

BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 8

MINUTES OF THE LIBRARIES & CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON MAY 4, 2017 AT THE DERFNER MUSEUM, 5901 PALISADE AVENUE (Pending Committee Approval)

In Attendance:

Marvin Goodman,	CB 8, Committee Chair
Martin Wolpoff,	CB 8, Committee Member
Peter Pamphile,	Library Manager, Van Cortlandt Library
Susan Chevelowe,	Museum Director, Derfner Museum

Committee Members Absent

Amy Joy Robateau

The meeting began at 5:40 PM. The minutes of the April meeting were postponed for a vote.

Susan Chevelowe, the museum director, was introduced. The current exhibition is called "Across the Divide-- Borders and Boundaries in Contemporary Art". The 17 artists whose works are on display were born in various parts of the world. These include Kansas City, Memphis, New York City, Youngstown, Chicago, Bloomfield, Iowa, London, Tel Aviv, Bombay, India, Zagreb, Croatia, Buenos Aires, and St. Petersburg, Russia. Most are Jewish. The exhibit highlights that the borders and boundaries of the community from which we come define who we are. When you cross the divide into other communities, you redefine yourself. The works on exhibit are both religious and cultural. For example, one Jewish artist in Israel took a male religious garment (a tallit) and, in a child's size, embroidered designs on it and included designs inspired to promote peace between Israelis and Palestinians. Some artifacts define and comment artistically about the religious "Eruv", the only area within which you can carry anything on a Sabbath or holiday. The artist uses this as a metaphor as to what is happening in his community among different cultures and the boundaries between the public and the private. She continued the tour for us about the cultural and boundaries effects of other artists and how each used a variety of different materials and media to express these ideas. For example, there are photos of black cowboys, photos of activists along the pipelines, etc. There are photos of the original Lubavitch home at 770 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn and how there are architectural replicas, some with cultural modifications, in various Lubavitch communities around the world. Various videos continued to show these ideas in places around the world. For example, there is a wall in northern Africa that separated Spanish territory from African territory. One artist drew this idea on a silk scarf to show how fragile such boundaries can be.

The next exhibit on display was the metalpoint paintings of Susan Schwalb. The committee chose not to have a detailed tour of this exhibit, which runs through June 30. The museum is open Sunday through Thursday, from 10:30 A.M. to 4:30 P.M. Admission is free. We were all encouraged to see this exhibit, as well as permanent exhibits.

The Chair returned the meeting to libraries and mentioned his visit to the Francis Marin Library on May 2 at a ceremony sponsored by Councilman Fernando Cabrera in recognition of National Libraries Week, where he awarded proclamations of merit to five librarians, one of whom was Clea Counts, the children's librarian of Jerome Park Library. The head librarian of his district presented the councilman with a libraries' T-shirt which says "Invest in Libraries".

Martin Wolpoff indicated that the Law, Rules, and Ethics Committee was invited to give lessons in civics at the Kingsbridge Library and at the Riverdale library.

Peter Pamphile reminded the committee that this is "Libraries Advocacy Month" and that there is a movement to stimulate financial investments in libraries by writing to the Mayor and the Council Members to show how important libraries are. He also noted that there will be several summer reading programs for students of every grade level.

The Chair asked Peter if there was any information on when the Van Cortlandt Library would be moving to its new location on Sedgwick Avenue. The time line for a completed renovation of the facility on this site was 2020, but absolutely no work has yet begun. There was discussion again as to why the three library systems of New York City are not unified into one system.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Marvin Goodman, Committee Chair