

Sandra Rusak
Deputy Director for Education and Statewide Partnerships
Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

Education

The College of William and Mary (Williamsburg, Virginia) B.F.A., 1975.

Virginia Commonwealth University (Richmond, Virginia)
M.A.Ed., 1989. Art Education. Full Fellowship Awards: 1987, 1988.

Selected Professional Activities

Guest Educator, Musée des Augustins, Toulouse, France, 2007.

Peer Reviewer, American Association of Museums, Surveyor for the Museum Assessment Program.

Educator, FRAME (French Regional and American Museums Exchange), Lyon, France, 2003; Giverny, 2005 and 2006; Tours and Lyon, 2008.

Guest Faculty, The James Madison University Center for School Leadership and Governor's Best Practices Teaching Academy, 2001 and 2002.

Guest Faculty, Virginia Department of Education, Peru Study Seminar for Teachers, 2002.

Guest Faculty, Virginia Department of Education, Egypt Study Seminar for Teachers, 2000 and 2001.

The Getty, Leadership Institute for Museum Management, 1997.

Museum Educator of the Year, State of Virginia,
1995-96 Award from the Virginia Art Education Association.

Russian Teaching Exchange Recipient, Moscow, 1996, Virginia Department of Education.

Professional Experience

Deputy Director for Education and Statewide Partnerships (1996-present)
Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, Virginia

Oversee the Education and Statewide Partnerships Division, including the departments of Metropolitan Education (Tour Services, Youth and Family Programs, Teacher Programs, Teen Programs, Adult Programs, Educational Resource Room and Library); Administration and Volunteer Services; the Studio School; and the Office of Statewide Partnerships (Statewide Media Services Library, Traveling Exhibitions, Outreach Educational Programs). These departments provide educational programming for 450,000 users locally and statewide. Supervise and provide creative leadership for 16 full-time staff members; 9 part-time staff; 50 contractual faculty; and 800+ volunteers and interns. Develop and manage a \$1.8 million budget; author and contribute to grants and fundraising initiatives. Serve on the museum's senior management team and as lead educator on exhibition planning teams.

Manage the development, implementation, and evaluation of all educational initiatives, insuring that they enhance understanding of the museum's collections; serve a broad and diverse audience; are effectively marketed; align with and support interdivisional initiatives; and are accomplished within budgetary guidelines. Currently planning and fundraising for the new education center in VMFA's expansion, including architectural review of all schematic drawings; creating an expanded roster of programs and activities; and raising funds to support these new initiatives.

Manager, School and Family Programs, VMFA, 1995-1996

Managed the staff and programmatic activities of the School and Family Programs Department: *Teacher Programs*: developed programs (lectures, studio art classes, summer institutes); educational materials (discovery kits, posters, classroom lessons and activities); and training (in-services, curriculum consultations, professional development workshops) about VMFA's collections to educators of all subjects and grade levels (K-college) throughout the state; *Tour Services*: managed the training of 130 volunteer docents and oversaw their recruitment, supervision, training, and evaluation. Formulated the content and evaluation for adult and student tours. Developed and provided docent training to VMFA partner organizations throughout the state; *Youth and Family Programs*: developed programs for approximately 35,000 young people (age 5-17) and their families including classes and workshops, performing arts events, a teen residency program, and other special events at the museum and in the community in collaboration with other cultural, arts, and education organizations.

Adjunct Faculty, Virginia Commonwealth University

Teach graduate-level courses for the Department of Art Education including "Topics in Art Education: Aesthetics, Art Criticism, and Art History" and "Using Art History to Teach Across the Curriculum." Develop and present course lectures, demonstrate innovative teaching strategies, and implement student testing.

Coordinator, Teacher Programs, VMFA, 1993-1995

Established and managed the VMFA's first Department of Teacher Programs.

Developed and presented an ongoing series of workshops, lectures, in-service programs, and summer institutes for teachers grades K-12 and college students majoring in education throughout the Commonwealth. Originated teachers' kits, posters, and other educational materials based on the museum's encyclopedic collections and state curriculum objectives. Directed and coordinated the museum's Teachers' Advisory Committee, comprised of twenty-two educators from various regions of the state.

