

CAM staff looks forward to welcoming patrons back

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“That is exhibitions that we send out; we organize here and we send out to other museums. We had just launched what was called ‘The Lore of Niagara,’ it was highlights from the Charles Rand Penney historical print collection. It’s a traveling exhibition that we organized, and we had venues lined up. One of those canceled; the rest of them postponed them. So, what that means is, those shows now aren’t going out for another year or two.”

CAM schedules exhibits multiple years out, so, “Luckily, we were able to rearrange our upcoming schedule with a lot of work and a lot of give and take. We moved some very important exhibitions back, meaning to 2022-23. Some others we’re going to have to postpone until a later time.”

“Our summer fundraiser – (Senior Manager of Marketing and Museum Public Relations) Tara Walker originally conceived and organized our first come-together, outdoor summer event. We couldn’t do that last year,” Beam said.

With the museum closed (except to students, faculty and staff in the academic semesters), Beam and his team “worked on a lot of long-term fundraising, estate planning – things that we need to launch when we reopen,” he said.

Their focus shifted to 2021, with hope to reopen in the summer.

Beam explained, “As we move forward, we’re planning for summer camp and summer events and the reopening, but it’s all contingent on (safety protocols and state permissions).”

“We’re moving forward,” he said. “We have our goals, we have our time set, and we’re working towards it as if life will get back to (‘normal’) and the museum can reopen and reenergize.”

In the meantime, CAM has a slew of new virtual tours and programs designed to keep patrons connected. These include:

√ A new website: www.castellaniartmuseum.org. For the first time in the museum’s 30-year history, visitors will have digital access to CAM’s collection of modern masters, world-class historic Niagara Falls prints, and works by regional folk artists.

They also can tune into Facebook Live for virtual museum tours on select Wednesdays in February at 12:30 p.m. for “staff picks.” Details will be shared on the CAM social media sites.

Beam said Walker and Curator of Folk Arts Edward Yong Jun Millar “from scratch ... initiated and started doing online things to keep the museum relevant to people who can’t physically go there. ... They initiated a whole series of videos and online programming that people could do in the meantime, to keep them ‘involved’ with the museum.”

“Our website launched this week; it’s a soft launch and there’s more coming on it.”

Beam said, “Every single person has stepped up, way beyond their normal duties. (Registrar) Mary Helen Miskuly oversaw the design and launch of our new website.”

Beam said, “You could see a few pieces (before), but now our



website is on par with any other major museum.”

Moreover, “Tara has reimagined and is redesigning our entire membership program.”

In partnership with the NU advancement department, CAM will begin utilizing new software to organize, track and improve real-time member/visitor services. In addition, all current memberships are being extended through June 2022.

“During this pandemic, we couldn’t remain silent,” Beam noted. “We had to stay in the social media, in the minds of our supporters and our sponsors, to let them know that we’re going to come out of this.”

√ Aesthetically, in late spring, CAM plans to unveil a newly designed reception desk and visitor information center in the DiMino Sculpture Court.

Beam said this, too, was a team effort. He raised funds, while Walker, Millar and Miskuly contributed to the project design and development.

The museum portico was refitted with new SMG color-changing LED lights, providing a luminescent wash across the white marble facade of the building at night.

CAM is the newest member of Buffalo Landmark illumination Team. Buffalo LIT is an initiative between architecturally significant buildings and structures in the region. CAM is one of only two participants in Niagara County – of course, the other is Niagara Falls State Park.

“That’s another way for us to be able to sort of partner and socially engage people at a different level,” Beam said.

√ “CAM Kids Coloring Contest” will take place in March.

Kids in grades K-8 can download free coloring pages from the new website, inspired by works of art in the CAM collection. Winners will receive prizes, along with their coloring page framed and hung next to the original work of art in the museum.

√ A free virtual/driving tour exploring cultural heritage in Niagara County, “Niagara Frontier Back Story,” features audio excerpts from community members, local artists and accompanying images highlighting the cultural heritage of five locations. The tour can be explored virtually or on-site at each location.

Millar said, “It’s a free tour focused on sharing cultural heritage in Niagara County at a few different sites around the area, by pairing/using excerpts from interviews collected through fieldwork over the years at the museum and with an intro narration. It is kind of like a site-specific series of podcast snippets about some (not all) cultural traditions in Niagara County.”

He added, “For example, you can stop at Niagara Falls and learn about Tuscarora beadwork by listening to excerpts from interviews with two bead workers; you can stop at Upson Park in Lockport to learn about the history of music on the canal; or at the Lewiston Landing waterfront to learn about recreational fishing on the Niagara River, etc.”

Millar noted each stop has audio excerpts with individuals one can find named on the tour titles and descriptions page. Kevin Rogan provided narration of the introduction and in-between audio excerpts.

√ Patrons also can subscribe to CAM’s YouTube channel, and

The Castellani Art Museum of Niagara University will remain closed to the public through the spring semester, as Niagara University continues to use its galleries as classroom space in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. At this time, the museum will not host public visitors or in-person programming. However, online offerings are now available – and plans are in place to reopen this summer. (Images courtesy of CAM)

follow the release of videos every Friday. The newest series, “NUperspectives,” is developed and presented by Niagara University students, focusing on major artists and works in the collection.

As the weather gets warmer, and COVID-19 restrictions continue to ease, “We’re excited to unlock the doors for visitors,” Beam said.

He added, “I think museums will come back stronger, and they’re going to thrive more because people realize that the in-person experience is paramount.”

Beam said the internet is certainly a valuable tool, but with the in-person experience “you’re engaging all five senses.”


He called the past year “unprecedented. ... I don’t know what to relate it to ever in my life. No one’s ever experienced this with anything.”

But, he added, “When we

come out the other side of this – not only the museum, but the university, the community, the neighborhoods – everyone, I think, is going to be more appreciative of what they have – and where they are, and everything around them – than they used to be.”

The Castellani Art Museum has a collection of more than 5,000 works of art, including those by notable artists such as Salvador Dali, Louise Nevelson, Pablo Picasso, Robert Rauschenberg, Cindy Sherman and Andy Warhol. Its mission is to connect diverse audiences to art by inspiring creativity and learning within the campus community and beyond.

GM/Managing Editor Joshua Maloni contributed to this report. He is an adjunct professor in the communication studies department.

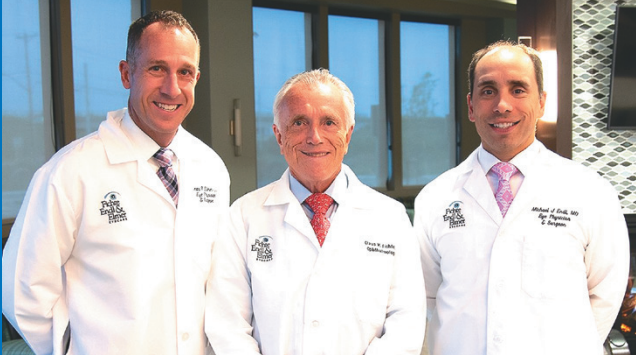


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