

A SELECT HISTORY OF FAMDA

THE FLORIDA ART MUSEUM DIRECTORS' ASSOCIATION

Compiled by Roy Craven C. Craven, Jr., with assistance from Allys Paladino-Craig, for the years through 1990, Garry Libby for the years from 1990 to 1997, and by Jennifer Potter, administrative intern to Rebecca Nagy, for the years from 2007 to 2013.

In the late forties and into the fifties, before FAMDA became a recognizable entity, the Ringling Museum loomed singularly large upon the Florida art museum landscape, and the professional contributions of its' first two directors need to be remembered here.

Mr. Everett "Chick" Austin Jr., the first director of the Ringling Museum of Art, was appointed director when the museum opened in 1946. He remained in the position, and guided the museum through its emergence as a mature and professional institution, until his death in 1957. During his tenure, and largely due to his efforts and energies, the Asolo theatre wing was added to the museum's physical complex. This was a tremendous cultural enhancement not only for the museum's mission in Sarasota, but also for the significant enrichment of the theatre arts in the State of Florida.

When Mr. Austin died in 1957, he was followed in the directorship by Mr. Kenneth Donahue. Donahue came to the Ringling at a time of expanding art activities across the State of Florida, and he immediately committed his enthusiasm toward making the museum a center for many diverse art events.

One memorable activity sponsored by the Ringling at the time, in cooperation with the art departments of the Florida State University and the University of Florida, was the Annual Art Symposium. Each spring, art students from both campuses and the public gathered in Sarasota for a week of lectures and special exhibitions presented by leading scholars and artists. Exemplary among the Symposium's various activities was a singular exhibition of the then current New York School of Abstract Expressionists. Among the artists in attendance at various times were Phillip Guston, Alan Kaprow, Rico Lebrun, Ad Reinhardt, Corrado Marca-Relli, Robert Motherwell, Larry Rivers, and others. On other occasions, writers, museum curators, and scholars of various art historical perspectives, including Sir Anthony Blunt, Walter Friedlander, Robert Goldwater, Thomas B. Hess, Sam Hunter, H.W. Janson, and Russell Lynes were in attendance.

In 1964, Mr. Donahue relinquished his directorship of the Ringling Museum to become the director of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. About five years later, Mr. Rexford Stead, a founding member of FAMDA, departed from his "Inaugural directorship" at the Museum of Fine Arts St. Petersburg to join Mr. Donahue in Los Angeles. Thus, two talented individuals, who had made lasting contributions to the early art museum profession in Florida, were attracted to California to administer one of that state's major art museums.

Prior to World War II, the state of Florida was hardly known for its art museums or collections. Only the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art (est. 1930), in Sarasota, with an international reputation for its

collection of Baroque art, and the gilt-edged assembly of the late 19th and early 20th century art in the Norton Gallery of Art (est. 1940), in West Palm Beach, were the most important and best known to the art world outside the state. Art exhibition activities were sparse among a handful of smaller institutions of varied status, some with collections but most without, and most operating as art centers for the instruction of art.ⁱ

The decade of the sixties, however, saw a quantitative and qualitative interest in the establishment and construction of art museums and galleries, and by the end of the decade, over fourteen new art Museum facilities had been created. The early sixties, for example, saw the opening of the Cummer Gallery of Art in Jacksonville, the Museum of Fine Arts in St. Petersburg, and the University Gallery at the University of Florida. The last facility marked the start of professional art gallery buildings being constructed at the State University System's institutions and subsequently at community colleges.

Beginning around 1964, a small group of about a half-dozen or so directors of art museums and galleries from across the state, began to meet informally on several occasions during the year.ⁱⁱ They would generally gather at one or the other's home institution to share lunch and exchange information regarding their common interests of arranging and booking exhibitions and other topic related to improving the professional qualities of their operations.

In 1964, Jim Camp was "elected" FAMDA's first "chairman". Being "chairman", however, was a rather casual designation in those first years because whoever extended an invitation to the "members" for a visit to an institution normally acted as chairman to arrange logistics for the meeting and set the agenda. These first meetings generally took place on the occasion of a major exhibition opening, with members attending the opening in the evening followed by a FAMDA meeting the following morning and adjournment after lunch. Jerry Dodge and Jim Camp were especially active and generous in calling the group together. FAMDA met on five occasions in 1964, and six times during 1965.

