

Shared Vision, Shared Progress: Museums and Communities October 2010

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Images from Bindlestiff Studio (www.bindlestiffstudio.org),
Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture
(www.washington.edu/burkemuseum/), Fuller Craft Museum
(www.fullercraft.org), Pacific Asia Museum
(www.pacificasiamuseum.org) Afghan Culture Museum
(www.afghanculturemuseum.org), Frye Art Museum
(www.fryemuseum.org), and Queens Museum of Art
(www.queensmuseum.org).

Museums are eager to reach new audiences, generate new ideas at their institutions, use original art to educate and inspire, become more involved with the community, and explore innate creativity and how it is expressed in different cultures. Communities want to preserve and present their cultural traditions and history and share them with their own young people and people from other cultures.

Museums and community residents agree that it is time to build new relationships that honor each other's assets and each other's goals, but early efforts in many places have increased distrust between these potential partners as skepticism about each other's motives and a push for early programmatic successes curtailed the conversations and dialogue that might have led to mutual respect.

Museums are often not comfortable places for community residents to visit. For many in the community, museums are seen as elitist and unconcerned with the needs of community residents. This generality does not represent all museums, but for many arts institutions it is a struggle to determine how to be a good neighbor. There is a tension that many museums feel between artistic excellence as it is defined in the artistic world and the arts and cultural traditions and artistic products from the communities that surround them. Museums also are concerned with the "mission creep" that a focus on the concerns of community residents might mean for them. They ask who is the museum's community – is it the people who come to their exhibits and support their endeavors or is it the people who reside in the low-income, multi-ethnic neighborhoods with whom the institution aims to connect.

Community residents seek places of beauty that would highlight their cultural traditions and offer links into communities of power. They want to break down the barriers between the community and the museum and work as peers to change their relationships, but many communities end up feeling that the museums are simply using them to build their audience and address diversity goals. Community residents hear museums saying that they want to teach about the artistic traditions their institutions represent without being willing to learn about and honor the innate creativity that is expressed in all cultures.

Successful partnerships are possible and this report captures lessons from some of these successes and includes case studies to illustrate varied approaches. The overarching lesson is that it is necessary to commit resources and a great deal of time to building relationships and during this time there are no visible outcomes. But the results are worth it. The museum finds itself moving from a bastion of remote cultures to a vibrant community hub and social center. Communities that fought allocations for museum support now battle beside the museum to garner local and state funding. Communities are able to present their cultural

Bindlestiff Studios partnered with its neighborhood organization in San Francisco to allow all voices to have a voice in shaping their community. A group of residents in poorly maintained singled room occupancy (SRO) hotels developed sketches that captured some aspect of their lives. Then Bindlestiff developed a play that wove together the sketches and policymakers were invited to attend the performance. The play got a standing ovation and policymakers who had worked on these issues for years said that this was the first time they really understood what life is like in an SRO.

traditions with an excellence that attracts people across demographic divides. In some places, these relationships have allowed for discussions about longstanding community challenges related to health, education, and limited access to financial services. Each may seem a long way from art, but a common artistic vocabulary built on trust creates a basis for conversations that get beneath the hardened positions.

This report frames the emerging work in a series of stages. While these steps are not necessarily consecutive, it does seem that the first stages of engagement and outreach must precede joint projects. And, generally, joint projects precede active efforts to explore social and community concerns. In short, partners need to know each other and build trust through listening and sharing and working together on projects that meet everyone's aims.

This is a time of significant change in the museum world. There is much discussion in the museum world and some powerful examples of how institutions are moving from a role that focused on conserving objects to becoming educators and curators of stories as well as objects. This report captures a point in time amidst these shifting paradigms and highlights some of what has worked for institutions that are building lasting relationships with their neighbors from surrounding communities.

Capturing the Learning at each stage

1. Expanding audience

a. Make it relevant

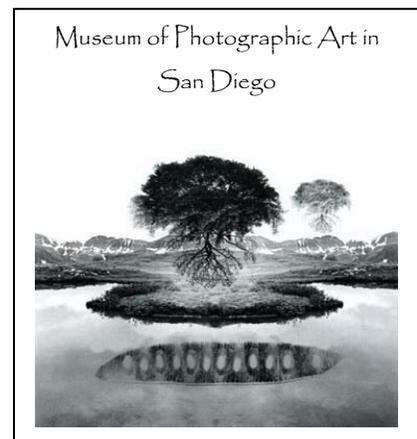
- i. Technology allows for personal, relevant connections both locally and nationally so it is important to get clear on the image and message you want to use to convey what your institution stands for. For example, Fuller Craft Museum in Brockton, MA has a simple new brand message "Let the Art Touch You" that conveys how they hope to relate to visitors.

b. Value opinions

- i. Let visitors use cameras and share reactions to artwork. For example, Museum of Photographic Art in San Diego has an audio tour that captures reactions to the photographs from both museum staff and visitors.

c. Show that you listen

- i. Visitors want to know that their opinions are affecting how the museum curates. For example, Worcester Museum of Art in MA has curators and visitors chose their Top 40 objects. The votes are tallied and items are tagged as one of the Top 40 on a weekly basis. The changing labels bring people back to



the museum to see where their favorites stand in the ranking.

d. *Use social media*

- i. Blogs, podcasts, Facebook, Twitter, Flickr and YouTube all bring your institution to the attention of every widening circles of people. Institutions that are succeeding with social media have learned to ease up control over what is posted so that multiple voices make the message more authentic.

e. *Reach beyond just physical visitors*

- i. An internet platform allows visitors to look at images of artwork and artifacts that they cannot travel to. The Museum of Afghan Culture, www.afghanculturemuseum.org is underway with support from museums and experts worldwide.

