We are working on a season launch – more details to come. There is still some anxiety around the beginning of the season because medical professionals are predicting herd immunity around November, which creates some anxiety for September and October events, and we will look at contingency plans for events earlier in the fall. We currently still have virtual offerings, such as the Dave Koz Valentine's Day special, National Geographic Live, and Classical Music Inside Out.

Randy Vogel stated that MAC had an opportunity to have Grammy-winning musician Zuill Bailey record the entire Bach cello suite in the theaters with 256 times the quality of the average CD, which makes it sound like you're really there. Hopefully, that will release in April. Thanks to Michelle Streeter from Visit Mesa: Visit Mesa had Zuill go out in nature and play the prelude of the Bach Cello Suite No. 1 that Visit Mesa and MAC can use for promotions. Michelle Streeter said this was a long-overdue collaboration between MAC and Visit Mesa, and Randy suggested doing another collaboration next year.

#### Arizona Museum of Natural History (AzMNH) – Alison Stoltman

Alison Stoltman stated that things are going well, and the museum continues to get good feedback from customer surveys. 92% rated the museum as excellent or very good and 98% reported the museum met their expectations. The museum is almost full every hour, particularly on weekends. We continue to offer half price admission but that isn't what is bringing people in, based on their survey responses.

The museum is hiring a new exhibit preparator. This position will work on modernization of galleries, create new experiences and imagery, work on projection mapping, and blend technology with sculpture. The museum has some big projects in the works. The education department is creating an online field trip experience with 360 degree images. The Historic Post Office building cleanup is ongoing in preparation for renovations. Our lighting project will start soon: this is a capital project to replace lighting in the original areas of the museum building. The lighting systems are ancient, and this will make a big difference in quality and control over the lighting in the galleries and will enhance our visitors' experiences.

#### i.d.e.a. Museum – Jeffery Morris

It's bittersweet that Sunnee O'Rork has retired: staff was sad to see her go but excited for her next adventure. Jeffery Morris stated that the museum is moving forward and remains open to limited admissions Thursday through Sunday. The museum has had 1,907 visitors over last 14 weeks, limited to 25 people per time slot. We've been very busy over last two weeks and almost all sessions have been full.

Our educators are doing a great job making everyone feel safe and comfortable and working on creating even more safe experiences. The museum has four disinfection stations and all but four of the museum's front line staff have received COVID vaccines, which helps a lot. Museum educators are also working on virtual tours to help school systems, like our sister museum AzMNH.

The current exhibit is still Art of the Story, but we are working on our next exhibit, Robo Art, set to open at the end of April. This exhibit features robotics and art in robotics. One artist uses a robot to make his art. Our fall show will be about the art of architecture.

We are moving forward with the museum renovation project. The architect is Holly Street Studios, who is also working on the ASU project in downtown Mesa. The i.d.e.a. Museum Foundation Board will start fundraising for the second phase of the project soon. We now have a brand new fire system, so we are up to code, and we are getting new security system in the near future. We're also working on fundraising to create virtual tour of the museum for the website.

#### **Discuss any Projects, Initiatives, or Presenters of Interest – Board Members**

Alycia de Mesa-Weeden asked if there are any other topics of arts advocacy to discuss. Nick Willis (not present) wanted to know if anyone had any ideas. Please mention today or by email to Alycia de Mesa-Weeden or Nick Willis so we can get it on the next Agenda. Sarah Goedicke will forward updates from AZ Citizens for the Arts on their advocacy efforts to get a regular line item in the state budget for AZ Commission on the Arts, so if Board members choose to do anything to support those efforts they can be informed.

Sarah Goedicke will also send the link for Board applications to the Board at large. There will be two openings for the Board starting in July.

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

Theresa Schlechty just started working with the City of Mesa neighborhood panel. That work has overlapping themes with some of the things discussed in this meeting and Theresa want to bring up arts activities with that group (activities that you can do with your neighbor). Cindy said we would love to have Board members share out any of the activities we share with the Board.

Ivan Martinez told staff that they are doing a lot to be proud of like Classical Music Inside Out, and the Martin Luther King, Jr. PBS presentation that was extraordinarily well done. Ivan Martinez stated he also really enjoyed the Wynton Marsalis panel discussion on race and encouraged staff to continue this work moving forward.

Alycia de Mesa-Weeden said she made it down to the Chiricahua Mountains for her birthday and visited the Amerind museum. There, she saw an exhibit co-curated by Gabriel Ayala, Yaqui tribal member of Southern Arizona, who is a musician and visual artist and Eric Kaldahl. She would love to see something like this at MAC both because of the Native art component, but also because Gabriel is a multi-disciplinary artist. She's excited to get Gabriel over to play for an ASU event soon.

Alycia de Mesa-Weeden also discussed a presentation she gave recently titled "Indigenous Storytelling for Social Change in the Technological Age." This session reviews examples of how Indigenous storytelling is transcending borders and age groups through social media, discusses ethical considerations in traditional storytelling applied to modern technological

channels, and invites participants to consider the use of virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) from Indigenous perspectives. Alycia wanted to bring to the Board's attention to an exhibition curated by. She's going to get Gabriel over to play for an ASU event soon. Alycia highlighted a 180 VR film made by Indigenous creators in Yawarni (Amazon in Brazil) and will send the link to the Board after the meeting. She also mentioned an AR experience that decolonizes narratives to monuments that was a fascinating piece.

***The next scheduled meeting date is March 25, 2021 via Zoom video conference.***

There being no further business, Alycia de Mesa-Weeden moved to end the meeting and Jocelyn Condon seconded. The meeting adjourned at 5:12pm.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cindy Ornstein". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large, stylized initial 'C'.

Cindy Ornstein, Director  
Arts and Culture Department