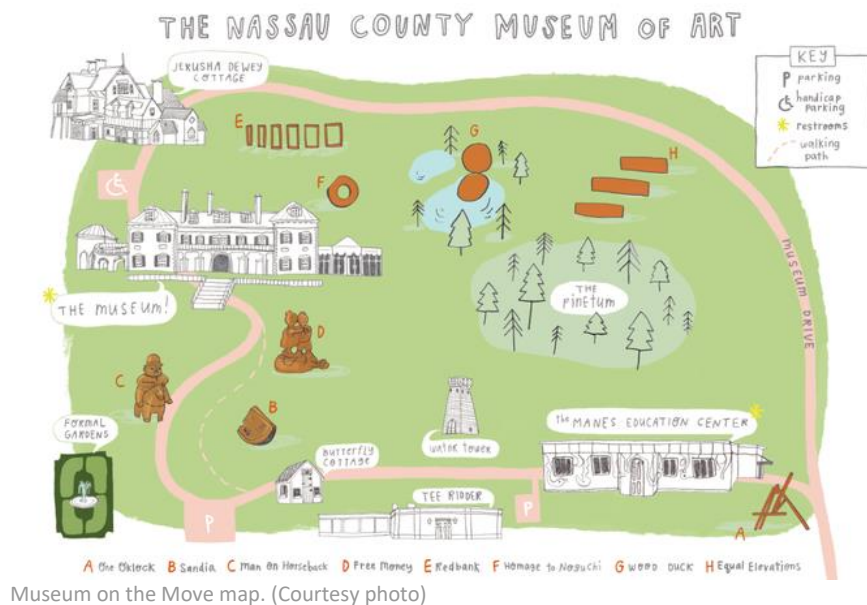




By Charles Riley April 2, 2020

Nassau Museum Offers Digital Art Exhibitions



Museum on the Move map. (Courtesy photo)

Determined to serve our loyal community during the pandemic, the Nassau Museum moved online within days of closing our doors on March 13, the very day we were ready to open our new exhibition. Along with other art museums and educational institutions, we accelerated plans to release enhanced Web content such as lessons and games for families, virtual tours and art history for the adult learners and teaching guides for local educators whose classes would have been coming up the driveway yellow busload by yellow busload the very next week. We hustled to load videos, Instagram posts and a trove of art history on our website and social media, and the powerful response has been gratifying.

“I need my art fix,” began many emails to our deserted offices (we work from home these days). We had kept our sculpture garden open for strollers, making quite sure they kept the common-sense distance apart as they admired masterworks by Fernando Botero, Mark di Suvero, Richard Serra and others. But the website became the new gallery and classroom. The sense of urgency among my energetic and community-spirited colleagues was intense. On-line daily brainstorming sessions were followed by the rapid deployment of images, short texts and videos into our project management software. Never at a loss for innovative ways to reach

students, my crackerjack education team, headed by Laura Lynch, had already been developing a range of online content. Her colleague Katie Aragon magically produced short videos of drawing exercises for teachers and families. Facebook and Instagram posts highlighted the new show, which turns the whole mansion over to the color blue (with spectacular results). Using installation pictures that Reem Hussein, our brilliant manager of the Manes Center and our top Web designer, took the day we were supposed to open, we started posting on Instagram and Facebook and our site was soon alive with new content.

None of this deft response is creditable to the senescent director. My gruff dismissals of social media were for years the source of mirth among my youthful, connected colleagues. At meetings, I would rumble like the Airedale in a James Thurber cartoon at the very idea of a “selfie station.” I now admit that the web has its virtues, including the speed with which we knew we were reaching our audience.

Within hours of posting their fresh content, the art coordinator from Elmont, Zoe Sanders, was thanking our educator Rebecca Hirschwerk: “You have no idea what an absolute gift this is. I am sitting in my kitchen, working on ‘e-learning’ Art for grade 5. I opened this email, and started to cry (a little embarrassed to admit, but I feel the need to). Gorgeous, well thought-out, and so age-appropriate and interesting. Of course, I’d expect nothing less, but still: a gift.”

For a sample of the online museum, updated daily, visit nassaumuseum.org.

Charles Riley is the director of the Nassau Museum of Art.

<https://longislandweekly.com/nassau-museum-offers-digital-art-exhibitions/>