

## Executive Director's Report

Respectfully submitted by Thomas Scurto-Davis, Executive Director on 2/5/18

Trying to get this down to 2 pages this time(!):

- **New Hire:** Unfortunately, after last ED report's good news about Joe Slater, I regret to tell you he has decided to leave the Center. He came with some physical issues that he didn't understand would be exacerbated by a forty hour work week and he has not been able to reconcile these with his desire to serve. In addition, I believe the pace may be beyond what he wanted to adapt to as a post retirement gig. As he promised when hired, he has agreed to stay through the transition to a new hire and we are making progress to that end. I've begun phone interviews and have three scheduled later this week. I can give an update at the meeting on the 12<sup>th</sup> if there is one.
- Professional Artist Member (PAM) exhibition comes down today and the Lower Merion School District Show goes up at the end of this week. The opening is Wednesday afternoon, I encourage you to come and meet these creative kids, their parents and the teachers who make the magic happen. This is a great opportunity for board presence in the community and helps our partners feel the love. Even if you can't make the opening, I encourage you to come see the show, it is fabulous and the artwork generated by these children is unbelievable, truly.
- After the Lower Merion show, the 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Betsy Meyer Memorial Exhibition will go up. Paige and I have been meeting with the award winners, picking the work and planning the installs. This show is going to be very accessible and wonderfully cohesive as all of the artists' work is based around similar themes of relinquished control, the effect of time and the elements on the world we inhabit, plus all the work is visually stunning. We are very excited to have you join us and the Meyer family for the opening on March 2<sup>nd</sup>. Please block it out on your calendars now so that you can be sure to attend and thank the Meyer family for their generous support of the Center over the 15 years of this exhibition.
- I am excited to announce that in the fall of this year (2019) the Center will be presenting a lifetime retrospective exhibition of longtime Center artist Etta Winograd. The exhibition is being presented to coincide with the American Craft Association's Annual Conference in Philadelphia in October and as part of CraftNow's Craft Month and symposium in November. We are hoping that this exhibition will be a big draw for the Center during these two important events and will bring us a fair bit of recognition both locally and regionally/nationally. I want to personally extend my gratitude and that of the Center, to David and Maureen Winograd and the Winograd family who, in consideration of this wonderful opportunity have given a very substantial contribution to the Center. I also want to thank Wendy Branzburg who connected us to CraftNow and others who will be helping us pull off this once in a lifetime event. Stay tuned for more details.
- **Education Update:** Our Ed department is killing it! Fall registrations this year were 1362 compared to 775 last year, yielding nearly \$11,000 more revenue than last year! So far, winter registrations are up by 130 vs. this time last year with a revenue gain of \$7350 over last year at this time. We believe our high touch efforts are paying off. Collin will be discussing how each of you can help (with minimum effort) the Center continue to show the students we care, while meeting new families and students and making the Center the most welcoming community art center around! Our progressive learning scheme (sneak peek to discovery to fundamentals to classics and special topics) is really showing progress with introductory/new students moving from discovery classes to fundamentals classes in larger and larger numbers.

- In addition to being more welcoming, we are also doing more inquiry, with students and teaching artists, in short bursts (net promoter surveys and short subject surveys) to see how we are doing and what else they would like to see us do.
- The Catherine School project finished its first 10 weeks at the beginning of January and we are waiting to start the install of the first year's portion of the mural until the weather warms up. Funding for year two is complete and we have a pledge for \$20,000 of year three so with an additional \$10,000 of EITC credits (which Pachy is going to talk at the board meeting: a little known but simple way to generate gifts for the center at no cost to the giver!) we should have all three years of the project funded!
- Finally, we have worked hard to establish new partners in our accessible art programs and to recalibrate the expectations of those partners. Unlike in the past, we now expect our accessible art partners to truly partner with us, providing at least 50% of the funding and demanding (politely) equal support in administering these programs. Past frustrations and unsuccessful partnering has led us to rethink how we offer these services and what it takes to create long-term successful programs with many of the other non-profit service providers in our area. We are finding that making our expectations for partnership clear up front has helped us to easily identify those partners we are best situated to serve and eliminated much of the wasted time and effort of those organizations who cannot support our efforts. While we would love to work with clients at all of these potential partners sites, some of these organizations simply don't have the capacity at this time to partner with us in the way that will best serve their clients. New and renewing partnerships you might be interested to know are underway or in the program development stage: Overbrook School for the Blind with generous support of Karen Lotman, renewed partnership with Pennsylvania School for the Deaf, and in progress, revived partnership with The Village (formerly Presbyterian Children's Village)
- St. Johns and Yeshiva Lab Schools (fee for service prgms): Children's School at St. Johns: Kindergartens visited for a gallery and studio tour this past January. Eighteen students became "art detectives" and went on a hunt through the galleries for missing artwork then created a collaborative drawing in our studios. We have been invited to offer a day of art during their Week of the Young Child this April where we will work with toddlers-kindergarteners to create sensory or project-based art experiences. And our partnership with Yeshiva Lab School has more than doubled in scope this year which has resulted in \$13,000 additional vs last year.
- **Sink Hole:** This issue continues to challenge the Center. Most recent update is that we need to engage the structural engineer we worked with for the most recent capital project to discover if there is a drainage problem in the parking lot to resolve the parking lot flooding issues, meanwhile we are having the rain runoff drains scoped to discover the cause of the sinkhole. Once that is determined we will proceed with a proper repair and resolution the problem.
- **Library Update:** Unfortunately after waiting for a bid from dedicated volunteer and cabinet maker **Jeffrey Kimsey-Carroll**, he got a new position and informed me that he will not be able to do the project. I am following up with contractors he suggested could do the work.
- **GALA/Art in Action:** A landing page for the campaign, with PayPal Giving as payment processing, will be designed and created in house by staff and volunteers. This page will be shareable in social media platforms, and have some of the features of a 'standard' crowdfunding platform: video upload, photos, fundraising campaign narrative, etc. Benefits of the use of PayPal giving will be the ease of use (a card can be swiped on a square using a phone or tablet) and no fee will be paid/charged for the service. Graphic design is underway for invitations, posters, social media branding, etc. Invitations will be sent out to special guests and admission to the event will

be free once again. We are honoring our teaching and accessible art artists this year. In addition to submitting one piece for the exhibition, most teaching artists will be generously donating a work or service for a silent auction. Request for guest lists from board members is eminent! The success of this FUNDRAISER will depend on getting as many people as possible to the event, we're counting on your help. We would also welcome any connections for corporate partnership for the event. Currently we are working with the following organizations to secure support for AiA:

Pending: Bryn Mawr Trust, High Swartz, Wilke Lexus , MyCIO, Merion Art & Repro

Secured: DIS-Comfort Zone, Shipley School

Yet to connect: RDS, Kimco Property Mgmt.

- **Strategic Planning:** First strategic planning committee meeting is being held on Feb 11<sup>th</sup>, and the process is already underway, Joe Kluger having already interviewed most of staff and perhaps some board members as well. Next steps is for the committee to meet to map out the process and finalize the list of interviewees.
- **Development:** two reports attached, the giving report thru 1.31.19 and the foundation status update thru 1.31.19

**DRAT, almost made my 2 page goal!**

Thomas