These early meetings were involved with many substantive matters such as sharing exhibitions, technical matters such as insurance coverage, appropriate art packing and transport, etc. Another matter concerned the drafting of guidelines and ethics for visiting lectures and the jurying of exhibitions by FAMDA members (i.e. "no jurying within a fifty mile radius of a member's home institution and a minimum honorarium of \$50, plus expenses" ... by 1970, this was revised to "a 100 mile radius and a \$100 honorarium").

FAMDA meetings were frequently scheduled to take place during the SEMC and AAM annual meetings. An interesting historical fact recalled from a FAMDA meeting held in 1964, during the SEMC conference in Savannah, was from an informal survey made of art museum directors' salaries across the southeast. It was noted that highest reported salary was \$16,000 a year.

One of the most important competitive exhibitions of contemporary art in the southeastern U.S. in the sixties was the Florida Fair Exhibition in Tampa. FAMDA members (particularly Jim Camp) were advisors to the Fair's organizers and remained so until it ceased operation in the early 1970s. This exhibition was a very positive stimulus for the creation of art in the state of Florida, especially in regard to younger emerging artists. It not only brought financial rewards to their efforts but provided important out-of-

state leaders in the arts as jurors (for example, George Segal and Philip Pearlstein). It also called attention to the quality of contemporary art being created in Florida, not only within the state but beyond.

By 1965, FAMDA members were very much engaged and active in a state-wide organization named the Florida Arts Council (the precursor group which preceded the current body within Florida's Department of State) because they were determined that Florida should obtain its quota of arts funding available from the NEA for each state. Also, they were pressing for a formal state agency, designed for this function, to be implemented. The Florida Development Commission, trying to function in that capacity at the interim, had appointed Mrs. Beverly Gilman as coordinator to work in liaison with state art institutions and plan toward the establishment of such a state agency.

A significant accomplishment of FAMDA, working with the Florida Development Commission, was to mount a major showing of seventeen leading Florida artists in Washington D.C.ⁱⁱⁱ Entitled FLORIDA 17, this first major group exhibition of Florida artists, out the state, had its venue in the galleries of the Pan American union, known today as the Organization of the American States.

Smarting from criticism from amateur and conservative art elements in Tampa, the Florida Fair had abandoned its state-wide art competition, and FAMDA (especially David Reese in Orlando) undertook to establish an alternate exhibition for Florida's craftsmen and artists. David Reese negotiated successfully with the Florida Gas Company in Orlando to sponsor a new state-wide competitive exhibition entitled FLORIDA CREATES, which would premiere in Orlando and circulate to FAMDA organizations across the state for a year. The Gas Company was also generous in providing purchase awards which led to their corporate collection of quality art. FLORIDA CREATES became an important catalyst for many emerging Florida artists of the time (i.e. Duane Hanson) and greatly enhanced the art scene for the Florida art public in those locales where it was presented.

Curtis Coley of the Ringling Museum of Art was one of the many newer members of FAMDA by the beginning of the 1970s.^{iv} In 1972, Coley, at the FAMDA meeting in Miami, first proposed that the state of Florida establish an Art Restoration Laboratory at the Ringling Museum to serve the museums in Florida, similar to the one at Oberlin College which served museums in Ohio and New York. This in time became a reality, and such a state asset has operated at the Ringling since the 1990s.

The year 1972 was also when the ARTS DAY in Tallahassee originated under the sponsorship of Secretary of State Dick Stone and the Division of Cultural Affairs. FAMDA was in the forefront, insisting that a professional art person be made Director of the Division of Cultural Affairs. Also, in the early days of the Division of Cultural Affairs, FAMDA was vocal in insisting that there needed to be a distinction between the Division of Cultural Affairs and the Fine Arts Council.

By 1976, Suzanne Teate Bos was serving in the Division of Cultural Affairs as a Coordinator for state-wide Museum Services. This was a unique position within the Division which would last until 1979, when the position was expanded to "Visual Arts" and assigned to Marsha Orr.

For almost two decades, FAMDA had existed as an informal assembly of individuals, but in 1977, on April 21, it became an incorporated entity. The articles of incorporation were ably drafted by one of FAMDA's friends and supporters, Mr. Arthur Jacobs, an attorney serving on the Florida Arts Council and a later appointee to the NEA board in Washington D.C. With incorporation came the necessity for administrative officers, and Dick Madigan was appointed to be FAMDA's first President (see Appendix for listing of FAMDA presidents).

