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An internship report: the New Orleans Museum of Art

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AN INTERSHIP REPORT: THE NEW ORLEANS MUSEUM OF ART

An Internship Report
Submitted to the Faculty
of the
University of New Orleans

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Arts Administration

Elise Lianne King Solomon
B.S., Florida State University, 2007
July 2010

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For Matt

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I would like to thank my instructors, Lauren Bierbaum, Bill Abbott, Richard Read, and John d'Addario, of the Arts Administration program for encouraging me and guiding me throughout my time in the program. Their experience and expertise has been a source of inspiration and comfort as I have set out to begin my career.

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ABSTRACT

Experience obtained from an internship at the New Orleans Museum of Art leads to a discussion of the Museum's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Strengths identified are the Museum's location, temporary exhibitions, expansive collection, recognition of New Orleans cultural heritage and diversity, ability to attract different audience segments, and educational outreach to schools. Weaknesses include the Museum's resistance to change, neglect of technology, poor internal and external communication, lack of coherent and shared purpose, and adequate space for programming. Opportunities ascertained are the potential for expansion in technological updates and public programming, and the leadership of a new Director. Threats recognized are the inattention to technological advances, competition with other cultural sites, and the economic recession. This analysis produces specific recommendations for improvement in the Museum's management practices, public programming, and technological insufficiencies.

Museum Management, Museum Education, Internship Report, Arts Administration, New Orleans Museum of Art

INTRODUCTION

INTERNSHIP DESCRIPTION

Duties and Projects

I completed my internship in the New Orleans Museum of Art's (NOMA) Education Department. Alice Yelen, the Assistant Director of Education, and John d'Addario, the Associate Curator of Education, were my immediate supervisors. The Education Department's primary goal is to increase access to its collections and exhibitions through programming for audiences of different ages and backgrounds. My primary duty as an Education intern was to assist with the daily tasks and projects of the department.

My first project in the Education Department was to help put together the educator's guide for the upcoming *Beyond the Blues: Reflections of African America in the Fine Arts Collection of the Amistad Research Center* exhibition, which was to showcase art by African Americans. I compiled and synthesized research on the artists like Romare Bearden and Elizabeth Catlett and their work in the exhibition that had been prepared by other interns; I then set up a base upon which the information could be expanded and formatted for the guide.

Early in my internship, NOMA was hosting the *Dreams Come True: A Look at Classic Fairy Tales from Walt Disney Studios*. Disney had given the Education Department grant money to provide free admission for public schools in Louisiana and busing reimbursement up to \$100 per bus. To successfully meet the requirements of this grant, one of my first projects was to coordinate with all of the Louisiana parish school boards to encourage school attendance of the

exhibition. My responsibilities included: identifying the appropriate person to send Disney tour information so it would be dispersed to the schools; assisting with the coordination of scheduling school tours; and answering general information questions. I also helped Sophie Hirabayashi, the Education Assistant, organize records, send out invoices, confirm tours, and complete the disbursement of the busing reimbursement grant money. My assistance with administrative duties helped the Education Department to serve its audience more efficiently.

Additionally, the Education Department was organizing a summer program with the NOMA Art Therapist that would invite summer camps to participate at no charge during certain weeks. At the beginning, I received the assignment of researching local summer camps that could participate in the summer program. While looking for organizations that would meet the requirements and expectations of the Assistant Director, I was able to make a significant breakthrough by receiving assistance from Lauren Bierbaum of the Greater New Orleans Afterschool Partnership. She helped us narrow down the list of summer camp organizations and provided imperative contact information. I contacted each of the organizations to find out who made decisions on summer camp activities. The department created an information letter and sent it out to each of the contacts. Ms. Yelen, Mr. d'Addario, and I worked with each organization to book the free program weeks.

Contributions

During my internship, I did the necessary groundwork in obtaining valuable contacts in the schools. The Education Department now has records of whom to send information about educational opportunities and events. After contacting each parish, the information sent out

about the *Dreams Come True* field trips garnered enthusiastic response. Now more educators are aware of the Museum's educational offerings.

My most important contribution was the successful implementation of the free-of-charge summer program. The objective set before me was not only to find organizations that could book the amount of days wanted, but most importantly, could be partners with the Museum in the schools. In other words, my courtship of these organizations needed to result in fruitful and advantageous relationships. Through this process, I was able to establish connections for the Museum with several organizations and introduce the Education Department to the Greater New Orleans Afterschool Partnership, which could also prove to be an important connection in future projects.

Furthermore, I laid foundation for similar future programs. Through trial and error, I found out what worked best for the organizations and the Museum. I created forms and letters that can serve as templates. To ensure future success, I have written guides that give instructions on when to begin implementing the programs and that describe specific details on how to run the programs more efficiently. These guides are stored on the Education Department's network drive for easy access.

Paper Layout

In chapter one, I discuss the profile of the New Orleans Museum of Art. Chapter two contains a SWOT analysis of the Museum. Finally, chapter three includes my recommendations for improvement within the organization.

CHAPTER 1

PROFILE OF HOST ORGANIZATION

History

In 1910, philanthropist Isaac Delgado gifted to the city of New Orleans an art museum bearing his name. Delgado intended to found an institution that could be in step with the world-class museums in the Northeastern United States and in Europe but would be accessible to both rich and poor with a focus on education.¹ The Museum's founding collection was small, but it cultivated its assortment of works effectively through the acquisition of funds for accession and the establishment of the Museum as a beneficiary of bequeathed personal collections. In 1965, a board member suggested that the name of the Museum change to the New Orleans Museum of Art (NOMA) to aid with fundraising, but at the time the idea created a surge of outrage among the trustees and was dropped until 1971. In that year, the Museum enacted that name change in conjunction with the revitalization of the Museum itself.²

Since its inception, NOMA has established itself as a visual arts leader. The Museum is the leading fine arts attraction in all of Louisiana and is the largest fine arts museum in the Gulf South. As a principal arts organization, it has also hosted a variety of blockbuster exhibitions including *Treasures of Tutankhamun* (1978), *Degas in New Orleans* (1999), *Jefferson's America*,

¹ Prescott N. Dunbar, *The New Orleans Museum of Art: The First Seventy-Five Years* (Louisiana State University Press, 1990), 8.

² Ibid., 235, 254-55.

Napoleon's France (2003), and *Dreams Come True: The Art of the Classic Fairy Tale from the Walt Disney Studios* (2009-2010).