2. Education

a. *Innovations in museum education are inspiring.*

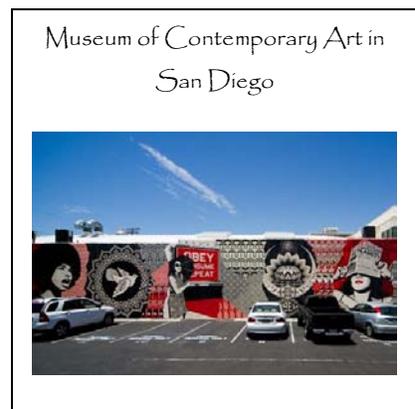
- i. At a time when school systems struggle to offer quality education in many districts in the country, museums are stepping in to connect art with the educational curriculum and give children and youth opportunities to learn about art during their summer vacations.
- ii. Frye Art Museum in Seattle, WA brought together different aspects of the community in a unique manner. The Seattle Project partner organizations were teaching art in high school, encouraging art with formerly homeless adults, and teaching art education to community members. The Frye Museum made its staff available to support and act as a liaison with the partner organizations. These collaborative exhibitions and projects celebrated the Museum's fifty-eight year commitment to community outreach and art education; raised awareness across the partners and project participants about the needs of others in the community; and, built new relationships with local funders.

b. *Let online programming extend your reach*

- i. www.colonialwilliamsburg.org has a daily puzzle, blog and word games.
- ii. www.ushmm.org uses its Unites States Holocaust Memorial Museum site to examine current topics and issues that relate to genocide.
- iii. www.artbabble.org grew out of the success of Indianapolis Museum of Art's You Tube video channel. Museum of Contemporary Art in San Diego is one of many arts institutions that are featured.

c. *"Invite the world to come and learn art"*

- i. Fleisher Art Memorial has had a long term



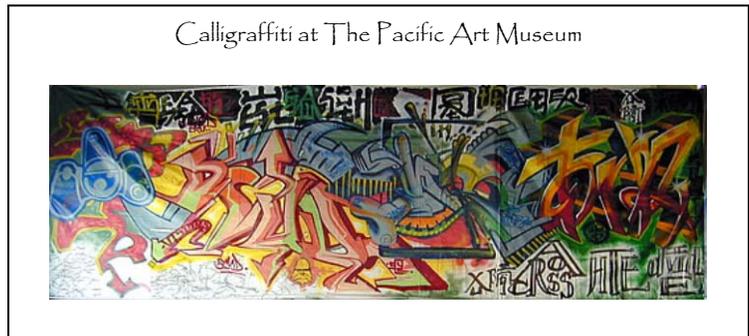
partnership with the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Here, children from all economic and cultural backgrounds share in the commonality of the creative experience and the cultural diversity of the faculty of working artists in diverse fine-arts mediums such as painting, drawing, sculpture, printmaking, photography, and ceramics.

3. Participatory Curation

- a. *Key questions to be explored*
 - i. Who controls the buildings, collections, programs, exhibitions, and events?
 - ii. How do visitors become more active stakeholders?
 - iii. Can community members be content creators, consumers, critics, and collaborators?
 - iv. How important is a consistent experience?
- b. *One museum's response to these questions*
 - i. Queens Museum of Art Partnership Gallery
 - 1. 15 exhibits a year that are curated by community groups.
 - 2. The opening is the big event and brings in people who have never been to the Museum before.
 - 3. This allows for a much quicker turnaround than a museum installation would.
 - 4. Community groups have a beautiful place to show their work.
 - 5. Funding from the city and state is now supporting a major renovation and expansion as a result of the combined advocacy efforts of the Museum and the community organizations.

4. Joint Curation

- a. *Successful efforts always maintain aesthetic standards*
 - i. The Pacific Art Museum's mission focuses on contemporary arts pertinent to Asia and the South Pacific Islands. One exhibit, Calligraffiti, connected contemporary graffiti artists with traditional Chinese calligraphy. Guest curators worked with young Latino artists to present an exhibition of large-scale murals in the Museum parking lot that were a conversation between two different aesthetic standards.
- b. *Culture bearers are on site*
 - i. In order to be sure that presentations were accurate and without bias, the



Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture in Seattle, WA de-centered authority and allowed the cultural communities to interpret their objects through their own perspectives.

- c. *Exhibitions need an over-arching theme*
 - i. Burke Museum was a pioneer in authentic museum/community collaboration and Pacific Voices has set a high bar for future work. The aim in later exhibitions will be to continue to de-center authority while maintaining sufficient coherence to enhance the visitor's experience.