Coordinator, Tour Services, VMFA, 1988-93

Coordinated and supervised the museum's group tour program, serving approximately 30,000 visitors annually. Supervised and trained two full-time staff members and a volunteer staff of 130 docents. Formulated concepts, content, teaching approaches, and evaluation for guided tours and other gallery programs. Authored educational materials for pre- and post-tour use and field-tested such materials in the classroom. Piloted tours for sequential learning, grades K-4; established new tour initiatives for visually-impaired visitors, EMR children, and senior citizens.

Assistant Coordinator, Tour Services, VMFA, 1984-88

Assisted in the coordination and daily operation of the museum's group tour program. Managed the department's student tour program for grades K-6. Developed tours and educational materials on all aspects of the collection based on curriculum objectives for art, social studies, and language arts for elementary and middle school students. Assisted in the training and supervision of the museum's docent staff. Supervised group scheduling.

Curator of Education, Valentine Richmond History Museum, 1981-84

Responsible for originating and implementing educational programs, tours, and materials for student and adult audiences relating to the museum's collection and institutional focus: the life and history of the city of Richmond. Supervised three staff members as well as the museum's 80-member docent staff; oversaw operation of the historic Wickham-Valentine House. Initiated, wrote, and administered grants that funded a children's gallery, two living history festivals, and a children's history workbook that sold in museum shops across the country. Wrote promotional brochures and press releases. Developed and administered the departmental budget.

Administrator and NEA Grant Project Director,
Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, 1980-81

Directed a 1-year project for improving the gallery facilities in selected VMFA partner museums and art centers throughout the state of Virginia. Provided on-site technical assistance to art organizations seeking to improve the conservation capabilities of their facilities. Assisted these organizations in obtaining grant funding (through the NEA and IMS) to make the necessary facility improvements critical to achieving optimum climate control and security levels for their institutions.

Artmobile Curator, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, 1978-80

Traveled with and supervised the Artmobile as a public museum throughout Virginia, providing gallery and classroom programs for students of all ages, as well as lectures within the communities served. Developed and curated Artmobile exhibitions.

Selected Regional, National, and International Lectures and Workshops

“Impressionism: Revolution in Paint,” Virginia Art Education Association Conference, Williamsburg, Virginia, 2007.

“Bringing in the Teens,” New Professionals Mentoring Roundtable, American Association of Museums Conference, Boston, 2006.

“Educator Institutes,” Virginia Association of Museums Conference, Roanoke, Virginia, 2006.

“Egypt On Site and On-line,” Museums and the Web International Conference, Arlington, Virginia, 2004.

“Art as a Reflection of Ancient Egyptian Culture,” Virginia Department of Education, Egypt Study Seminar, Cairo and Luxor, Egypt, 2001.

“Families, Museums, and Change: Adapting Museum Programs to Changing Definitions of Family,” and “A Country Mile: Strategies for Reaching Rural Audiences,” panel presentations for the Southeastern Museums Conference, Knoxville, Tennessee, 2000.

“The Art of Ancient Egypt,” Virginia Department of Education, Egypt Study Seminar, Cairo, Egypt, 2000.

“If You Build It, Will They Come?” American Association of Museums Conference, Cleveland, Ohio, 1999.

“The Search for Sema-tawy-tefnakht,” Virginia Art Education Association Conference, Norfolk, Virginia, 1998.

“Team Strategies That Work,” American Association of Museums Conference, Los Angeles, California, 1998.

“Oh Say, (What) Can You See?,” Lubertsy Public Schools, Moscow, Russia, 1996.

“Bringing Museum Education into the Classroom,” National Art Education Association, San Francisco, California, 1996.

“Completing the Circuit: Connecting Art, History, and Science,” Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, 1995.

“Teacher Institutes: A Source for Rejuvenation,” Virginia Association of Museums, Richmond, Virginia, 1995.