Mission and Philosophy

Museums historically had their start “in the salvage and warehouse business,” in which they would collect artifacts and articles to preserve and study. Under this conceptualization of the Museum mission, any benefit rendered to the public was secondary.³ Currently, museums battle between the traditional philosophy of preservation, interpretation, and scholarship and the philosophy of shifting the focus on the collection to a mission that stresses public good realized in educational programming. Moreover, some broadminded museum experts believe that the museum finds its purpose in whatever it holds, and because of this, each generation has the right to determine what it wants the museum to be.⁴

NOMA maintains a moderate perspective in that the traditional philosophy is adequate if its primary purpose is public education. This ideal is seen in NOMA's mission statement: to inspire the love of art; to collect, preserve, exhibit and present excellence in the visual arts; to educate, challenge and engage a diverse public. The first half of the mission statement addresses its primary responsibility to its collection and exhibitions. The second half focuses on its educational outreach objectives. If the mission statement is upheld, a spiritual need of the Museum's audience can be met by spending time with the art and gaining a deeper appreciation and understanding of it.

³ Stephen E. Weil, “From Being *about* Something to Being *for* Somebody: The ongoing transformation of the American museum,” in *Museum Management and Marketing*, ed. Richard Sandell and Robert R. Jones (Electronic ed., London and New York: Taylor and Francis Routledge, 2007), 30.

⁴ Weil, 31.

Collections and Exhibitions

NOMA's permanent collection includes over 32,000 objects that span over 5,000 years. The collection includes pieces from all over the world and features Northern and Southern Renaissance works, photography, glass, African, Japanese, Pacific Islander, European and American art. The Museum recognizes the rich cultural heritage of New Orleans by including a comprehensive survey of French art and a unique Arts of America collection that surveys North, Central, and South American art from the pre-Colombian period through the Spanish Colonial period. Additionally, NOMA boasts the five-acre Sydney and Walda Besthoff Sculpture Garden that is adjacent to the Museum. The Sculpture Garden includes sixty sculptures by 20th and 21st century artists from America, Israel, Europe, Latin America, and Japan. The sculpture garden is always free to the public and was recently reopened after undergoing major renovations.

Even though NOMA has an expansive permanent collection, the Art Department ensures that the permanent collection is focused. The department recognizes that the Museum does not have the capacity to serve as an encyclopedia of world art. Therefore, visiting and temporary exhibitions function as a way to showcase works not strongly represented in the permanent collection's focus.

NOMA's exhibition schedule for 2010-2011 will focus on art from African-American, Native American, Asian American, and Cuban artists as well as contemporary and decorative arts, and art on paper. The exhibitions will have diverse appeal from the emergent New Orleans Hispanic population, to families, to the youth market. Some of the exhibitions include *Dreams Come True: Art of the Classic Fairy Tale from the Walt Disney Studio*; *Polaridad*; *Complementaria: Recent Works from Cuba*; *Parallel Universe: Quintrón and Miss Pussycat*;

Beyond the Blues: Reflections on African America from the Fine Arts Collection of the Amistad Research Center; Swamp Tours: Exploring the Louisiana Contemporary Collection; and The Sound of One Hand: Paintings and Calligraphy by the Zen Monk Hakuin.

Visitors and Public Programming

NOMA serves the diverse population in the greater New Orleans area, which includes Orleans, Jefferson, St. Bernard, and St. Tammany parishes. In Orleans parish, 60.7 percent of the population is African-American, 30.7 are Caucasian, 4.5 are Hispanic, and 2.9 are Asian.⁵ Additionally, the New Orleans population has risen to 76.4 percent of pre-Katrina levels.⁶ In 2009, NOMA hosted a total of 79,983 Louisiana residents and 19,596 out-of-state visitors.

To expand, engage, and educate its audience, NOMA schedules events focused on its permanent collection and visiting exhibitions such as walkthroughs led by experts, musical performances, artist talks, panel discussions, lectures, and community art-making projects. For example, the weekly event Mid-Week in Mid-City, which opens the Museum to visitors free-of-charge and highlights current exhibitions through different programming like live music or lectures, increases Museum attendance and highlights the surrounding neighborhood.

Furthermore, NOMA's Education Department reaches over 10,000 students a year by working closely with the local schools by providing school field trips and educator workshops. It also has a group of volunteer docents who are trained in the Museum's permanent collection

⁵ Allison Plyer and Elaine Ortiz, "Who lives in New Orleans and the Metro Area now? Based on 2008 U.S. Census Bureau Data," Greater New Orleans Community Data Center <http://www.gnocdc.org/2008Demographics/index.html>, (accessed April 28, 2010).

⁶ Amy Liu and Allison Plyer, "The New Orleans Index: Tracking the Recovery of New Orleans and the Metro Area," Greater New Orleans Community Data Center, <http://www.gnocdc.org/NewOrleansIndex/index.html> (accessed April 28, 2010).

and its visiting exhibitions, and who give tours to students. Additionally, the Education Department housed an Art Therapy Program. The Art Therapist, trained through a Masters of Art in Art Therapy, worked in the schools to address students' psychological needs, runs summer programming for students, and also organizes community art-making events through the Museum that are geared toward families and adults.

Management Structure

NOMA is organized in a traditional fashion. The Museum operates under the governance of a Board of Trustees comprised of forty-seven members. This larger sized board is more effective for fundraising, whereas a smaller board is better suited for efficient involvement.⁷ The Board of Trustees ensures that the Museum's policies, objectives, collection, exhibitions, and staff adhere to and preserve the organizational mission, vision, and goals. The Board of Trustees also ensures the financial stability of the Museum by approving and assisting the creation of organizational budgets and strategic plans, and by acting as a fundraiser on behalf of the Museum.⁸ Each member of the Board of Trustees brings valuable knowledge, skills, or fundraising capabilities. The trustees take an active interest in the Museum.

To make the most out of the trustees' time, the Board is divided into eleven committees: executive, finance, legal, personnel, investment, building and grounds, accession, nominating, long range planning, development and membership, and centennial. Appropriately, the Museum

⁷ Gail Dexter Lord and Barry Lord, *The Manual of Museum Management* (Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 1997), 21.

⁸ Ibid., 19.

director is involved in these committees and can delegate involvement to other Museum staff members.⁹

The Board of Trustees meets once a month, usually the third Wednesday of each month, except during the summer. During the meeting, the Trustee committees and Museum departments bring reports before the Board of Trustees. Each department provides pertinent information important to keeping the trustees up to date on the happenings in the Museum. Board Reports from each department are important in keeping the trustees informed so that they can make informed decisions.¹⁰ Assistant Directors can also make bids on behalf of their departments for action by the Board.