5. Connecting Art and Livelihood

- a. *Becoming a dependable source of income for working artists over time*
 - i. Both museum leaders and working artists share this aim, but success has been limited.
 1. Philadelphia Museum of Art, as well as many culturally specific museums, has been successful on a short-term seasonal basis.
 2. Skilled community artists develop design themes and then work with museum store personnel to find manufacturers and then price and display the work. Contracts give artists a percentage of sales.

6. Addressing Social and Community Issues

- a. *Art can provide a safe space for discussion and sharing*
 - i. Redlining, or limiting access for people of color to certain neighborhoods, has affected housing patterns in many parts of the country. The Queens Museum of Art presented exhibition that told the story of this practice through the eyes of the community and then used this exhibition to bring in housing experts and policymakers to talk with community members about ways to change the practice and address the sub-prime mortgage debacle as well.
- b. *The aim is to be addressing issues the community sees as most important*
 - i. It takes time for trust building but the aim is to get to the point where museums are partners in social change and they are invited to participate and bring their resources to the table.
- c. Queens Museum of Art hired a community organizer to help them reach out to the community and listen and learn from their neighbors. An important issue to the community was the condition of Corona Park, a public space that was owned but not well-maintained by the city. QMA had connections with city leaders and was able to get significant investment in the park. The community wanted the jobs for maintaining the park to go to local residents and Queens Museum of Art was able to help them get contracts with the city. Queens Museum of Art continues to hold big events in the park to ensure that it is well-used for creative, fun celebrations.

QMA and its partners have organized three street celebrations per year in Corona Plaza that combine art, entertainment, health, and social services into one package. The popular events attract several thousand attendees.



APPENDIX

This Appendix includes:

Four brief case studies:

- Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture, Seattle, WA
- Frye Art Museum, Seattle, WA
- Pacific Asia Museum, Pasadena, CA
- Queens Museum of Art, Queens, NY

Additional Websites to Explore

BURKE MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY AND CULTURE UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON, SEATTLE, WA

Setting the stage

Founded in 1885 by volunteer naturalists, the Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture (The Burke) has been a Washington state museum since 1899. Located on the campus of the University of Washington in Seattle's University's district it is the only major natural history museum in the Pacific Northwest. The Burke's collection numbers over twelve million artifacts and specimens, including totem poles, gemstones, and dinosaur fossils. The museum currently displays three long-term exhibits, "Life and Times of Washington State," "Treasures of the Burke," and "Pacific Voices." The Burke presents temporary and traveling exhibits, provides programs for schools and other groups, and offers a rich array of public programming.

Seattle, with a population of approximately 600,000, is exceptionally ethnically diverse. In 2000, nearly seventeen percent of the population was born abroad – a figure that is forty percent higher than a decade earlier. This is an especially educated community with 53.6% of the population holding college degrees.

Introducing the model

In 1990, the Burke dismantled its existing exhibit and began development of *Pacific Voices*. This groundbreaking exhibit grew out of an intimate, extended collaborative process that brought together members of Washington State's diverse Asian, Pacific Islander, and Native American communities.

Pacific Voices was not the Burke's first foray into community based exhibits – the staff had co-created an exhibit with some thirty Native American communities that opened in 1989. This experience, along with others gained from working with Pacific and Asian community members on several temporary exhibits served as important precursors to *Pacific Voices*, which opened in 1997. The exhibition became a vehicle for the expression of a variety of voices exploring sources of cultural identity: objects, rituals, ceremonies, and traditions that both anchor and showcase the ways of life of Pacific Rim communities.

Pacific Voices tells the story of the peoples of the Pacific Rim region, who have a substantial presence in the Puget Sound area, from the perspectives of those communities. The Burke curators decided to involve the relevant communities, de-center authority, and allow the subjects to interpret their objects through their own perspectives. A core committee with representatives from eighteen cultural groups worked for two years, establishing the overall thematic and design approaches. Each of the cultural groups then created their own displays drawing on materials from their community and country of origin. Ultimately more than 150 individuals participated in the process.

Pacific Voices was one of five permanent exhibits that the Burke created and installed simultaneously over five years with grants totaling \$5.5 million. Sources for *Pacific Voices* included the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Korea Foundation. Importantly, some of the funds raised were used for stipend in the \$500 - \$700 range for the community advisors, confirming the value of their contribution.

Pacific Voices became an early pioneer in authentic community/museum collaboration, setting the stage for future exhibits at the Burke and the high bar for the museum field nationally. While collaborations take longer and cost more, the Burke feels it is well worth the effort. Community members gain a deeper sense of ownership: they bring their friends and families to the museum, hold ceremonies there, and even replenish their displays. The Burke gains new audiences as well as creative partners who are willing to serve as liaisons and sources for ideas and information. For example, many of those active in the *Pacific Voices* over a decade ago recently volunteered for the Burke's strategic planning process.

Drawing lessons

Pacific Voices was a seminal event for the Burke and its diverse communities. Although the exhibit is over thirteen years old, it continues to delight visitors and educate school children about the people of Puget Sound. Most recently, a book entitled *Pacific Voices* was published that features images and essays by community members (University of Washington Press, 2010).

