



MEASUREMENTS OF SUCCESS: OUTREACH AND DIVERSITY EFFORTS

Deepening the Dialogue: Art and Audience

Through a generous grant from The Wallace Foundation, the Seattle Art Museum has spent the past four years engaged in an initiative to effect transformation, *Deepening the Dialogue: Art and Audience*. During the initiative, SAM focused primarily on the goals of enhancing the quality of the SAM experience for all visitors, building SAM's audience, and significantly increasing diversity at SAM.

Highlights of SAM's progress through various stages of the initiative are outlined below. Both quantitative and qualitative measurements were analyzed to determine the success of the initiative. The quantitative measurements included assessing an increase in ethnic/cultural diversity of staff, trustees, volunteers and visitors; and evaluating the diversity of programming, accessibility, and participation. Qualitative measurements utilized surveys, questionnaires, interviews, focus groups and testimonials.

2001–2004 Deepening the Dialogue's Goals

1. Deepen the quality of the visitor experience
2. Broaden SAM's audience
3. Diversify SAM

Findings and Accomplishments

KEY CHANGES

- Revised Mission and Vision Statements;

VISION: *SAM Connects Art to Life*

MISSION: *SAM provides a welcoming place for people to connect with art and to consider its relationship to their lives. SAM is one museum in three locations: Seattle Art Museum downtown, Seattle Asian Art Museum at Volunteer Park, and the Olympic Sculpture Park on the downtown waterfront. The Museum collects and exhibits objects from across time and across cultures, exploring the dynamic connections between past and present.*

- Used audience research to better understand the visitor experience;
- Identified and addressed participation barriers;
- Evaluated and implemented 12 participation/sustainability strategies and more than 50 associated activities to engage audiences.



12 PARTICIPATION STRATEGIES USED TO ENGAGE AUDIENCES

(Priority order, determined by SAM staff.)

Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Advisory Committees -Audience Research -Community Outreach Activities -Partnerships and Collaboration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Targeted" Marketing and Advertising -Reduced pricing/Complimentary Tickets -Training in Participation-Building Skills -Diversity and Customer Service -Audience-responsive programming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Community Facility Use and Rental -Program Expansion/Enhancement -Artist Residencies

Quantitative Measurements of Success:

INSIDE SAM: VISITORS, MEMBERS AND STAFF

- Six of 12 special exhibits since 2001 targeted visitors from diverse ethnic communities: *Treasures from a Lost Civilization: Ancient Chinese Art from Sichuan* (visitor diversity unrecorded), *Art from Africa: Longsteps Never Broke a Back* (22%), *Frida Kahlo, Diego Rivera, and Mexican Modernism: The Jacques and Natasha Gelman Collection* (13%), *Over the Line: The Art and Life of Jacob Lawrence* (24%), *Painted Visions From India and Pakistan, Past and Present Intimate Worlds: Masterpieces of Indian Painting from the Alvin O. Bellak Collection* and *Conversations with Traditions: Nilima Sheikh and Shahzia Sikander* (19%), and *Spain in the Age of Exploration 1492–1819* (34%).
- From 1999 to 2001 the ethnic diversity of SAM's visitors varied from 8% to 10% of total visitors; from 2002 to 2004 an increase of diversity in 14% to 34% of total visitors was achieved.
- Comparing two exhibitions with similar art content and overall visitation reveals nearly a 100% increase in ethnic diversity of SAM's visitors. During the *Impressionism: Paintings Collected by European Museums* exhibition in 1999, 316,000 visitors and 8.1% visitor ethnic/cultural diversity was noted and in 2004, for *Van Gogh to Mondrian: Modern Art from the Kröller-Müller Museum*, 288,228 visitors and 15.5% visitor ethnic/cultural diversity was tallied.
- In 2003 and 2004, 39% of visitors attending SAAM's *Free First Saturday* Program represented diverse ethnic backgrounds.

- Based on 2004 membership data, 20.7% of SAM members were people of color (King County 2000 Census reports 26.7% total ethnic population).
- Ethnic/cultural diversity—among staff, board, and volunteers combined—reflected an increase from 12.3% to 15.5% over the past four years. However, the ethnic/cultural diversity of staff (measured alone) declined slightly.
- Frontline staff (93%) participated in diversity and customer service training.

SAM OUT IN THE COMMUNITY

- SAM has 140 community partners who presented 209 programs to communities since 1997.



- More than 8,952 children and families have participated in SAM's hands-on art activities at Seattle Center festivals since 2002.
- Since 2002 more than 7,000 free and reduced admission passes to SAM have been distributed at the festivals; 5.3% were redeemed.

- Over 5,500 community members have been reached through *SAM Dialogues* presentations at over 205 venues since 2001.
- Since 2002, 45,000 free and reduced admission passes were distributed in the community and 8.4% have been redeemed (reported average is 3%).



- From 2001-2004, the three *Forums on Race* programs presented at SAM attracted 710 participants (27% African American and 12% Asian American).

