

# Initiatives of Syracuse, Detroit museums might offer new strategies for Everson



The Detroit Institute of Arts placed a reproduction of "The Fisherman's Wedding Party," by Thomas Moran, along the Mill Pond Pathway in Milford, Mich., in 2011. The outdoor installation is part of the museum's "Inside/Out" program that places reproductions of the DIA's permanent collection throughout Metro Detroit. *(Courtesy photo)*

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SYRACUSE, N.Y. -- [Everson Museum of Art](#) possesses a trove of treasures any one would be proud to have in his or her community. [Five masterpieces](#) from its permanent collection, including the building designed by renowned architect I.M. Pei, were featured on [syracuse.com](#) to remind Central New Yorkers of what's inside the downtown museum.

Everson is at a critical juncture in its 117-year history. It must solve [a \\$500,000 deficit](#) for 2013 and 2014, which forced its board to cancel two touring exhibitions this year. If that's not enough, Everson is without an executive director after Steven Kern resigned at the beginning of the year.

The community's response -- from citizens, to arts, civic and government leaders -- has been mixed since these developments came to light in January. A cross-section of opinions on the Everson's past and future continue to be posted on Syracuse.com.

Everyone has an idea how to steer the arts museum in a new direction. In search of what's been tried elsewhere, we looked at two museums taking different approaches. One local museum is generating revenue from its collection. And a big city museum is introducing its collection to neighboring communities on their home turf.

Here are their stories. Share with us your ideas and suggestions for developing innovative programs and increasing visitors at the Everson.

## **ONONDAGA HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION**

[Gregg Tripoli](#) applied his business acumen -- he had a career in finance and management in the United States, Europe and the Mideast -- before becoming executive director of [Onondaga Historical Association](#) in 2008.

"I wasn't use to corporate sponsorships and government subsidies and that sort of stuff," he said. "I've always been used to a for-profit business model where you make money the old-fashioned way. And so, I applied those principles and they're basic business principles."

The first order of business for Tripoli was to listen to general community concerns. He took these, added a few more and responded by opening a retail store, the Gift Gallery Museum Store, in 2011. Putting street front windows in the building, said Tripoli, improved visibility and attracted visitors and shoppers. Sales from OHA gift shop alone bring in \$45,000 to \$50,000 a year, said the executive director.



Onondaga Historical Association sells a reproduction of the Congress Beer tray and pilsner glasses in its Gift Gallery. The OHA has a vintage tray in its permanent collection. Photo courtesy of the Onondaga Historical Association

Many of the products sold in the Gift Gallery are inspired by OHA's own collection.

"We've collaborated with for-profit companies to work with them on using our collections as inspiration for them to manufacture products that will appeal to their markets as well as ours," said Tripoli.

For example, OHA worked with local chocolatier Emily Woloszyn, of [Lune Chocolat](#) in Manlius, to make a line of chocolates inspired by the original recipes of Mary Elizabeth Evans, an early chocolate maker, from the late 1800s. OHA also had a beer growler designed with the logo from the old Thomas Wine & Brewery. In a partnership with Empire Brewing Co., growler buyers could receive a free fill up. A New York City company re-created one of OHA's vintage beer trays and it has sold well here and there, said Tripoli.

This collaborative monetization of the OHA collaboration generates additional revenue as the manufacturers share with OHA a portion of profits from sales at their retail outlets.



Onondaga Historical Association sells Mary Elizabeth's Candies, handmade chocolates by Lune Chocolat, of Manlius. Photo courtesy of Onondaga Historical Association

Additional initiatives include arranging for reduced fees at a nearby parking garage for OHA visitors and organizing exhibitions at [Syracuse Stage](#) that connects the theater's different productions with relevant historic events in Central New York.

After these initiatives were completed, Tripoli said OHA attendance increased by 246 percent and continues to grow.

At monthly staff meetings, it's full financial disclosure. Tripoli said OHA's 12 staffers hear about the bottom line and they are all expected to generate ideas of how to bring in dollars.

"It's all about the money," he said. "You've got to know your numbers." Tripoli considers development to be every employee's responsibility.

## **DETROIT INSTITUTE OF ARTS**

[Detroit Institute of Arts](#) took its collection to the streets with its "Inside/Out" program. It's not exactly the genuine article but reproductions of DIA masterpieces are installed as temporary outdoor exhibitions throughout the city of Detroit and its suburbs. Paintings can be found on an exterior wall of a store, on rock faces in parks or in the landscape of a building.

DIA Director Graham Beal initiated the program after seeing the National Gallery's "Grand Tour" in London in 2007. The DIA launched its version, "[Inside/Out](#)," as part of the museum's

125th anniversary celebration in 2010. Originally, 40 works of art were installed in 40 communities. Now, five to eight works of art are placed in close proximity in a community, allowing residents to experience "Inside/Out" as a walkable gallery. DIA has installed artwork in 750 locations in 98 communities since 2010.

"The idea of using it as an opportunity for people to enjoy their own communities by looking at the DIA collection has been really favorably received," said Kathryn Dimond, director of community relations at DIA.

At this point, DIA has reproduced about 85 pieces -- paintings, prints and a couple tapestries. A printer reproduces the life-size art work as a vinyl image that is laminated on aluminum plates. This year "Inside/Out" will have two seasons, April through July and August through October.

"If you leave them up too long, people start, kind of, viewing them as a poster or like a billboard and start losing the spontaneity of it," said Dimond.

The program's yearly budget is \$150,000 for staff, installation and reproduction costs and programming. The DIA footed the bill the first year and the local utility, DTE Energy Co., covered the expense the following year. The [Knight Foundation](#) has underwritten "Inside/ Out" the last two years.

Dimond said "Inside/Out" has been an important component of DIA's community engagement. While curators and staff initially decide on the placement of the artworks, communities can make requests.

"We really respond to the community," said Dimond.

Measuring the success of the program and any increase in museum attendance is difficult, she said. The DIA uses indicators, such as Facebook "likes," media attention and community participation, to gauge the popularity of "Inside/Out." DIA also offers free museum admission to participating communities. The Taft Museum of Art in Cincinnati and the [Walters Art Museum](#) in Baltimore have copied the DIA program.

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