Reflecting back, one of the curators said they would have done two things differently. First, they believe the exhibit lacks sufficient coherence; as a result, the over-arching themes of Burke's exhibits are front and center and more accessible to patrons. Second, the exhibition technology used in *Pacific Voices* was heavy and unwieldy; it did not allow for updating the materials. Accordingly, the Burke now uses cases and other technology that is more flexible and easier to refresh.

FRYE ART MUSEUM SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

Setting the stage

Having first opened its doors in 1952, The Frye Art Museum was founded by Charles and Emma Frye, prominent early-twentieth century Seattle business leaders and art collectors. Since then, works from the Frye Founding Collection of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century European paintings, with a strong concentration of which is German art, have continuously been on view.

The Museum also hosts notable exhibitions of works by internationally renowned as well as emerging artists, and maintains extensive public programs including lecture series, art classes, and school and educator programs. A catalyst for the Museum's engagement with contemporary art and artists is the Founding Collection of Charles and Emma Frye, access to which will always be free.

The Frye Art Museum is located on Seattle's First Hill. Seattle has an estimated 2010 population of just over 600,000 people. An ethnically diverse city, Seattle has a large portion of residents from Hispanic or Latino backgrounds. This is an especially educated community with fifty-four percent of the population holding college degrees.

Introducing the model

The Frye Art Museum has a relatively new, yet already incredibly successful program that takes a page from the work of a young schoolteacher in the South Bronx thirty years ago. In the early 1980's, a young Tim Rollins developed a curriculum that utilized art to give at-risk students lessons in reading and writing. This visionary program functioned by having one student read aloud from selected text while others drew, relating the stories to their own experiences and their art. The majority of the students participating were of Hispanic / Latino origin. The result was Rollins and K.O.S. – Kids of Survival – and they produced art directly on pieces of text, creating large-scale works that demonstrated their process. The art has since been exhibited all over the world and K.O.S has active members in Philadelphia, Memphis, San Francisco, and New York.

To celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the program, the Tang Museum in Saratoga Springs, NY organized a retrospective of Tim Rollins and the K.O.S. In January of 2010 the Frye Art Museum opened its doors to the exhibition, *Tim Rollins and K.O.S.: A History*, and simultaneously announced the presentation of work from their successful community outreach program, *The Seattle Project*.

The Seattle Project is a series of collaborative exhibitions and projects commissioned by the



Frye to celebrate the Museum's fifty-eight year-old commitment to community outreach and art education. The Project derived its inspiration from the interdisciplinary collaboration in *Tim Rollins and K.O.S.: A History*, and it places that exhibition in the context of the needs of the community in Seattle. Furthermore, it acknowledges the excellent work of partner organizations Arts Corps, Path with Art, and the Center School.

A three tiered project, *The Seattle Project* involved partner organizations in a variety of community-generated projects at the Museum. Seattle's Lower Queen neighborhood is home to Center School, an arts-focused public high school with an active graphic design class. Frye Art Museum invited this class to design products for the Museum's gift shop. In addition to designing products, the students worked with Store Manager to source manufacturers, develop a budget, set retail prices, oversee the production, and design the Store's exhibit space.

Public Belongings is part of *The Seattle Project* in collaboration with Path with Art, an organization that works with formerly homeless adults. It presents the work of ten adults who worked together with two teachers in the Frye Art Studio with Path with Art teaching artists to describe and document *their* Seattle from the perspective of life on the street in photographs, collaged maps, video, and texts/poetry. The exhibition was up for five months.

Another component of *The Seattle Project* is *I Wish I Knew Who I Was Before I Was Me*, a student-curated exhibition that offers insight into the Frye collection as experienced by young people. In partnership with Seattle's largest nonprofit arts educator, Arts Corps, the Frye Museum allowed students to participate in the behind-the-scenes operations at the Museum.

The students who curated *I Wish I Knew Who I Was Before I Was Me*, performed a soundscape at the opening celebration. From this performance they were invited to attend the White House historic concert and education event, "A Celebration of Music from the Civic Rights Movement." Support from the Board of Trustees, the Frye Foundation, and an anonymous supporter from Arts Corps brought together the funds for the eight students and two teachers to attend the White House reception.

Drawing lessons

The Seattle Project brought together different aspects of the community in a unique manner. Prior to *The Seattle Project*, the partner organizations were still completing their missions of teaching art in high school, encouraging art with formerly homeless adults, and teaching art education to community members. All the Frye Art Museum had to do was bring these organizations together in a partnership that would be mutually beneficial.

Funding for the project was raised by both the Frye Art Museum and the partner organization, respectively, and in all three programs, the partner organization brought in staff personnel to lead the program. The Museum made its staff available to assist and support, and act as a liaison with the partner organizations. Benefits from the partnership include raised awareness and additional relationships with funders.