NOMA employs one Director that oversees five Assistant Directors. The Directors and Assistant Directors manage Communications and Marketing, Art, Education, Development, Finance and Administration. Each Assistant Director has between four and twenty-nine employees that report to him or her. Within each department, similar hierarchies and smaller offices exist. NOMA employs forty full-time staff, thirty-four part-time staff members, and four contracted workers. The Museum also has its Volunteer Committee that has more than four hundred members, as well as docents and interns that work in each department. (Appendix A)

In particular, the Education Department is run by an Assistant Director of Education, an Associate Curator of Education, an Education Assistant, and a part-time employee. The Education Department also includes many docents and an intern. The Assistant Director handles administrative tasks and works with the other Museum Directors. She also manages all projects in the Education Department and assigns various tasks relating to the projects to each of the

⁹ Lord and Lord, 21-22.

¹⁰ Ibid., 20.

Education employees. The Associate Curator works closely with the docents and oversees all educational events. The Education Assistant answers phone and email inquiries, manages administrative processes, and books tours. The part-time employee works educational events and, like the intern, works on various assigned tasks. Throughout the week, each employee reports to the Assistant Director, brings work to be examined, and then receives supplementary assignments.

At this time, NOMA is undergoing a change in directorship. The current Director of 37 years, E. John Bullard, is retiring but will remain active in the Museum as the new Director, Susan Taylor, takes his place.¹¹ The future for NOMA looks bright, but change in its processes and management is inevitable.

Budget

NOMA currently operates within a budget deficit. According to its Form 990 from 2008, the Museum had total revenues of \$7,054,062 and total expenses of \$7,806,038, which leaves the Museum at a net loss of \$751,976. NOMA's biggest source of revenue comes from contributions and government and philanthropic grants, which totaled \$5,933,293 in 2008. Admission charges were NOMA's second largest source of income totaling \$208,496. NOMA's biggest expenses from 2008 were compensation and benefits at \$1,904,189 and acquisitions of art at \$1,569,629.

¹¹ Dunbar, 358.

CHAPTER 2

SWOT ANALYSIS

Strengths

NOMA's strength lies in its ability to attract and organize high quality exhibitions and in its expansive permanent collection. The art displayed in the Museum attracts a variety of people because the diversity of the art speaks to the experience of audiences with different backgrounds. The temporary exhibitions offer visitors an opportunity to see work that is focused on a certain theme or experience. Some exhibitions are focused on a specialized area of art history, but usually the Museum has major exhibitions with broad appeal. Visitors can always rely on the permanent collection to present a broader overview of art history of many different cultures, especially ones with which they may not have much experience.

NOMA's huge advantage is that it is one of the very few, large, comprehensive art institutions in the Gulf South. Its history of quality art exhibitions that have broad scope and appeal has established a good reputation within the community and New Orleans tourists. Local teachers love to bring their students to the Museum because NOMA usually has an exhibition or the permanent collection that relates to their curricula. The comprehensiveness of the Museum also attracts people from out of town. Through its reputation and longevity in the area, the Museum has created a value brand.¹² NOMA's patrons consistently revisit the Museum because

¹²Christine Burton and Carol Scott, "Museums: Challenges for the 21st Century," in *Museum Management and Marketing*, eds. Richard Sandell and Robert R. James (Electronic ed., London and New York: Taylor and Francis Routledge, 2007), 63.

they know they can expect NOMA to fulfill their needs, whether educational, social, or even spiritual.

Furthermore, the Museum's reputation as an important arts site also helps draw more press coverage. Big exhibitions are usually given editorial attention by important local media outlets like the *Times Picayune* (New Orleans newspaper of record) or the *Gambit* (a well-respected local weekly). NOMA's betting escapade with the Indianapolis Museum of Art during the Super Bowl also garnered positive attention from national news sources and blogs.¹³

(Appendix B)

NOMA is intentional about incorporating its community and heritage into the displayed works. Local and regional artists are always showcased. NOMA also exhibits other favorite local pastimes like jazz and food. Additionally, NOMA displays work that encourages social awareness. African Americans, women, and Asian artists are frequently featured. The role of the Museum is changing from being an institution solely focused on the collection and display of pieces to an institution focused on playing an active role in societal changes.¹⁴ New Orleans requires its arts organizations to recognize cultural and ethnic diversity, and NOMA meets that challenge.

Additionally, NOMA generally attracts an older crowd that consists of people from 55 years old and older. This strength manifests itself through NOMA's steady following of patrons and volunteers. However, the Modern and Contemporary Art curator has been making

¹³ Doug MacCash, "New Orleans and Indianapolis art museums bet on Super Bowl," *Times Picayune*, January 28, 2010, Entertainment Section, online edition, http://www.nola.com/saints/index.ssf/2010/01/post_137.html (accessed July 7, 2010).

¹⁴ John Reeve, "Prioritizing Audience Groups," in *The Responsive Museum: Working with Audiences in the Twenty-First Century*, eds. Caroline Lang, John Reeve, and Vicky Woollard (Electronic ed., Ashgate Publishing Company, 2006), 54.

concentrated efforts in attracting a younger crowd of 20 to 35 years old. She encourages participation by the younger crowd by designing exhibitions and events specially geared towards their interests. Her designated exhibition space consistently showcases innovative and exciting works. Her past two exhibition openings have attracted a crowd that would most likely not have come to the Museum otherwise. For example, she organized the exhibition opening for *Parallel Universes: Quintron and Miss Pussycat*, which attracted a large crowd of young audience members because the Quintron and Miss Pussycat were already established in the community and were creating innovative work for the Museum. The Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art also works to create a sense of community between young, aspiring art historians by hosting social events.

Also, NOMA has a great location. It is in the Mid-City neighborhood in City Park. Being in City Park offers many advantages. First, there is ample free parking, which is something few other cultural attractions can boast. Next, City Park has plenty of space to bring kids and let them run around after being well-behaved and quiet in the Museum. Schools also like this location because there is space for picnic lunches. Also, families and other visitors can make a full day of activity by visiting the Museum and then engaging in other activities in the park, such as Storyland (a small amusement park for children) and the Botanical Gardens. Additionally, the Museum is located at the end of the streetcar line. This is advantageous because many people who do not have access to private transportation, particularly tourists, can get to the Museum cheaply and easily.

Furthermore, NOMA's admission prices are reasonable. Louisiana residents receive discounted prices (out-of-state admission prices are a little more expensive). Wednesdays are

free for everyone. Before the Disney exhibition, Louisiana residents received free admission. Louisiana residents now expect quality entertainment at a reasonable price from NOMA.

NOMA also utilizes its space to generate additional income. It rents itself out for weddings and other events. NOMA's facilities attract local events as well as high-profile events like the recording of part of an episode of popular television show, *Top Chef*. Additionally, NOMA has a gift shop and a café that produce some revenue.