Before this important development, FAMDA had lost some of its original members, but during the 1970s and 1980s, had acquired many new ones.^v

Being incorporated, FAMDA needed to frame a set of By-Laws by which it defined its goals and membership, and in September 1980, a committee composed of Lee Malone, Jim Brown, Frederick Walkley, and Roy Craven (Chairman), was assigned the task. The committee drafted FAMDA's By-Laws using those of the National Association of Art Museum Directors as their model but adjusting models to accommodate diversified sizes of institutions and other regional considerations.

During this time period, George Firestone was Secretary of State, and he actively expanded the Division of Cultural Affairs programming and enhanced funding for the arts. One item that emerged as a heated issue on the Fine Arts Council's agenda, and still resurfaces occasionally, is the assertion that State institutions, University and Community College Galleries are "state-supported institutions", and when they are awarded FAC grants, they are "double-dipping" and should therefore be limited in the amount of funding they receive.

These same smaller state galleries, and others, felt that FAMDA's By-Laws represented a prejudice for size since "a minimal staff of two full-time professionals – and a collection of art or a support group" was required for membership. Also other museums across the state, such as the Science and Children's museums, objected to FAMDA's By-Laws because they felt that they should be accommodated into the organization, even though they were not art-oriented in their missions. It appeared that some believed that FAMDA, which has "organized" early and had a long and close interest in, and involvement with, the Florida Fine Arts Council, had special entrée into the granting process (which has never been the case). They perceived, by gaining membership in FAMDA, they would acquire an advantage in the growing competitiveness of "grantsmanship." Eventually, after some debate concerning FAMDA membership, a number of positive aspects developed out of these initial reactions, among which was the creation of an umbrella organization for all of Florida museums called The Florida Museum Association (presently Florida Association of Museums).

As the 1980s proceeded, one very important aspect of the Florida Arts Council's funding for museums was the establishment of the Major Institutions category. This was an item that many past FAMDA members had worked hard to see created. The rationale for this category was the major museums, somewhat parallel to major orchestras and theatre groups, have substantive investments of facilities, collections, staffing, programs, etc., and they have earned the right to receive continuing basic support from the FAC to complement and assure their on-going professional contributions to the state. This

status vividly points up the success of the cultural renaissance in the visual arts, created in Florida, and FAMDA can be justly proud of its contributions.

Another important development for Florida's museums in the 1980s was the State of Florida's Indemnification Program. Again FAMDA took an interest in and assisted with the design and implementation of this program. Under this service, the State of Florida guarantees the insurance coverage for major exhibitions where the insurance values are excessive and the sponsoring institution's insurance resources are normally limited.

By 1990, there were more than 50 art galleries and museums (public, private, municipal, and state-assisted) in Florida. Of these institutions 22 were members. Fourteen of Florida's art museums and galleries were also accredited by the American Association of Museums at this time.

Throughout the 1990s, FAMDA worked to strengthen its role as an organization through collaborations at the state and national levels. In 1996, under the direction of its new coordinator Ruth Meyers, FAMDA organized a four-part workshop series on conservation, funded by the Florida Division of Cultural Affairs and the NEA. FAMDA also assumed sponsorship of the Daytona Beach Museum of Arts and Sciences' Annual Conference on Current Topics, addressing topics such as Visitor-Centered Education, the Growing Museum, Visual-Learning through Museums with noted Harvard educator Abigail Hausen, and Art-Centered Learning.

To further its advocacy for arts at the state level, FAMDA began in 1996 to host the Florida Visual Arts Fellowship Exhibition. Frank Holt, Public Art Coordinator of the City of Orlando, curated the inaugural exhibition. In subsequent years, guest curators included FAMDA members Karen Valdes, Ken Rollins and Amy Vigilante. In 1998, FAMDA sponsored the keynote address by Jack Nokes, executive director of the Texas Association of Museums, at the annual FAM conference as well as art-centered programming throughout the meeting.