“Teaching African Art Across the Curriculum,” Virginia Art Education Association Conference, Virginia Beach, Virginia, 1994.

“The Roof of the World: Himalayan Art at the VMFA,” The Art Museum of the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia, 1994.

“Object Lessons,” Southeastern Museums Conference, Norfolk, Virginia, 1993.

“The Museum as Learning Laboratory,” Virginia Association of Independent Schools Conference, Richmond, Virginia, 1993.

“Touring Techniques for Teens,” National Docent Symposium, Atlanta, Georgia, 1993.

Exhibitions

“Mystery,” A VMFA exhibition that focused on elements of mystery in works of art across cultures and time period. September, 2007.

“Speed,” a VMFA exhibition that examined how artists use movement to create spirited and expressive masterpieces. September 2006. Subsequent venues at Hollins University, Roanoke, Virginia, September 2007; Peninsula Fine Arts Center, Newport News, Virginia, 2008.

“The Council: Serving VMFA Since 1995,” a VMFA exhibition featuring works of art given by the museum’s flagship support group. May-September 2005.

“Celebrating Art Nouveau: Interactive Family Exhibition” VMFA, October 2002-January 2003.

“African Artifacts from the Permanent Collection,” Valentine Museum of Richmond History, 1983.

“Shades, Shadows, and Profiles: English and American Silhouettes,” Valentine Museum of Richmond History, 1984.

“Furniture of the United States: the First 100 Years,” VMFA Artmobile exhibition, 1981.

“Form and Function: the Chair as Art,” VMFA Traveling Exhibition, 1980.

Selected Educational Resources

“Outside and Outside the Box: A Guide to Impressionism,” VMFA Teacher’s Guide and Poster Set, VMFA, 2007.

“The Beholder,” on-line creative writing collaboration with Virginia Commonwealth University, 2007.

“Meet Gustave Courbet,” on-line web exhibition and curriculum project, VMFA, 2004.

“History Connects,” curriculum contributor for an on-line American history course for Old Dominion University, Norfolk, 2004.

Family Gallery Guide, “Exploring Nature in Art,” VMFA, 2002.

Exhibition companion brochure and web site for “Worlds of Wonder & Desire: Indian Paintings from the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts,” 2001.

VMFA Permanent Collection Family Gallery Guides, “Spirit of the Motherland: African Art” and “Looking at Contemporary Art,” 2000.

Exhibition companion brochure and web site activities for “Monet, Renoir, and the Impressionist Landscape,” Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, 2000.

Family Guide, “Splendors of Ancient Egypt,” VMFA, 1999.

“Jacob Lawrence: The Frederick Douglass and Harriet Tubman Series,” Virginia Museum of Fine Arts exhibition brochure, 1996.

“African Art at the Virginia Museum,” Art Education: The Journal of the National Art Education Association, September 1996.

Professional Affiliations

Member, National Art Education Association

Member, Virginia Association of Museums

Member, American Association of Museums

Museum Education Philosophy

The visual arts provide a direct route to learning, to perceiving, to imagining, and to expressing ideas about our world, ourselves, and others. They form a special kind of language, one that is used and has been used by virtually every culture in the world. Like all languages, the language of art must be learned. With its unique syntax, the visual arts enable us to understand and question, celebrate and condemn, affirm and decry what it is like to be human.

The visual arts enable us to bridge the past. Through them, we have access to people and civilizations that are no more. Art, with its unique commonality, facilitates the comprehension of cultures other than our own. It encourages us to see ourselves and our many facets, by comparison, more clearly. It fosters an understanding of the present.

It is my belief that the resources that the visual arts provide--pleasure, information, ideas, emotions, and insight--should be within the reach of everyone. Art museums should function as vehicles for teaching the language of the visual arts, thereby assuring that their artistic treasuries are not only physically available to the public, but within its cognitive and subjective grasp. It is through museum education, be it the silent pedagogy of labels, the verbal skills of an educator, or the supplemental programs surrounding an exhibition, that the museum visitor/learner achieves optimum access to the visual arts.

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