



Charles Riley JULY 15, 2020

Nassau Museum Reopens



They came in twos and threes, families and romantic couples and solo art lovers. They came from New Hyde Park and Sag Harbor and Brooklyn Heights and Flushing and Pennsylvania. They came in from the gardens and trails outside where they had been exercising since March. They came.

When I opened the doors on July 8 at 11 in the morning, the very first moment we were allowed to host visitors, I was not sure who would show up, and I was torn between worrying that too many would come, or nobody at all. For the next four days, as the timed ticketing and

touch-free entry system were performing flawlessly, we all marveled at what can only be described as the perfect Museum experience. Each “pod” (as we are calling the groups who reserve online) had the galleries to themselves. That is the kind of intimate and quiet experience of great art that is usually only available to the very richest vip supporters. But these were families and young (I happened to notice) couples, or single visitors, who were just hungry for great art. And this show has major art: Picasso, Matisse, Miro and Klee in one gallery alone, a spectacular and buoyant painting by Helen Frankenthaler a luminous sculpture by Yves Klein and many other historically important artists. As curator, it was a thrill to play host to some immensely knowledgeable visitors as well as to some familiar friends and a bunch of new faces, all eager to enjoy the truth and beauty of art and leave the craziness outside. Our conversations were unforgettable. A young teacher from Brooklyn sighed in front of Bettina WitteVeen’s blue Buddha photograph and said, “I really, really needed this.”



Van Cushny and Alix Michel are longtime supporters of the Museum and very astute collectors. They were bowled over by the international flavor of the show. “You really got the balance right with the mix of artists, Western and Eastern, and the many types of art, and I can’t believe how important many of these works are, like the big Frannkenthaler!” Michel said. One very savvy connoisseur, who came to us because we are the one important art museum open in the area and she goes to museums every weekend, was amazed to see the high level of the contemporary works on view, including a painting by Sean Scully, a huge and brilliant photograph from James Casebere and a sculpture by Jeffrey Gibson, all of them hot tickets on the international art stage but not necessarily household names.

“His work is so human,” one wonderful young lady said of Gibson, one of the highlights of her un-hurried, stress-free visit. A quartet of young, stylish art lovers from Flushing gathered in front of the powerful painting by Cao Jun that is a highlight and marveled at his virtuoso technique. One visitor who is in “luxury goods” and clearly knows her stuff said, “I cannot believe you were able to borrow works on this level.” Another visitor, an architect from Brooklyn, picked up on the many moments of the show that were specially made for the elegant spaces, including the large and spectacular paintings by Antonio Santin. Longtime supporters of the museum, members who have seen many shows, were just thrilled to be back.



I had a great laugh with Robert Zuflacht, an attorney from Carle Place who was one of the thousands of people who had enjoyed our grounds since March, which we maintained and kept open for people who needed a refuge. “I have been waiting about a hundred days to come in!” he said.

To you, Bobby Z, and all the rest of you with whom I shared the first moments of a re-opened show, please accept my gratitude for being part of a memorable celebration of the triumph of art over circumstances. We may have been distanced physically, but in the presence of great art we closed the gap.

The Museum returns to its regular hours, Tuesday-Sunday from 11 a.m. until 5 p.m. Visitors are urged to buy their timed tickets in advance online at nassaumuseum.org. For those unable to visit now, these enhanced online offerings, including a virtual tour and guide to the current show, are available at nassaumuseum.org. To support the initiative and future programs, the Museum launched the Art with Heart campaign, to which donations may be made by texting NCMHEART to 44321 or online at nassaumuseum.org.