FAMDA President Christina Orr-Cahill and Immediate Past-President Gary Libby served on the Florida Art Council's Strategic Planning Task Force, and in 1999 the organization assisted VISIT FLORIDA with development of a tour brochure on art museums in Florida for tourists to the state. At the national level FAMDA worked with FAM in leading a grassroots effort to build and support state museum associations. In 1997, IMLS funded the first ever national conference of state museum associations with 45 represented. In 1998, FAMDA and FAM received further IMLS funding to organize the second National Conference of State Museum Associations (NCSMA), held in Denver, for which a FAMDA member served on the national steering committee. In 1999 FAMDA successfully applied on behalf of NCSMA to create the first centralized online database of museum and museum association information.

1999-2007

Minutes from FAMDA meetings during these years are currently unavailable. FAMDA members who can help to fill in the history during this period are invited to submit information to Malinda Horton or Rebecca Nagy.

In 2007, during the Presidency of John Blades, changes were made in FAMDA's structure to ensure that the organization would remain effective and relevant for member art museum directors. FAMDA became an affiliate of FAM, and FAM Executive Director Malinda Horton was contracted to provide administrative support to FAMDA at the state level. The organization's By-Laws were also adjusted to require one annual meeting to be held alongside the yearly FAM conference and the biannual appointment of 3 officers (President, Vice-President, and Secretary/Treasurer). That year, Maarten van de Guchte was the first to be elected FAMDA President under this new system of governance.

2007 also marked the opening of the Fellowship Exhibition, a contractual effort between the Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs and FAMDA, at the Lighthouse Center for the Arts in Tequesta. This event provided support for 25 Florida artists and increased visibility for FAMDA at the state level, just as early exhibitions such as FLORIDA 17 and FLORIDA CREATES had done in previous years.

In 2009, despite previous changes to the organization's structure, the future of FAMDA still remained in question. In a report to the committee at the end of his two-year tenure, President van de Guchte challenged FAMDA to play a greater role in helping art museum directors develop the skills that they need to be effective in their jobs. He identified strategies such as emphasizing the social aspect of the organization, reaching out to new members, using social media more effectively, working with FAM to advocate for museums at the state level, and fundraising to grant fellowships and to support museum professionals.

With these new goals in mind, Daniel Stetson stepped into the position of President. At this time, the President' term of office was changed to three years to allow for greater continuity in the organization. Stetson primarily worked to revive a strong collaborative relationship between FAMDA and FAM. This goal was facilitated when Stetson was elected President of FAM, although a move out-of-state precluded his completion of both terms of office. As FAMDA president, Stetson also served on the FAM Foundation Board and as an ex officio member on the FAM board. During Stetson's tenure, FAMDA agreed to sponsor the key note speaker at the annual FAM conference whenever feasible. FAMDA sponsored Bill Eiland, director of the Georgia Museum of Art, as keynote speaker in 2010 and Alex Nyerges, director of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in 2011. Stetson also established a schedule of two FAMDA meetings each year, one in conjunction with the annual FAM conference and another in the spring hosted by a member museum. To date, spring meetings have been hosted by the Polk Museum of Art (2010), the St. Petersburg Museum of Fine Arts (2011), the Harn Museum of Art (2102) and the Vero Beach Museum of Art (2013). At the St. Petersburg and Gainesville meetings, directors were invited to bring curators, who met separately from the directors, then jointed the directors for combined discussion of issues in the field over lunch.

As Daniel Stetson left Florida in 2011 to become the Director of the Hunter Museum in Chattanooga, FAMDA Vice-President Rebecca Nagy assumed the role of President to complete one uncompleted year of Stetson's term and a full term. She also serves on the FAM Foundation Board and as an ex-officio

member of the FAM board. Nagy has focused on increasing membership and working with the executive committee and members to make the organization more relevant to its members. She has also followed Stetson's lead in encouraging FAMDA members to participate in the annual FAM conference and encourage their staff members to attend and present at the FAM conference, thereby enriching the art-related content of the annual meeting. As an initial step, scholarships were approved by the membership to provide financial assistance to staff from FAMDA member museums to attend annual FAM meetings. In conjunction with the Vero Beach meeting, FAMDA joined with FAM to co-sponsor a workshop on Museum Security, open to all FAM and FAMDA member directors or high level administrators. The workshop was held on Thursday afternoon so that directors could stay over for the Friday morning FAMDA meeting. During Nagy's presidency, a survey of FAMDA members was conducted to obtain feedback and guidance from members on directions for the organization. In addition, a Web committee developed guidelines for a FAMDA presence on the FAM website which is scheduled to go live in fall 2013.

