

Jeannine Kiely, *Chair*  
Susan Kent, *First Vice Chair*  
Valerie De La Rosa, *Second Vice Chair*  
Bob Gormley, *District Manager*



Antony Wong, *Treasurer*  
Eugene Yoo, *Secretary*  
Ritu Chatree, *Assistant Secretary*

## COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 2, MANHATTAN

3 WASHINGTON SQUARE VILLAGE

NEW YORK, NY 10012-1899

[www.cb2manhattan.org](http://www.cb2manhattan.org)

P: 212-979-2272 F: 212-254-5102 E: [info@cb2manhattan.org](mailto:info@cb2manhattan.org)

Greenwich Village v Little Italy v SoHo v NoHo v Hudson Square v Chinatown v Gansevoort Market

### ARTS & INSTITUTIONS COMMITTEE

The Arts & Institutions Committee of Community Board #2, Manhattan held a meeting on Monday, October 25, 2021 at 6:30 P.M. via Zoom.

#### **Arts & Institutions Committee:**

**Board Members Present:** Robin Rothstein, Chair; Coral Dawson; Chris Dignes; Susan Gammie; Ivy Kwan-Arce; Rocio Sanz; Georgia Silvera Seamans

**Public Members Present:** Stacey Goergen; Kristin Marting; Jonathan Slaff

**There were two items on the agenda. There were no resolutions.**

1. The Whitney Museum's Education Department presented an update regarding their methodologies and how these relate to the community.
2. The NYC AIDS Memorial presented an update regarding the organization's current and upcoming programming initiatives.

#### **1. Whitney Museum's Education Department update**

Whitney Museum representatives, Cris Scorza, Chair of Education, and Dyeemah Simmons, Director of Social Impact, presented to the committee on their recent and upcoming work.

Originally from Mexico City, Scorza began with some background on her museum journey, which began as a visitor at the age of six. She later studied art and made her way to New York as an exchange student. During that period she interned at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in the Education Department. She has since worked at MoMA, the New Museum, the Brooklyn Children's Museum, [Art in General](#), and the Museum of Art and Design, and most recently spent the last decade as the Head of Education at the Museum of Contemporary Art in San Diego.

Dyeemah Simmons is the new Director of Social Impact at the Whitney, but has been at the Whitney for about six years. She started as the assistant to team programs, then coordinator within the education department for three years. She was then Director of Access and Community Programs, thinking about programs for people with a wide range of disabilities and also developing community partnerships.

Simmons continued the presentation, describing the work she oversees at the museum.

The museum had to do a lot of virtual programming over the past year and a half, but is excited to get back to doing some in-person programming and engaging a diverse audience in a lot of different ways from the audio guides that they work on in the education department to walking tours, pride celebrations in coordination with artists, family outdoor open studios, and more. For COVID safety they have been doing this programming outdoors, and as the months get colder, they are figuring out how to continue to engage families in art making.

Simmons then spoke about [WECAN \(Whitney Education Creates a New Neighborhood Network\)](#), an advisory group at the Whitney that was developed in 2012 ahead of the museum moving down to the Meatpacking District. This group helps to build responsive programming for the communities that are in this neighborhood and generally Lower Manhattan, and now also beyond Lower Manhattan. They do a wide range of team programs, all free. In Open Studios they focus on prompts related to exhibitions on view and teams get to do art making from home, and now in-person again. Some partnership organizations and schools located within Community Board 2 include 75, Morton, LGBT Center, PS3, The Door and Westbeth.

In addition to the family and team programming and general community programming, they also provide programming for seniors with their senior partners. In their senior programs they served over 5,000 people last fiscal year. That included some groups located within Community Board 2, such as Westbeth, Greenwich House, and community organizations such as The Door.

They also work with a wide range of school groups. During the pandemic, they were able to work virtually to explore exhibitions and talk about artwork and to make artwork, which they were able to do over Zoom with the help of some wonderful teachers. Last fiscal year they served over 19,000 students from schools all over New York City through virtual programming and they are working on welcoming them back into the museum.

One of the access programs they provide, [Whitney Signs](#), is led by a deaf educator totally in ASL. This is important for the museum's vibrant deaf community.