NOMA also attracts many volunteers and interns. The curatorial staff always takes on many interns. The Museum dedicates an entire office to putting volunteers to work. Additionally, the Education Department has a team of docents. They give tours and receive training on the permanent collection and special exhibitions. The docents respect the Associate Curator of Education and love the Museum, which makes scheduling them more pleasant. NOMA makes sure it shows its appreciation by holding luncheons and other events for their volunteers.

Strengths from the Education Department

Furthermore, NOMA values educational programming. The Education Department goes to great lengths to reach out to schools in its target areas of Orleans, Jefferson, St. Bernard, and St. Tammany parishes. The department sends out email alerts with information on field trip booking and educator workshops. The Museum receives a great response from the public, parochial, and private schools. NOMA encourages field trips by providing free or discounted admission. To supplement field trips and to ensure the best learning experience possible, NOMA often provides free educator materials for teachers. NOMA creates these

materials in compliance with the academic standards determined by the state and the school boards to ensure they are relevant and usable in the classroom.

Additionally, NOMA promotes field trips by providing facilities and materials for educator workshops. Teachers gladly participate in the Education Department's free educator workshops to meet certain professional development requirements. The educator workshops are scheduled in conjunction to current major exhibitions. The Education Department either works independently or with the exhibition organizers to develop learning materials for the workshops. The workshops include a lecture by either curators or Education Department staff and a walk-through of the exhibition. Participants leave the workshops with information on field trip booking and materials to use with their students. The Education Department often partners with other organizations like KIDsmART to increase attendance to the workshops. The benefit of the workshops is that many participants tell their fellow coworkers about the exhibition and then book field trips that allow many students to experience the art.

Moreover, the Museum featured an art therapist who worked directly in the schools. Her involvement in high-needs schools enabled her to provide access to the Museum to many people who would not have come otherwise. The Art Therapist also improved access to the Museum by developing summer programs and public art-making activities.

Weaknesses

NOMA is a very traditional, conservative museum. While this is not inherently a weakness, it does shed light on many of its flaws. The most obvious and over-arching weakness is the Museum's resistance to change.

This weakness manifests itself most injuriously in the Museum's neglect of technology. NOMA currently uses second-hand software and hardware handed down from the City. Therefore, the computers, monitors, etc. are on the verge of expiring from old age and constant use. Additionally, the Museum does not have enough usable computers for all of its employees, interns, and volunteers.

Furthermore, many of the Museum employees are reluctant to incorporate technology into their work space. Therefore, available technology is not utilized to its fullest capacity resulting in inefficiency. For example, accounting procedures still require carbon copy forms that are type-written, and many times work is pushed off to someone else who does know how to use the computer effectively. Under-utilized technology also affects communication. For instance, the Museum keeps a "red book" that is intended to organize scheduled events to avoid overbooking. However, it is inconvenient to flip through the book to see if an event can be scheduled and then fill out the necessary form to put inside the book. This system is unreliable because people do not reliably enter small events or provide necessary information for some reservations. If the Museum used a shared, network-based calendar, miscommunication could be avoided and up-to-date information would be easier to provide and find.

The under-used technology also contributes to the slowness of the Museum's response time. Communication is not always effective. The Education Department's location in the Museum basement contributes to poor communication. Since it is not physically located near the other departments, many times the Education Department staff is left out of the daily Museum happenings. Intentional efforts must be made to communicate education goals and programs so they can be included and remembered amongst the other departments' goals and programs.

Oftentimes, the lack of communication affects productivity. Programs are started late with unclear goals and rules. Partnerships are strained because of the last-minute work ethic.

Poor use of technology also affects NOMA's communication with its patrons and potential audience members. NOMA's website is difficult to navigate and has remnants of outdated and irrelevant information. Narrative text obscures the most basic information that most visitors try to find such as hours of operation, admission, and upcoming exhibitions. (Appendix C) Additionally, tour booking requires a significant amount of staff time and effort because of antiquated booking systems and constantly changing information. In several instances, the Education Department's communication with interested and participating audience members has been delayed or incorrect because of the large room for error in the booking system.

Furthermore, the Museum's weaknesses can be attributed to a common problem that most nonprofit organizations face: lack of funding and staffing. NOMA simply does not have enough money to support the programs desired nor the personnel needed to create fully-functioning departments.

Despite a lack of money and personnel, organizations must be motivated to make programs work. NOMA lacks well-defined and codified work processes, articulated vision, and clear goals. Employees struggle with implementing programs and other tasks because responsibilities and authority are spread among many people. Additionally, the substantial number of interns and volunteers do not have clear goals and initiatives, so free labor goes unused.

Another weakness of the Museum is its physical construction. NOMA's building was constructed in the traditional sense in that it has the grandiose look of a government building, church, or wealthy institution whose main purpose was to store, display, and preserve art. The

Museum does not have appropriate space to accommodate the educational activities to which it is currently committed. After Hurricane Katrina, the space allotted to educational programming was repurposed for art storage. This undermines any attempt to focus the Museum on educational outreach. Also, NOMA does not have enough space to accommodate a growing need for more staff. People are forced to share working space and scrounge for materials.

Opportunities

NOMA's opportunities lie in recognizing the potential for expansion. Before Hurricane Katrina, NOMA had 125 employees. Now, that number is significantly reduced. However, New Orleans' recovery has been steadily moving forward which has led to an increase in population in the Greater New Orleans area and a resurgence of tourism. All of these positive increases mean that NOMA has the opportunity to discover and expand demand for cultural programming. To do this properly, the Museum must dedicate more resources to staffing, materials, and space. While this will have a negative short-term effect on the bottom line, the Museum will derive benefits from an increased audience and the opportunity for more funding.

Currently, NOMA adequately reaches out to educators, schools, and other people already interested in art. NOMA has immense opportunity to reach other audiences, though. For example, the Ogden Museum of Southern Art started a program for mothers and young children during the day. If NOMA created a similar program, it could reach an audience that has disposable income and is actively seeking enrichment programming. Additionally, NOMA has the opportunity to make the Museum more interactive and feature activities and programming that are accessible and enjoyable to people without an arts background.

Furthermore, NOMA attracts a large number of volunteers and interns. Usually interns are used in the curatorial departments and volunteers are used as docents or other duties. However, the Education Department has the opportunity to seek out and employ the use of interns and volunteers to increase its programming. Other administrative departments have this opportunity as well.

Additionally, NOMA has the opportunity to improve its technology, which would also improve its communication problems. Website upgrades would help the Museum connect and communicate with its audience. Improved internal networks would encourage better communication between employees.