ⁱ Among these art centers were: The Loch Haven Art Center (est. 1926), in Orlando; the George D. and Harriet W. Cornell Fine Arts Center Museum (est. 1932), at Rollins College, Winter Park; and the Society of the Four Arts (est. 1936), in Palm Beach. Shortly following these came The More Gallery of Art (est. 1942), in Winter Park; The Gulf Coast Art Center (est. 1948), in Clearwater; and the Jose and Emily Lowe Art Gallery (est. 1950), at the University of Miami, in Coral Gables.

ⁱⁱ Among the first individuals to gather were James Camp (University of South Florida); Roy Craven (University of Florida); Joseph Dodge (The Cummer Gallery of Art); Russell Hicken (The Jacksonville Art Museum); Robert Hunt (The Norton Gallery of Art); David Reese (The Loch Haven Art Center); and Rexford Stead (The Museum of Fine Arts at St. Petersburg). Very soon they were joined by Robert Parks (The Ringling Museum); Russell Plimpton (The Society of the Four Arts); Dr. August Freundlich (The Lowe Art Museum); Horace Jayne (The Museum of Fine Arts at St. Petersburg); and, later, Curtis Coley (The Ringling Museum). By the end of the 1960s, as new facilities and activities were added to the museum scene, others were coming as well.

ⁱⁱⁱ The exhibition featured the works of Harrison Covinton, Ernest Cox, Arthur Deshaies, Doris Leeper, Steve Lotz, Bryn Manly, Eugene Massin, Geoffrey Naylor, William Pachner, Frank Rampolla, Craig Rubadoux, Donald Saff, Syd Soloman, Bernard Voichysonk, Vernon Voelz, Hiram Williams, and Karl Zerbe.

^{iv} Other newer members include: John Baratte (Lowe Art Museum); Jerry Basset (University of South Florida); Darrell Bohlsen (Tampa Bay Art Center); George Bolge (Ft. Lauderdale Museum of Art); Grover Cole (Miami Art Center); Marena Grant (Loch Haven Art Center); Bruce Dempsey (Florida State University); Alan DuBois (Museum of Fine Arts in St. Petersburg); John Gordon (Society of the Four Arts); Don Herold (Daytona Beach Museum of Arts and Sciences); Hendrick Langerak (Pensacola Art Center); Lee Malone (Museum of Fine Arts in St. Petersburg); Peter Tomory (Ringling Museum); and Mark Vol Aldelmann (Pensacola).

^v New members during the 1970s and 1980s include: Dick Carroll (Ringling Museum); James Couper (Florida International); David Courtney (Boca Raton); Robert Frankel (Miami Center for the Arts); Robert Gabriel (Brevard Art Center); Roberta Griffin (Miami Dade Community College, North Campus); Shirley Howarth (Tampa Museum of Art); Ira Licht (The Lowe Gallery); Carol Malt (Hollywood Art Center); Andy Maass (Tampa Art Museum); Margaret Miller (University of South Florida); Dahlia Morgan (Florida International University Gallery); Ken Rollins (Polk Art Museum); Larry Ruggiero (Ringling Museum); Robert Schlargeter (Cummer Gallery); Karen Valdes (Miami Dade Community College, South Campus); Carl Weinhardt (Vizcaya); and others.

APPENDIX

FAMDA Presidents:

Dick Madigan, first President, 1977-

Lee Malone

Marena Grant Morrisey

Margaret Miller

Diane Camber

Ken Rollins

1990s

Bruce Dempsey

Andrew Maass

Gary Libby

Christina Orr-Cahill

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John Blades, 2005-2007

Maarten van de Guchte,

2007-2009 Daniel Stetson,

2009-2011 Rebecca Nagy, 2011 -

Lifetime Achievement Award Winners:

Lee Malone (Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg)

Roy Craven (University Gallery, University of Florida)

Gary Libby (Museum of Arts and Sciences, Daytona Beach)

2007 – **Arthur Blumenthal** (Cornell Museum, Rollins College); **Ken Rollins** (Gulf Coast Museum of Art, Pinellas County)

2009 – **John Schloder** (Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg)

2011 – **George Bolge** (Boca Raton Museum of Art)