PACIFIC ASIA MUSEUM PASADENA, CA

Setting the stage

While officially founded in 1971, The Pacific Asia Museum building was constructed in 1924 by pioneering collector and entrepreneur Grace Nicholson whose collection of Asian art set the tone for arts-related activities in the Pasadena community. Later, the building served as the Pasadena Art Museum, which held many successful contemporary art exhibitions. Now, the Pacific Asia Museum has combined the spirits of both its predecessors in its focus on the classic and contemporary arts of Asia and the Pacific Islands. It is one of only four institutions in the US dedicated to the arts and culture of Asia and the Pacific Islands with a permanent collection of more than 15,000 objects, spanning four thousand years and the region extending from Persia to the Pacific Islands.

Pasadena is home to approximately 150,000 residents and is the sixth largest of the 88 cities in Los Angeles County. The 2005-2007 American Community Survey Estimates found fifty-five percent of Pasadenans are white, thirty-three percent are Latino, thirteen percent are African-American, and thirteen percent are Asian. English only is spoken at home by fifty-five percent of the population over age five. Of the non-English speakers, Spanish is spoken at home by twenty-eight percent of the population. The citizens of Pasadena are relatively well educated: of those twenty-five years of age or over eighty-five percent are high school graduates and forty-five percent have at least a bachelor degree or higher.

In comparison to Pasadena, approximately fifty percent of the nearby Los Angeles population is reported of Hispanic / Latino origin.

Introducing the model

In 2003 the Pacific Asia Museum held a workshop to correspond with an exhibition called *Drawing the Line: Contemporary Artists Reassess Traditional East Asian Calligraphy*. The workshop, while capped at fifteen, brought in about forty attendees ranging from museum trustees to Los Angeles graffiti artists, to discuss the use of words and text in art.

Following the discussion, the group moved outside the Museum to create large-scale murals in the Museum parking lot. The workshop brought in Chinese American artists who work with writing calligraphy and local street artists from the L.A. area. The result was three large murals that demonstrate both calligraphy and graffiti and Asian and Latino cultures.

Three years later a guest curator suggested the murals be exhibited and over the following three years the Museum refined what would be *Calligraffiti*, an exhibition on the intersections between fine art and street art, Chinese calligraphy and graffiti. The exhibition was on view from August 2009 to January 2010 in the temporary exhibit galleries.

According to the curatorial staff, the exhibition brought in community-generated artwork that would not have been exhibited otherwise. Partly due to the sheer size of the works (mural size), the reason for not exhibiting also dealt with the question of what constitutes art, and whether or not street art is fine art. The museum curatorial staff noticed increased involvement from a younger generation and a stronger Latino influence at the museum after the workshop in 2003 to present.

Along with significant individual contributions, funding for *Calligraffiti* was provided by the local art council (Pasadena Art Council). Importantly, the funding for the original workshop in 2003 was provided by the Pasadena Art Alliance to ensure free registration for attendees.

Drawing lessons

The Pacific Art Museum's mission declares a focus on contemporary arts pertinent to Asia and the Pacific Islands. It also aims to promote cross-cultural understanding. While the museum has consistently hosted contemporary art exhibitions in its temporary gallery space, they have experienced increased success with exhibitions that examine contemporary art in comparison with traditional or historical art, and exhibitions that the Museum's constituents can relate to – the *Calligraffiti* exhibition as an exemplar.

The Museum also chose to exhibit, *The Samurai Re-Imagined*, which explored the roots of the popular Japanese art forms of manga (graphic novels) and anime (animation) in the traditional arts of Japan such as depictions of samurai in Edo era woodblock prints and ink paintings. Much like the model of *Calligraffiti*, this exhibition brought in a younger, more diverse audience.

The curatorial staff noted the success of these exhibitions in bringing in a new, younger, and more diverse audience stemmed from “how you put it into the context.” To engage people, the curatorial staff concentrated on ideas with popular culture roots and brought in outside experts in the field. In the case of *Calligraffiti*, they were able to find an intersection between Asian art and the local Latino community, but it was the engagement, involvement, and further continuation of this intersection by culminating the workshop into an exhibition years later that made it all the more successful.

QUEENS MUSEUM OF ART QUEENS, NY

Setting the Stage

Corona, Queens, the neighborhood immediately surrounding the Queens Museum of Art (QMA), is a nexus of ethnic diversity. In the past, it has been home to legends such as Louis Armstrong, Dizzy Gillespie, Malcolm X, and Ella Fitzgerald. Ever since F. Scott Fitzgerald first immortalized Flushing Meadows in *The Great Gatsby*, the park that houses QMA and the surrounding community have been inextricably linked. The 1939 and 1964 World's Fairs were held in Flushing Meadows Corona Park, helping to cement the area's status as a thriving artistic and cultural community.

In the last three decades, however, Corona has experienced a major demographic shift, with a tremendous outflow of long-time residents and an influx of recent immigrants to America. The population of Corona has increased by 31.2% since 1980, and QMA has discovered that its programs serve only about one-third of the diversity found just outside its doors. Furthermore, despite the announcement by New York City (NYC) Mayor Bloomberg of citywide decreases in crime and unemployment, Corona remains an anomaly, with an increasing crime rate and a large demographic of underserved communities, many of whom have limited English language proficiency.