Scorza finished off the presentation discussing how the museum looks forward to being more sustainable and intentional about the programming they offer online and working closely with their partners to identify the programs that mean the most to their community. The Whitney looks forward to supporting values that guide them. They are the "artists' museum" and believe that art shapes our lives and our communities. The Whitney is experimental, responsive and takes risks, and wants to collaborate with those partners to expand their reach. They engage and embrace questions for their audiences and communities that are close and also further away, and, in turn, learn from them. And they are actively embracing the complexity of what it means to be an American art institution. One of the examples of that is moving towards a concerted effort of having the Whitney become more bilingual. Little by little, exhibitions will have English and Spanish language translation, and hopefully in a couple of years they will be fully bilingual.

Question: How does the Whitney incorporate the social and political upheaval in the world around us?

Answer: It's integral to the work that we do. We take those leads from artists and many of the artists that are exhibiting at the Whitney question those things and question the politics of our country, even someone like Jasper Johns, who has been perceived as just an artist that's done symbols and color and construction and pop, is someone who was deeply engaged with the politics of his time. So if you come to see the exhibition, you'll see his art addresses his concerns with the Vietnam War. And we explicitly talk about that for our Days End installation on the Hudson River. This also has a series of programming and audio tours that address the complexity of the neighborhood and its history. We are also not shy about having those

conversations with our youth and our general public. We're doing a lot of training with our staff including our docents about what it means to respond to the issues of art in our time.

The Whitney has been tracking, and will continue to track, how art impacts youth and the community. The museum is also building a relationship with Little Island and looking at ways they may be able to support each other's work and explore what that can mean for the Westside for relationship building.

Question: Will there be more Mexican-American art programming and education around the Mexican-American experience related to the art?

Answer (Scorza): I think my appointment was intentional and I believe we are going to make big strides on some things in this area. Thinking also about how we staff is a big part of this process.

Question: I am curious about the language offerings. How did you come to the decision to choose Spanish as the second language? Was there research behind that choice?

Answer: There's been a lot of research about why we chose to focus on Spanish translation as the language. There's a whole team here at the museum, which is the strategy team, that helps us put together a lot of this research. Within the findings, we've learned that 40% of the population is Spanish-speaking in New York. So with that number, it was significantly important for us to think about that our collection. It also reflects many artists that speak Spanish, and our exhibitions in recent history have shown works by many artists who are Spanish speakers, so that's one of the driving forces.

For more information on the latest exhibitions, workshops, events, and other programs, please visit:  
<https://whitney.org/>

## **2. NYC AIDS Memorial update**

This was the first time that NYC AIDS Memorial Executive Director Dave Harper presented to the Arts and Institutions committee. He began with some background on the memorial and followed this with what has been happening at the site and what the plans are for the future.

The idea of the memorial was born in 2011 around a confluence of events, including the closing of St. Vincent's Hospital. A grassroots effort was undertaken by two young men who never knew a time before the AIDS epidemic and who were perplexed as to how the city hadn't had some sort of major architecturally significant, permanent memorial to the epidemic into the 100,000 New Yorkers lost to it. Through a lot of lobbying, talking, and through the support of the community board and many members of the community, the group progressed to an international design competition in 2012. This ultimately resulted in the selection of Brooklyn based studio AI to build the memorial, plaque construction, and the organization itself over the subsequent three years. The memorial was dedicated December 1, 2016. The fifth anniversary is this year.

Harper joined the organization in the summer of 2019, as the first executive director and is still the only staff person, doing a little bit of everything. His mandate is to run the administration of the organization, the fundraising, maintain conversations with the City Parks Department and other departments about the park itself, to elevate what they are doing, and to enrich visitors with programs, surrounding the concept of the AIDS epidemic and how it impacts New Yorkers of all walks of life.

Today they are a 501(c)(3) and are a part of the Parks Department. The memorial is responsible for its maintenance, so they fundraise every year to maintain the memorial, its beauty, its fountain and its beautiful granite work, which is an installation by the artist [Jenny Holzer](#).

They strive to preserve this history by creating a place that people can come to learn and to gather. They encourage this often through arts, cultural and educational programs and events and partnerships with organization. They are also looking to enhance this engagement through technology that allows both for AR and VR engagement with the space and its history, as well as things like self-guided walking tours, and also provide more access points for people that aren't in the park can visit virtually to learn about what the memorial is doing.