NOMA's future opportunities will be greatly affected by the new Director. Much of the Museum's forward progress relies on the new Director's leadership.

Threats

NOMA faces the threat of becoming obsolete. This threat could manifest itself in several ways, but the most pressing is NOMA's apparent indifference towards the advantages of technology. In a society becoming ever more technology-driven, NOMA could fall behind by not satisfying the demand for more information available through technology. Booking tours and finding information sometimes requires more than just searching through the current website. If dealing with NOMA takes more time than potential patrons want to invest, NOMA stands to lose out on attracting more audience members.

Furthermore, another perpetual threat to NOMA is competition from other cultural sites.¹⁵ New Orleans has many arts and historical sites that vie for the patronage of tourists and

¹⁵ Burton and Scott, 49.

locals alike. If NOMA wants to avoid becoming obsolete, it must differentiate itself as an important and exciting destination and experience in order to generate attendance. NOMA has a great location in City Park, but it is not situated amongst the City's other arts institutions. Therefore, tourists or others unfamiliar with the Museum could potentially overlook it or intentionally avoid it in favor of the downtown area, which has a density of arts and culture institutions within walking distance of each other. Moreover, the abundance of cultural activities could lead an oversaturation of the cultural market. The overlapping of events is inevitable and can detract from the draw NOMA wishes to have.

Another very obvious threat to NOMA is the economic recession, which can affect the Museum in different ways. First, the recession has the possibility of discouraging the participation in leisure activities in New Orleans. The already smaller audience base will be more selective in how they spend their disposable income on entertainment. This also translates into less tourism.

Furthermore, NOMA's funding is affected by recession and competition. Even though there are tax incentives to donate to nonprofit organizations, donors are less likely to give money to organizations when they have less disposable income. Sadly, in 2009, individual giving dropped 0.4 percent from 2008.¹⁶ Additionally, the downturn in individual donations means that organizations, including NOMA, will be looking to other sources of funding like grants. There is more competition and fewer grants available to nonprofit organizations. Foundation grant making dropped by 8.9 percent from 2008.¹⁷

¹⁶ The Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University, "Giving USA 2010: The Annual Report on Philanthropy for the Year 2009," Executive Summary, Giving USA Foundation, 2010: 4, <http://www.pursuantmedia.com/givingusa/0510/> (accessed July 7, 2010).

¹⁷ Ibid.

CHAPTER 3

RECOMMENDATIONS

The New Orleans Museum of Art has the potential to become an important and far-reaching art institution. As the city of New Orleans receives more attention, especially for its unique and vibrant art heritage, NOMA has the opportunity to stand out as a cultural symbol of the city. To do this effectively, NOMA must consider a strategic plan which results in sustainability.

NOMA already incorporates some for-profit strategies into its nonprofit structure. However, it overlooks important management practices that encourage employee satisfaction and productivity. Additionally, NOMA needs to expand its audience base through broadened educational programming. Finally, the Museum must recognize and correct its serious technological shortcomings.

Management Practices

NOMA is fortunate to have an employee dedicated to Human Resource Management, but underutilizes the position's usefulness. The Museum must prioritize human resources practices established by the for-profit sector that encourage higher productivity and employee retention. Managing human resources requires understanding and communicating the importance of how organizational policy should affect employees and the workplace. NOMA must recognize the need to develop strategies that increase organizational effectiveness, including explicit values

and goals, the ability to adjust and promote change, and a framework that cultivates teamwork and communication.¹⁸ The Museum needs to undergo a management transformation if it is to remain an effective organization.

NOMA has in place a traditional management structure in which each department has hierarchical systems where employees answer to managers of more specific museum functions.¹⁹ Each position comes with a specific job title, job description, and supervisor. However, as in many nonprofit organizations, duties can be shared or delegated to employees regardless of title/job description as deemed necessary. Unfortunately, duties have been added to, taken away, or switched around so many times, that employees have difficulty interpreting what falls into their realm of responsibility. To avoid confusion and frustration, performance management strategies must be developed.²⁰ I recommend that supervisors reevaluate job descriptions with employees periodically to see if any changes need to be made. Changes and expectations should then be clearly communicated to the employee and to the rest of the staff. Reevaluated job descriptions should also be clear enough to provide standards by which employees are evaluated.²¹ Setting explicit benchmarks and goals within the job descriptions will also help lay out clear path to success.

Furthermore, to sustain a competitive advantage (or simply to remain relevant as a cultural institution) NOMA must realize the untapped value in its employees. The Museum needs to create a working environment in which ideas, knowledge, and practical expertise can be

¹⁸ Michael Armstrong, *Strategic Human Resource Management* (Kogan Page, 2006), 90.

¹⁹ Lord and Lord, 27.

²⁰ Armstrong, 143.

²¹ Carol L. Barbeito, *Human Resource Policies and Procedures for Nonprofit Organizations* (John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 2004), 113.

communicated and developed.²² To construct this environment, NOMA would have to encourage managers to be responsive to employees' creativity and to guide the employee in evaluating the novelty and relevance of the ideas.²³ Moreover, the Museum should also provide opportunities for staff to receive supplementary training and skill development.²⁴ NOMA is missing an opportunity to introduce employees who are hesitant about change to new skills in technology and basic interaction practices in the 21st century. Employee development is left to be interpreted by each Assistant Director.

Moreover, many managers do not delegate responsibility well. Employees are not given the opportunity to develop leadership skills or creative thinking abilities because managers do not seem to trust their staff to work on their own. Museums have the same responsibility as for-profit organizations to their employees. Museums should nurture "professional intellect" in its employees by empowering them to develop leadership skills by giving them more independence and authority.²⁵

Additionally, the employees need clear articulation of what the Museum's mission, vision, and goals means. Employees do their jobs without any clear purpose or understanding of how their roles contribute to the Museum's overall success. Inherently, the Museum's employees are dedicated to its mission because most employees want to be there out of love for the Museum and what it does. The leaders of the Museum, the Director and Assistant Directors,

²² Greg R. Oldham, "Stimulating and Supporting Creativity in Organizations," in *Managing Knowledge for Sustained Competitive Advantage: Designing Strategies for Effective Human Resource Management*, ed. Susan E. Jackson, Michael A. Hitt, and Angelo S. DeNisi (San Francisco: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 2003), 243-244.

²³ Ibid., 247-248.

²⁴ Lord and Lord, 37.