Tom Finklepearl, the Museum's Director, describes the role of the museum as follows, "Situated in America's most culturally diverse county, the Queens Museum of Art is committed to being an active participant in helping share its social, educational, and aesthetic environment. Thus the Museum, has community organizers, partnerships with the public library and hospital, art therapists with a dedicated access classroom, programming in four languages, a monthly gay and lesbian film program, and more."

Introducing the Model

Queens Museum of Art sees itself as a stakeholder in the revitalization of its surrounding community and feels that "focusing efforts in this neighborhood over a period of time will be a major contributing factor in creating a center for community engagement and positive community change. QMA's hope is to provide better services for the residents as well as to create a cultural hub for the community which will lead to increased cultural tourism, pride of place, and a safe space for cross-cultural interaction and problem-solving." (From website)

The Corazon de Corona/Heart of Corona initiative includes several projects: *Beautification and Clean-Up*, a *Healthy Taste of Corona Cookbook*, and a series of street celebrations and public art projects spearheaded by working groups that are collaborations among community-based organizations, health institutions, elected officials, and local businesses.

QMA has established multi-layered relationships with Corona businesses, elected officials,



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grassroots and civic organizations, and parent organizations. The Museum's community organizer made a point of understanding and focusing on the needs and interests of each partner. The community organizer "relied on elected officials to guide the Museum to community-based organizations and constituent-serving groups and from there to school-based organizations and finally began to make measurable strides with the CBOs themselves. While the gains have been incremental and the process gradual, QMA has established a significant role for the initiative in the community." QMA is seen as a resource and community organizations often approach them as projects are being explored.

Drawing lessons

The clearest success is that the Museum is more integrated into the community, recognized as a trusted leader for social change. The Museum is able to articulate the case for long term engagement with the community, using art to engage the community in projects that improve health, beautify the community, and make it a better place to live.

The relationships outside the Museum have brought more people into the Museum. Central American and Mexican communities describe the Museum as "home base" for them. The Partnership Gallery has 15 events a year that are curated by local community cultural organizations. Opening and closing events bring people who might not otherwise think about visiting a museum.

For the Museum's leadership, it is very encouraging that the institution is now seen as a community resource. Staff members speak many different languages and art is presented in ways that bring people into the Museum by using different media. Visitors like that the museum is a beautiful space that is so well-maintained.

Tom Finkelppearl, Museum Director, is adamant about the need for a community organizer who is integrated into the museum and able to engage the museum leadership in projects. It is the only way to hear the community and begin to build trust. Churches and schools have proved to be good entry points for the work and projects like the cookbook are themselves an organizing tool.

The Museum has been able to continue its work with support from other funders who have known the Museum for years and have been very interested in the impacts on the community. Project plans have been limited by budget cuts by key partners such as the hospital system and the overall difficult financial times for all nonprofit organizations.

Additional Websites to Explore

Engaging Diverse and Special Constituencies

Los Angeles County Museum of Art

www.lacma.org

LACMA is focusing staff and resources on programs that position it to serve as a “town center” and revisiting ways to use and direct its educators’ hand on learning expertise. It is inviting visitors to become engaged in creating exhibitions and programs and seeing notable outcomes from these efforts. A November 2008 *Machine Project “Art Happening”* event allowed more than 5,000 museum visitors to spontaneously interact with local artists who were invited to spend the day in Museum Galleries creating works of art and a 2009 installation of a permanent “Urban Light,” installation was promoted by staff members’ observing that the 202 vintage streetlamps set in front of the LACMA façade had become a photo opportunity for amateur and professional photographers. They organized an online competition and included the winners in a print-on-demand book, still available online. A new project underway will focus attention on artworks with food themes and lead to a multimedia set of events focusing on “Let Them Eat LACMA” scheduled for the fall of 2010.

Carnegie Museum of Natural History

www.carnegiemnh.org

This Pittsburgh cultural landmark is intent upon finding ways to exploit social-network tools on the Internet and the zeal that the younger than thirty generations have for collective participation and decision-making. Its strategic plan, according to Director Samuel Taylor includes recommendations for programs and experiences that will emphasize “social relevance and global connection.” In this respect, it invites the Carnegie Discoverers, which “is a volunteer group whose purpose is to assist and support Carnegie Museum of Natural History in promoting its cultural, scientific, and education missions and in the development of new and larger audiences for the institution.”

Fuller Craft Museum

www.fullercraft.org

This institution took form after its Brockton, MA predecessor, the Fuller Museum of Art, took stock of the interests and needs of the constituencies it had been serving and the characteristics and value of its collection. As a result of its appreciative inquiry into its work and an assessment of what it wanted to achieve for its community, it re-equipped itself to build on connections to local and national craft lovers and by so doing, developed a reputation as one of the nation’s outstanding craft museums. According to a 2009 Christian Science Monitor article about museums’ efforts to engage communities, the Fuller’s transformation was based on advice from a marketing firm that stressed the importance of its providing people with “personal, relevant connection...through technology such as Twitter or Facebook or physical participation.” The brand message used by the museum makes its commitment to doing this clear: “Let the Art

Touch You.”