Qualitative Measurements of Success:

TESTIMONIALS

The community testimonials are 1- to 2-minute filmed interviews with a diverse selection of people: SAM trustees, members, patrons, volunteers, staff, community partners, program participants, artists, and other individuals from the broader Seattle community. Each person speaks about the impact of SAM and/or the arts in general on one or more of the following: their life, community, organization, family, city or the Northwest region. (The testimonials are available on SAM's website.) The following are quotes from 5 of the 21 interviews:

- *"The children get inspired by other people's visions of the world."*—Greg, Marcia, Bernie and Cece Johnson family
- *"Art gives you an opportunity to appreciate humanity. It expands your imagination."*—Winnie Lee, SAM Community Advisory Committee member

- *"You can connect with the museum that wants to bring you in."*—Sandra Madrid, Assistant Dean, University of Washington School of Law
- *"SAM knows how to collaborate."*—Margit Rankin, Executive Director, Seattle Arts & Lectures
- *"Art is a unifying force, a medium through which people can speak without speaking."*—Jose Gaitan, President, The Gaitan Group

VISITOR SURVEYS

In July 2003 Seattle Art Museum conducted a confidential "How are we Doing?" survey. Over 150 community members completed the questionnaire, which served as a way to assess SAM's improvements from the community's perspective. Individuals were asked to evaluate how SAM was progressing with the *Deepening the Dialogue: Art and Audience* efforts since the previous survey taken in 2001-2002.

Key Findings of the Surveys

- The respondents represented a diverse audience: 14% Asian American; 25% Black/African American; 13% Hispanic/Latino/Mexican American; 34% White; and 13% other/not listed.
- Sixty-one percent of the respondents indicated they visited the museum more in the past two years than in previous years due to more engaging exhibitions, programs and events, and added incentive of special invites received from SAM.
- The top three areas viewed by respondents as those most greatly improved: diversity of exhibitions, community outreach efforts and marketing efforts to diverse communities.
- Seventy percent indicated some or noticeable change in their impression of SAM in the past two years.
- The community's perception of SAM as an elitist and unwelcoming place had changed to welcoming (69%), educational (68%), community-oriented (43%), and engaging (42%). (More than one choice could be selected.)

- This positive change in their assessment was attributed to SAM's efforts to increase accessibility and diversity of outreach and exhibitions.

FEEDBACK/COMMENTS

SAM invited community members—participants in initial research efforts in 2001—to a focus group meeting in 2003 to provide an update on their perceptions of the museum since then. The following are some of their responses to the questions: *How has your perception of SAM changed? What changes do you see?*

- “Programs like *Thursday After Hours* and the film series have helped change the perception of SAM. People never thought of the museum before as a place where you could go to hear jazz and have cocktails.”



- “One of the changes that I noticed was that SAM's staff responds to requests for use of SAM spaces in a more friendly, more efficient manner which makes me feel more comfortable. I find myself more likely to refer people to visit SAM, or to pass along SAM admission passes or invitations to SAM events to people that I know.”
- “The children's art activities that SAM provides at the Festal events at the Seattle Center have been really great. This is something that you would not have associated with SAM five years ago. It has changed my perception of SAM because it is outside the box—something different and community centered.”
- “An area that SAM has done very well in is reaching out to kids of all backgrounds that would not necessarily have access to

museums otherwise. SAM has made outreach efforts to programs like the Minority Achievement Program in Tacoma, programs in Federal Way and Puyallup—to new areas that have not been reached out to in the past.”

What's Next: Community and the Transformation of SAM

Even though this phase of the initiative *Deepening the Dialogue: Art and Audience* is being concluded, a foundation has been laid and SAM's commitment to sustain and continue to improve on inclusive efforts is strong. In support of this commitment, the museum has retained their Community Affairs department and will continue to involve community in future plans augmenting programming and complementary activities.

2005-2007 Community Connections and Community Campaign Goals

1. Visibility: Increase community awareness
2. Involvement: Increase sense of community ownership and participation
3. Diversity: Broaden membership, expand donor base and promote diversity at SAM on every level



The SAM of the future will include a restored Seattle Asian Art Museum and will expand its physical presence creating new access to art. On the waterfront the Olympic Sculpture Park will add 8.5 acres of free, open green space, breathtaking views of Seattle skyline and magnificent art. Expansion of the downtown museum will add 74% more space for exhibiting and viewing works of art. All sites provide increased opportunities for public

programs and community involvement, ultimately creating a more welcoming environment for visitors.

INSIDE SAM

- A new membership program will offer incentives for non-profit organizations participating in the Community Organization Program.
- Human Resources staff will focus on attracting and retaining an ethnically diverse workforce, especially in positions of management, and SAM will seek funding for minority internships.
- In the museum's new galleries, SAM's collections will tell stories that emphasize bridges between cultures.
- African American art, other artists of color, and Northwest artists will be highlighted in interpretive materials throughout the museum.

SAM OUT IN THE COMMUNITY

- SAM is working to increase the number of SAM Dialogues.
- The Olympic Sculpture Park educational outreach program will include artists' residencies in the various communities.
- SAM will launch a docent outreach program to area schools.
- SAM will continue collaborations with local arts organizations to create community partner programs.
- SAM will continue to participate in community festivals.



Get Involved

The Seattle Art Museum is dedicated to connecting art to life. This vision speaks to SAM's commitment to creating deeper connections to the community and acknowledging the visitor as the center of SAM's programs and activities. Community involvement is essential to transforming SAM at all three sites—an expanded SAM downtown, the new Olympic Sculpture Park, and a restored Seattle Asian Art Museum—into unique civic treasures, welcoming places where people can gather and enjoy art.

To find out how you can get involved or learn more about this initiative and SAM's outreach efforts, check out www.seattleartmuseum.org and click on the *Get Involved: Community Connections* link or go directly to the page <http://www.seattleartmuseum.org/community/community.asp>