²⁵ Robert Janes, "Embracing Organizational Change in Museums: A work in progress," in *Museum Management and Marketing*, ed. Richard Sandell and Robert R. Janes (Electronic ed., London and New York: Taylor and Francis Routledge, 2007), 74-75.

must determine goals and visions for the different departments, provide ways encourage participation, and create communication channels.²⁶ Many times, each department becomes so concentrated on creating its own objectives that it loses focus on the mission for the entire Museum. Having a clearly articulated mission and set of objectives can help to unify the departments for the advancement of the Museum.²⁷ NOMA's managers will have to take responsibility in setting up a working environment that incorporates clear ideals that unify and motivate employees. However, change cannot happen without continuous experimentation, openness, and shared purpose.²⁸

NOMA cannot avoid great change as its current Director is retiring and a new Director must establish her own management style. The new Director has the opportunity to break down the existing barriers in the Museum; however, change usually brings about fear and distrust within museum employees. When the Glenbow Museum in Canada underwent a management overhaul, the employees endured the stress of uncertainty. Not all of the employees agreed with the changes and left. Once the changes had been accepted by the staff, the Museum functioned more efficiently and effectively. NOMA will certainly face similar challenges from the impending management change.²⁹

²⁶ James A. Phills, *Integrating Mission and Strategy for Nonprofit Organizations* (New York Oxford Press, 2007), 158.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 161.

²⁸ Janes, 79.

²⁹ Susan Kooyman, Joe Konrad, et al. "Museum Staff Perspectives on Organizational Change," in *Museum Management and Marketing*, eds. Richard Sandell and Robert R. Janes (Electronic ed., London and New York Taylor and Francis Routledge, 2007), 82-97.

Public Programming

NOMA's broader challenge lies in providing easier access to its facilities and collection through its public programming. Currently, most of NOMA's public programming focuses on reaching schools and people already interested in the Museum and art. The Museum has proven successful in these endeavors, especially since the more affluent and educated are still more likely to visit the Museum.³⁰ However, it is missing important market segments: families, young people, and people not familiar with art. While these objectives are discussed in the Museum, they are not realized through concerted efforts. NOMA should put together audience development strategies that not only focus on expanding its patron base, but also encourage repeat visits.³¹

If the Museum wants to draw a broader audience, it must listen to what that audience wants and be open to adjusting to the audiences' needs and interests. Consumer research should become an important avenue in gathering information on potential Museum visitors.³² This can be done through different strategies. First, NOMA should create communication channels between its employees and Board of Trustees and the community, specifically targeted groups. NOMA already engages adolescents through the Teen Advisory Board, but it needs to find a way to make the gathered information usable. Also, NOMA should create surveys to distribute to activity participants and other stakeholders, such as current and past members. The Museum has

³⁰ Caroline Lang, "The Public Access Debate," in *The Responsive Museum: Working with Audiences in the Twenty-First Century*, eds. Caroline Lang, John Reeve, and Vicky Woollard (Electronic ed., Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2006), 36.

³¹ Eva M. Reusser, "Strategic Management for Visitor-oriented Museums: A change of focus," in *Museum Management and Marketing* eds. Richard Sandell and Robert R. Janes (Electronic ed., London and New York: Taylor and Francis Routledge, 2007), 156.

³² Michael Tooby, "Where Does the Museum End?" in *The Responsive Museum: Working with Audience in the Twenty-First Century*, eds. Caroline Lang, John Reeve, and Vicky Wollard (Electronic ed., Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2006), 139.

already benefited from having a younger curator who has been able to encourage involvement in NOMA's activities. More employees who are connected with families or youth should be given an important role in audience development. Importantly, however, all Museum staff should embrace the task of audience research.³³ Without an audience, the Museum ceases to have social significance.

NOMA's public programming most often revolves around temporary exhibits' openings and closings and school tours. The Education Department is currently establishing art-making activities and helps organize lectures by the curators. However, this programming should be held on a more consistent basis and be geared for specific audiences. The High Museum of Art in Atlanta, Georgia has regularly scheduled programming for adults and families. It holds daily docent-led tours called HIGHlights, weekend family tours, Toddler Thursdays that include activities for parents to do with their toddlers, Second Sunday Fundays that feature family-oriented activities, and other lecture and film events for adults.³⁴ Additionally, the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston have programs specialized for young children and families like the Storytime tour which is a weekly child-friendly tour that also includes an activity.³⁵ NOMA's family-specific programming is limited and almost nonexistent. NOMA has the opportunity to reach out to this audience segment.

³³ Alec Coles, "...and there is no new thing under the sun," in *The Responsive Museum: Working with Audience in the Twenty-First Century*, eds. Caroline Lang, John Reeve, and Vicky Wollard (Electronic ed., Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2006), 151.

³⁴ The High Museum of Art, <http://www.high.org/> (accessed July 18, 2010).

³⁵ The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, "Family Programs," <http://www.mfah.org/education.asp?par1=3&par2=4&par3=1&par4=1&par5=1&par6=1&par7=&lgc=5&eid=¤tPage=> (accessed July 18, 2010).

Technological Upgrades

NOMA has serious technological inadequacies. The Museum has out-grown informal and casual communication practices but does not have the technological strength to make sure that the growing and dispersed staff is fully informed. NOMA must take a strategic approach to integrating new technology.³⁶ To be successful in introducing and implementing new ways of technological communication, the Director and Assistant Directors will have to create a framework of social support around the new technology systems.³⁷ This means that an environment of openness, director buy-in, demonstrated usefulness, and continuous support will be an important part in influencing the acceptance of new technology into daily work activities.³⁸

Of course, budget constraints hinder any attempt to make the necessary upgrades, but I believe these should be a major priority. The Museum experiences failed communications between staff members on a weekly basis. The computers are incapable of doing several tasks at once. As a result, NOMA suffers consequences of inefficiency from the neglect of its computers. Therefore, NOMA should begin saving and spending money on new computers and computer training for employees. To begin this process, the Museum should change email providers from Yahoo to Google. Google has more tools for collaboration and communication such as Google Docs and Calendars that can be accessed and edited by people in the shared network. Furthermore, Yahoo's email program loads very slowly in comparison to Google's, which adds to the Museum's already very slow computers.

³⁶ Christopher T. Street and Darren B. Meister, "Small Business Growth and Internal Transparency: The Role of Information Systems," *MIS Quarterly* 28, no. 3 (Sep. 2004), 475.

³⁷ Thomas C. Powell and Anne Dent-Micallef, "Information Technology as Competitive Advantage: The Role of Human, Business, and Technology Resources," *Strategic Management Journal* 18, no. 5 (May, 1997), 379-380.

³⁸ Street and Meister, 476.