This summer they ran a very successful storytelling event with HIV/AIDS long-term survivors, many of whom had never told their story publicly before. The memorial did virtual workshops with them, along with a wonderful organization called [The Generations Project](#), an LGBTQ+ storytelling organization, to hone their personal stories. Then there were three events at the memorial where people were able to gather and hear these stories in public. It was incredibly touching and moving because not only did the stories impact those that came to hear them, but also because of the public nature of the site, people were drawn in from the community to sit and listen.

The memorial has done other storytelling programs, including in September of this year with [Bill Goldstein](#), who is writing Larry Kramer's autobiography. He did a talk on the first year of Kramer's activism, because this year was the 40th anniversary the founding of GMHC.

The memorial is the kind of sacred space to remember heroes, including Larry Kramer, the late author and activist and founder of [ACT UP](#) and [GMHC](#) and other influential organizations. It is also a place for protests, ranging from healthcare access to gun safety, as well as political advocacy and regularly hosts city officials, such as Pete Buttigieg during his presidential campaign and Speaker Corey Johnson. The memorial is a space for inter-generational dialogue about the epidemic for those who lived through it and were born after it. The memorial also provides free educational and cultural programs, including on-site exhibitions, sound and light installations, and LGBTQ+ balls. They also collaborate on programming with other organizations, such as with [The Poetry Project](#), and have also collaborated with [Village Preservation](#), [Greenwich House](#), and [Rattlestick Playwrights Theater](#) for the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of 9/11.

Upcoming programming plans include World AIDS Day on December 1, quilt-making workshops, potential art commissions and installations for the space, and they are in the early stages of working with the artist [Jim Hodges](#), for a year-long installation adjacent to the memorial.

With regard to educational programming, they hope to be able to work with the Department of Education (DOE) to get younger school groups to make field trips to the memorial and to include curriculum for field trips. Currently, they have been engaging with some universities and speaking about the memorial.

Following the presentation, the committee suggested that Harper connect with [Chashama](#) if he is looking for space in relation to any of his programming, and also to consider presenting more AIDS-themed theater work in the space, such as simple play readings. We also suggested he consider programming that connects with the school system, as students today know little about the history of AIDS, and to offer more all-inclusive programming that addresses long-term survivors of HIV/AIDS, especially women who are not often promoted as advocates, allies, and HIV/AIDS survivors themselves. The committee also encouraged Harper to apply QR codes for walking tours to deliver all the product and programming the memorial has already

done to allow even greater access to the history. For the December 1 event, the committee suggested having a vaccine-testing van on-site. Lastly, we suggested that the memorial collaborate with ACT UP and Housing Works in relation to the December 1 event, as they have a lot of useful resources that could help support with vaccinations and other healthcare-related activities.

For more information on the latest events and other programs, please visit:

<https://www.nycaidsmemorial.org/>

### **Discussion**

Prior to the presentations, there was some discussion surrounding our committee's meeting date and how it has been a moving target. It was only earlier this year that our committee was finally given the last Monday of the month as our monthly date. Since then, however, there are various factors that have continued to disrupt that consistency, ranging from larger community meetings taking place on the same night (i.e., SoHo/NoHo rezoning meetings), joint meetings with other committees, and having only one official Zoom account. Until community boards are given additional accounts by the Borough President, this will be an issue. However, the extension to allow virtual meetings ends on January 15, 2022, so we will see how in-person and/or hybrid meetings from that point on impact our ability to meet on our normal date with more consistency.

The point was made how virtual meetings have allowed for greater attendance and participation from the community for those who cannot attend in-person meetings, either through a disability, health concerns, or other challenges. This point has been raised before and there is agreement that virtual meetings have been useful in increasing attendance and engagement from the community. Ultimately, however, we must follow the state's rules on virtual meetings. We will see what the law allows for following the January 15, 2022 deadline. It is our understanding as of now that hybrid in-person/online meetings will be permitted after January 15, but that committee members will need to meet in-person.

### **Executive**

The committee was reminded that we would be doing a joint meeting with Parks and Waterfront on November 4<sup>th</sup> at 5:30pm to hear an update from Little Island regarding their first season of programming.

Arts and Institutions committee meetings the remainder of the calendar year are TBD, but, if there is a meeting in December, it will likely not be on the normal last Monday of the month, as that is a holiday week.

No new business.

Respectfully submitted,

Robin Rothstein  
Chair, Arts & Institutions Committee  
Community Board 2, Manhattan