Virtual Institutions

Museum of Afghan Culture

www.afghanculturemuseum.org

This virtual museum is being organized by a French/American team of scholars, designers, architects and curators as a \$10 million project of the New York Foundation for the Arts. Its organizers aim to provide an internet platform for images of artifacts and artworks that are national treasures of Afghanistan and are drawing upon public concern for the status of ancient artifacts that have been featured in a US Gallery of Art organized “blockbuster” exhibition titled “Afghanistan: Hidden Treasures from the National Museum, Kabul.” Items presented in this touring show were recovered from Afghanistan vaults after a 20 year disappearance and illustrate a dimension of world history that could be lost through acts of war and violence. The founders will not be archiving these or other artifacts but rather presenting images of items made available to them by museums, scholars, archives, and the general public. They are prepared to receive images via digital cell phone transmissions and have solicited help from the people of Afghanistan and elsewhere to help them focus attention on gathering evidence of the artworks and artifacts of this troubled nation. [*Now You See It* (Newsweek October 9, 2009 www.newsweek.com/id/217012) and *Online, It's the Mouse That Runs the Museum* (New York Times, January 20, 2010 www.nytimes.com/2010/01/20/arts/design/20museum.html)]

Museum of the History of Polish Jews

www.shtetl.org

The Museum of the History of Polish Jews will open in 2012 on the site of the former Warsaw Ghetto. Its mission is to present the history of Polish Jews and the rich civilization they created over the course of almost 1000 years in a multimedia narrative museum and cultural center. During the course of its construction, its staff has reached out to potential contributors and visitors through a virtual Shtetl project (shtetl.org) that has helped its curators build a collection of more than 300,000 photographs, videos, and audio recordings related to life in 1,300 towns with Jewish populations before and after World War II. Some of the photos have been placed on Flickr and items have been placed on YouTube and Facebook.

Museum of Online Museums

<http://www.coudal.com/moom>

www.veryshortlist.com/vsl/daily.cfm/review/417/Website/museum-of-online-museums

This online museum provides links to a number of major museums with online programs and to an array of “vanity collection” museums organized and maintained by lovers of items such as buttons, Russian hats, shopping lists, cereal boxes, airline spoons, uniforms, vials, etc. It also features commentaries about the impulses and practices of eclectic collectors and offers an informing example of how to deploy search engine optimization. According to a May 2010 interview with the site developer, Jim Coudal, MoOM started as a lark in 1999 and now attracts attention from thousands of visitors a week. His firm maintains the site as a loss leader



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inasmuch as it drives traffic to services available from “design entrepreneurs.” As an art director and manager of a successful Chicago creative services firm, Coudal thinks that blockbuster exhibitions are not the route that most museums should or need follow. He observes that museums “need to operate as businesses and be attentive to creating and serving markets in their vicinities or, if appropriate, far away...Those that fail do so because they didn’t respond to marketplace demands.” In his view, searching for one time big hits is not as realistic or as assured as a quality product for customers you identify as being near at hand. MoOM features a three part series of five minute documentaries about the motives and passions of people who are going online to present and share their collections.

New Technologies

Colonial Williamsburg Online Museum Exhibitions

www.colonialwilliamsburg.org/media/index.cfm

More than 60,000 objects are in this living history museum’s collection and many of these are now available for examination via a robust database. This well funded cultural destination offers an array of interactive and virtual promotion tools at its e-museum site. Among these are programs and exhibitions are presented via the internet as well as daily items such as an interactive “daily” jigsaw puzzle illustrating an item in the museum’s collection. I-pod casts, ringtones and computer screen wallpaper illustrations are sold online and educational programs are available for easy downloading by teachers with access to the Internet.

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

www.ushmm.org

Online exhibitions extend the reach of the Museum’s Public programs and special exhibitions. They touch on an array of topics and provide Internet users as well as educators with poignant and often personal insights and with experiences rooted in this institution’s work and mission. Materials are available in a number of languages in an effort to transcend cultural barriers and extend the museum’s collections and exhibitions to audiences who might never set foot on its floors.

Museum of Modern Art

<http://www.moma.org/explore/communities> and <http://www.moma.org/learn/activities/index>

The online communities portion of MOMA’s website illustrates the state of the art for social networking initiatives and virtual extensions of a cultural institution into communities its staff cannot fully describe or predict as a museum constituency. MoMA’s website encourages visitors to make selections of favorite pages and participate in the shaping of the site through feedback.

Metropolitan Museum of Art College Group

www.metmuseum.org/collegegroup

College Group at the Met (CGM) is a group of twenty-five local college students who plan and produce events and programs for other students. The CGM's mission is to enhance Museum

programming with regard to local college students, to connect campus communities with the Museum, and to increase student engagement at the Museum. Through programming, the CGM creates opportunities for all students—from all backgrounds and academic majors—to encounter and explore the Met's collection in new ways. They share images of events they organize on Facebook.

ArtStor

www.ArtStor.org

A consortium of museums and cultural institutions has made their photo archives and online exhibitions available to the public through this Internet service. It makes access to collections easy for educators that subscribe to the service directly or through their access to local institutions.