Additionally, the Museum should have a website that serves a major means of marketing and communication. It should reflect the brand with which the Museum wants to be associated.³⁹ Currently, NOMA's website passably communicates information to visitors. The website has clearly labeled sections that contain relevant information. However, most of the information is contained in long columns of text with few pictures. Exhibition information is limited to a couple of paragraphs and is sometimes stuck between other long columns describing additional exhibitions. Each exhibition should be listed with a link to a page dedicated solely to the specific exhibition so that visitors do not have to dig through extraneous text to find the information for which they are looking. The different departments should also be responsible for checking the website to make sure the information is not out-dated or missing important details. Slowly, NOMA is making efforts to improve its online bearing; but, updating its contents and design sometimes takes too long. The current website indicates that Museum does not emphasize innovation, modernity in technology, or change. (Appendix C)

Museums struggle with deciding how much information to put on their websites, fearing that too much information will discourage visitors from coming to the Museum in person to satisfy their curiosity or desire to learn.⁴⁰ Museum administrators fear that too much information and pictures of the works reduced to thumbnail size on a computer screen could perhaps keep the viewer from acquiring the relationship with a work that results from experiencing the work in person. However, viewers are already distanced from the displays by glass or other means of protection, and even the process of being shuffled from one work to the next. Since people are

³⁹ Sue Runyard and Ylva French, *Marketing and Public Relations Handbook for Museum, Galleries and Heritage Attractions* (Walnut Creek: Altamira Press, 1999), 108.

⁴⁰ Maxwell L. Anderson, "Museums of the Future: The Impact of Technology on Museum Practices," *Daedalus* 128, no. 3 (1999), 129-130.

already distanced from the Museum and its holdings, digital images and virtual experiences have the potential to increase interest in seeing the original similarly to the effect that slides and postcards have had.⁴¹ Online encounters with a museum's art do not replace museum visits, but instead essentially serve as a gateway and an introduction to the in-person experience. Currently, NOMA does not include very detailed information about its collections or exhibitions on its website. The website should include more pictures of the Museum's collection and galleries and give the option of learning more about the works. Pictures are important because they give a visual connection to the Museum that can help the visitor feel more comfortable and confident when he or she comes to see the actual site and authentic works.

Other museums have found success in implementing innovative solutions to website technology. For example, the Smithsonian recognized that it was missing important contact with visitors, so it began to collaborate with its audience to design and utilize online applications. After some initial failures to understand the needs of its audience and to attain buy-in from its stakeholders, the Smithsonian revamped its efforts and successfully implemented technological improvements that allow its audience to find easily the information needed to enhance and inform the audience's relationship with the Museum. NOMA can learn from the Smithsonian's experience. Technological upgrades should not be impersonal improvements but should have a clear strategic implementation plan that offers benefits that extend to the audience, employees, and all other stakeholders.⁴²

⁴¹ Anderson, 141-145.

⁴² Michael Edson, "Fast, Open, and Transparent: Developing the Smithsonian's Web and New Media Strategy," (paper presented at the Museums and the Web 2010 conference, Denver, CO, April 17, 2010), <http://www.archimuse.com/mw2010/papers/edson/edson.html> (accessed July 17, 2010).

CONCLUSION

To initiate improvements, NOMA needs to set steadfast goals and priorities with clear workplans and benchmarks that are explicitly communicated to the employees. Technological upgrade plans provide a good starting point because a plan can be easily formulated and the effects are plain to recognize. Public programming expansion is always an important priority to NOMA, but the Museum must find a way to review itself on a regular basis. Improved human resource practices will have to be developed over time.

Overall, NOMA is an important cultural institution that has much to contribute to the surrounding community. However, the Museum has many opportunities to improve itself as an organization. Improvements will not come without some resistance, but they will ultimately help the Museum enter a new age of organizational efficiency and social relevance.

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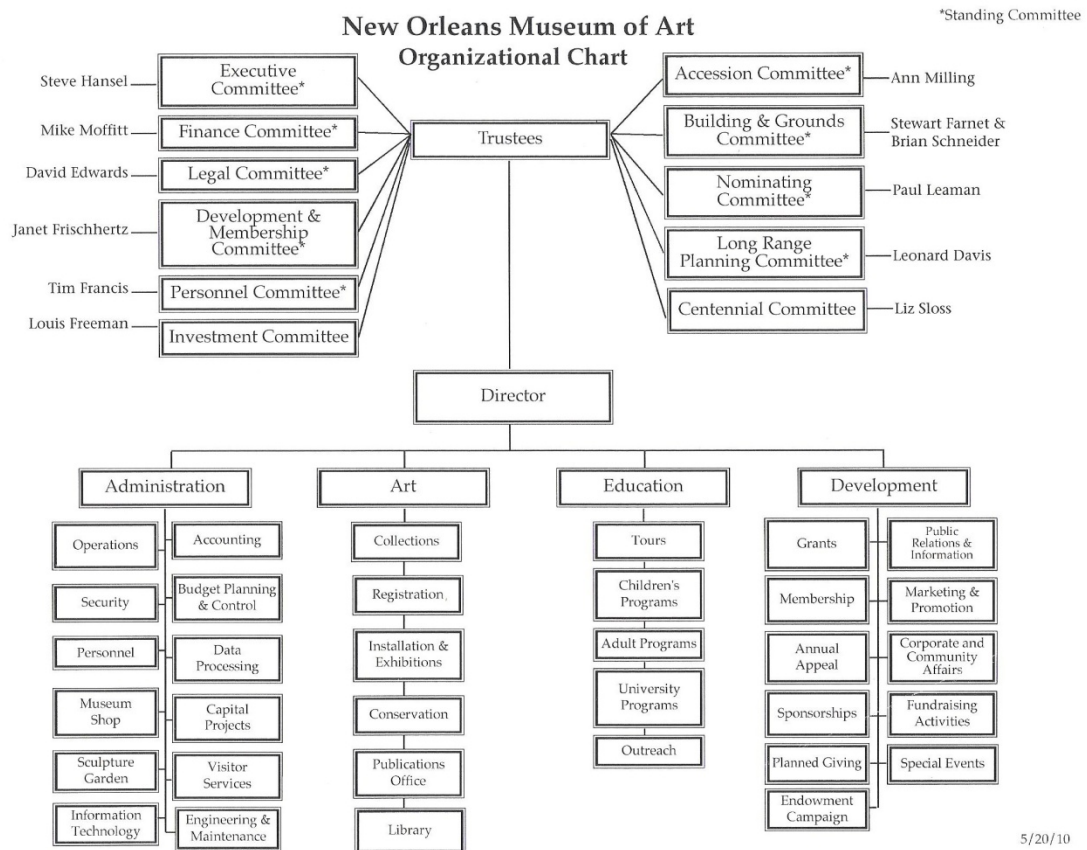
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APPENDIX A

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



APPENDIX B

RECORD OF TWEETS

During the Super Bowl, Director John Bullard of NOMA and Director Maxwell Anderson of the Indianapolis Museum of Art made Super Bowl wagers of art from each museum's collection.

RT @TylerGreenDC Would love to see @IMAMuseum and @NOMA1910 make a Super Bowl bet. Like a painting-loan-to-the-winning city. ~ Hmm... 9:39 AM Jan 26th via web

RT @MaxAndersonUSA: @TylerGreenDC Prepared to lend painting by Ingrid Calame to NOMA, for 3 months as of 7/1/10: <http://tinyurl.com/yaend3u> 8:47 AM Jan 25th via TweetDeck

RT @TylerGreenDC: @MaxAndersonUSA So if @NOMA1910 agrees, painting goes on loan just a bit before 2010 NFL camps to open... #Indy #colts 9:01 AM Jan 25th via TweetDeck

RT @MaxAndersonUSA: @TylerGreenDC No need to get ahead of ourselves. We're already spackling the wall where the NOMA loan will hang. #indy 9:01 AM Jan 25th via TweetDeck

@imamuseum, we will bet a 3 mo. loan of our \$4 million Renoir painting, Seamstress at Window, circa 1908. @MaxAndersonUSA, Go Saints! 10:45 AM Jan 26th via Twitter for iPhone

RT @MaxAndersonUSA: @NOMA1910 We'll see the sentimental blancmange by that "China Painter" & raise you: <http://tinyurl.com/yb6zj37> 1:06 PM Jan 26th via TweetDeck

Nay @MaxAndersonUSA - How about our Odilon Redon pastel, Beasts at the Bottom of the Sea, for a @imamuseum pointillist painting? 3:36 PM Jan 26th via web

Let's get serious @MaxAndersonUSA - works that would truly be missed! What would u like @imamuseum? A Monet, a Cassatt, a Picasso, a Miro? 3:50 PM Jan 26th via web

RT @hragv @TylerGreenDC @imamuseum offering's WAY lamer than @noma1910's. How about IMA's Gauguin? Renoir 4 Gauguin seems fair, no? #touche 4:10 PM Jan 26th via web

Sorry @imamuseum - Marie is too fragile for travel, much like Farve. What about Claude Lorrain, Ideal View of Tivoli, @MaxAndersonUSA ? 11:28 AM Jan 27th via Twitter for iPhone

RT@MaxAndersonUSA: @NOMA1910 Deal--Claude for Turner. 2 masters in spirited competition across the channel, & between our cities. Go Colts! 1:17 PM Jan 27th via TweetDeck

Trash talk began after the wager was made and heightened as the Super Bowl drew closer.

Woot! Let the games begin already. Perhaps our @18PeytonManning can deliver the Turner to @NOMA1910? Go Saints! #whodat 12:44 PM Jan 27th via web

Hey @imamuseum - Here's our NOMA team wishing you the best of luck this weekend. Go Saints! #whodat <http://yfrog.com/4fibqwj> 12:51 PM Feb 5th via Twitter for iPhone

Hey @NOMA1910: Nice pic! But can you play football? Check out staff playing in the snow! <http://twitpic.com/11ifaq> #GoColts 1:01 PM Feb 5th via TweetDeck

@imamuseum looks cold there! Leave football to the professionals. Come pre-game in our sunshine! <http://yfrog.com/35gh6wj> 1:46 PM Feb 5th via Twitter for iPhone in reply to imamuseum

NOMA won the wager and received the “The Fifth Plague of Egypt” by J.M.W. Turner to be on display for three months.

Looking good! RT @NOMA1910: We started off the day w/ hyping the beautiful Turner on loan from @IMAMuseum. <http://yfrog.com/ev5n9j> 1:50 PM Mar 25th via TweetDeck

@IMAMuseum Our paintings r AMAZING 2gether! Can we keep urs? Sneak peak. Official unveiling 2morrow @10! <http://yfrog.com/es35wj> Wednesday, March 24, 2010 1:59:20 PM

Thurs @ 10am come see us unveil the spoils of our Super Bowl bet with @imamuseum Here's the play-by-play: <http://budurl.com/IMAbet> 2:49 PM Mar 23rd via web

The wagering received media attention all over the world.

We're fired up in Indy! Our Super Bowl bet with @NOMA1910 has made the ESPN blog. <http://bit.ly/biHwux> (via @tylergreendc) 9:30 AM Jan 27th via TweetDeck

The Super Bowl bet keeps gaining momentum. Read what the @WSJ has to say here: <http://bit.ly/d97iE6> 4:24 PM Jan 27th via web

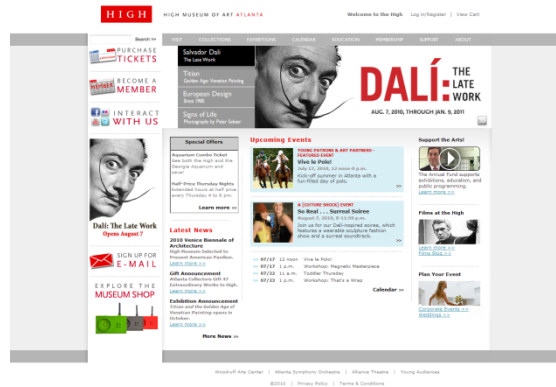
Be sure to listen to @NPR this afternoon. Robert Siegel talks w John Bullard & @MaxAndersonUSA about our Superbowl bet! 12:47 PM Jan 28th via Twitter for iPhone

About to do BBC Skype interview w @imamuseum Director @MaxAndersonUSA. Stay tuned & thanx again @TylerGreenDC <http://tinyurl.com/ydvkx35> 11:16 AM Feb 5th via web⁴³

⁴³ Tweets were retrieved from NOMA's twitter page <http://twitter.com/NOMA1910>, and the Indianapolis Museum of Art's twitter page <http://twitter.com/imamuseum>, accessed July 7, 2010.

APPENDIX C

SCREENSHOTS OF MUSEUM WEBSITES



This is a screen shot of the front page the High Museum of Art's website.

<http://www.high.org/>
Accessed July 17, 2010

This is a screen shot of the front page of NOMA's website.

<http://www.noma.org/>
Accessed July 7, 2010

VITA

Elise Solomon was born in Houston, Texas. She obtained her Bachelor of Science degree in Business Management from Florida State University in 2007. She began the Arts Administration graduate program at the University of New Orleans to pursue her Master of Arts.