Art Babble

www.artbabble.org

The Indianapolis Museum of Art created the Web site ArtBabble.org in April 2009 as a place where everyone is invited to join an open, ongoing discussion about art. It is intended to showcase video art content in high quality format from a variety of sources and perspectives. Partners whose videos are featured on ArtBabble include MOMA New York & San Francisco, Art21, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, The New York Public Library, and The Smithsonian American Art Museum. This initiative grew out of the museum's YouTube video channel and the popularity it witnessed for this program service.

Participatory Programs

Wing Luke Museum

<http://www.wingluke.org/>

This neighborhood based institution has been able to persuade a number of constituencies that they own the outcomes of its work and the role it represents for the city. The "Wing" is situated in the heart of Seattle's International District and commemorates the memory of a local civil rights proponent who tackled racial inequities in the city and state through his lifetime. It advances and illustrates cultural diversity through programs that address the Asian American experience and aims to be inclusive while also being respectful of constituencies whose experiences it strives to present. Its achievements in working with community residents have earned it attention from other museums and its 2002 garment worker-directed exhibition *If Tired Hands Could Talk: Stories of Asian Pacific American Garment Workers* won awards for a presentation of narratives from retired and active garment workers that fifteen advisors helped its curators collect. The founding director, Ron Chew, is quoted by Nina Simon in [The Participatory Museum](#) as saying "There has always been an assumption that the work that we do should be guided by the community here and now. There is an assumption that the museum is a portal for reflection for the outside world rather than a fortress of knowledge that people enter... The museum is more a place of dialogue than stated facts." (Nina Simon, [The](#)

Participatory Museum, <http://www.participatorymuseum.org/chapter8/> - p. 192 in text)

Ontario Science Centre - *Facing Mars* Traveling Exhibition

www.ontariosciencecentre.ca/rentals/facingmars/sample.asp

This exhibition is cited by Nina Simon as one that provides opportunities for visitors to learn from the collective intelligence of the people who visit it. People entering and leaving the exhibit must answer yes or no to the question “Would you go to Mars?” at a turnstile that captures the information and relays it to an LED Vote Count Display. Visitors can thus see the effect that experiences and learning provided by the exhibition has had on them and others who had the opportunity to visit. Though a majority of visitors typically vote “yes” as they enter the exhibition, the votes swing the other way majority votes “no” as they leave. Simon argues that this exhibition provides visitors with a simple way to share knowledge they have gained through their personal experiences at the exhibition and encourages them to do that in the form of a counted vote. Simon argues that a “real time” illustration of vote tallies affects the experience of others and shows visitors that their opinions are relevant and informing to others.

Worcester Museum of Art

www.worcesterart.org

www.worcestercitymuseums.org.uk/mag/magpex/top40/top40.htm

This Massachusetts Museum used the Internet and a TOP 40 competition to focus families on the Museum and its collection in the summer of 2009. Curators chose and announced their TOP 40 choices of outstanding items in the Museum’s collection and then invited visitors to come to the Museum to choose theirs. Voting for family favorites reinforced a sense of “ownership” of the artworks and the institution and kept people engaged in the ongoing weekly choices for TOP 40 favorites. Items chosen were tagged in the TOP 40 on a weekly basis for visitors to see.

Oakland Museum

www.museumca.org

This museum has undergone a four year, \$62 million renovation to create a new, more versatile environment for its programs and community engagement services. Its presence in Oakland spurred a major redevelopment of the City Center and complemented a number of other construction projects and economic development initiatives in its vicinity. It is hoped that the Museum’s new galleries and meeting spaces will again have positive effects on the city and help it achieve its ambitious agendas for community and economic development. The Museum experience with engaging community groups in program planning and exhibitions is long-standing and its efforts to merge municipal history, science and art institutions into a single complex allowed it to consolidate the energies and initiatives of a large group of advisors and find ways to extend a sense of ownership in its programs to culturally and demographically diverse constituencies. It has long been seen as the city’s premier institution and used as a town commons where the story of the region could be shown and told. Education and discovery were key factors in its initial building’s design. Engagement and collaboration are key factors in this new, second phase design. The Museum staff and trustees are clear about the institution’s

obligations to bring community groups and diverse constituencies to its doors. Community curating is a well established practice at this museum and uses of new technologies are adventurous, affective and informed by its proximity to the Silicon Valley.

Fleisher Art Memorial/Community Partnership in the Arts

www.fleisher.org

This neighborhood arts center has served as an early 20th Century Settlement House, a public education arm of the Philadelphia Museum of Art and as a free standing arts education enterprise since its founding in 1898. It operates in studios built in and next to an 18th century Romanesque Church (serving today as The Sanctuary Gallery) and is set in a neighborhood that has provided homes for émigrés for more than 300 years. Its importance to the lives of artists in the city is affirmed by the presence of a Siah Armajiani memorial to famed architect Louis Kahn who had attended the school as a child. The Louis Kahn Lecture Room was created to serve a dual purpose as a community meeting room and as a gallery for a changing group of Kahn's drawings. The community weighed into the decisions to create this artwork in the 1980s and provided a model for community engagement to many other similar institutions since then. Today, the Fleisher Memorial provides instruction to aspiring artists and critiquing sessions for professional artists and operates Public School Residencies for students K-8. Its presence in its community and the work it carries out make art a tangible part of everyone's life within reach of its doors.