



BUSINESS

Columnist:
Robert Miller

Robert Miller

Robert Miller writes about people and events of interest to the business community for *The Dallas Morning News*.

[Archive](#) | [E-mail](#)



Don't just look - connect with art, too

09:30 AM CST on Sunday, February 11, 2007

bmiller@dallasnews.com bmiller@dallasnews.com

Art patrons Kelli and Allen Questrom and Dallas Museum of Art executives Jack Lane and Bonnie Pitman have devoted much of their lives to the premise that understanding the creative process vastly increases the appreciation of art.

The Questroms – he was the retailing icon at such establishments as Neiman Marcus, Federated Department Stores and J.C. Penney – have pledged \$2,825,000 over five years to make that premise come true.

Next year, the DMA will launch the Center for Creative Connections, an experimental learning environment that provides interactive encounters with works of art and artists, said Mr. Lane, the Eugene McDermott Director of the DMA.

"The center will serve as a bridge between our everyday experiences of looking and the transformational experiences of seeing, creating and connecting deeply with works of art and with other participants," he said.

But back to the word *interactive*.



JOHN F. RHODES/DMN
From left: Marguerite

Hoffman, Gail Davitt and Jack Lane of the Dallas Museum of Art are shown with arts patron Kelli Questrom. Mrs. Questrom and her husband, Allen, have pledged \$2,825,000 toward the Center for Creative Connections.

Ms. Pitman, deputy director of the museum, said visitors of all ages will participate in hands-on exercises and create art.

A prototype installation called "Capturing Motion" has already been installed at the DMA. It centers around drawings of Isadora Duncan, the legendary avant-garde American dancer of the early 20th century.

"Unlike earlier exhibitions of these drawings, which focused on Isadora Duncan, the artist and the historical period, the new CCC installation focuses on movement," Ms. Pitman said. "For instance, visitors are able to model the dancer's positions with mannequins, sketch dancers in motion or deconstruct a film of dance to isolate individual poses."

Visitors can choose their method of expression, including computers, wooden models with movable parts and sketching with pen or pencil.

"All of the activities focus on revealing a fuller, deeper understanding of motion as seen in other works of art," she said.

Interactive space

Ms. Pitman said that about 5,000 square feet of the center will be dedicated to interactive exhibitions that focus on "helping viewers learn to look and experience works of art in the museum's collections."

It took four years of planning and fundraising, testing and evaluation to create the Center for Creative Connections, she said.

"The existing spaces in the center, such as the theater, will be refurbished and equipped for a wide range of programming; the art studio will be updated and improved; and a new tech lab – the entire Dallas Museum of Art will be wireless – and family center for young children will be added," Ms. Pitman said.

The DMA is counting on its outreach programs to bring in more visitors to the center and to form partnerships with community organizations, schools and visiting artists. Arts magnet schools and Advanced Placement Strategies Inc. will continue to present exhibitions by young artists at the DMA.

Ms. Pitman emphasized that the focus on the creative processes of the artist goes hand in hand with the interactive involvement of the visitors. Both roles are key to the layperson's understanding and appreciation of art.

"Installations will involve museum curators and educators working as equal partners to create exhibitions and learning programs in the galleries and online," she said.

"Exhibitions in the CCC will incorporate awareness, imagination, association, experimentation, play, synthesis and art-making in the visitor's experience.

"Specifically, the Questrom Foundation, which made the award, will endow the new senior education position of director of the CCC and provide five years of operating support," Ms. Pitman said.

In memory

Mr. Lane said the award was given in honor of the late Robert K. Hoffman, the Dallas businessman, civic leader and arts patron who died in August, and his wife, Marguerite, who is chairwoman of the DMA's board of trustees. Kelli Questrom is a member of the board.

"This award reflects the mutual desire of our foundation and the DMA to provide lifelong learning through innovative public education in the arts, with the anticipation that the DMA's approach will serve as a model for improvement in education nationally," Mrs. Questrom said.

"Arts education fosters the joy of discovery and recognition that there is strength in diversity, that the cultural differences between people add value to our lives and to our society. Museums can be about much more than merely showing art.

"The naming of the Center for Creative Connections says it well. We are all connected, and learning to live creatively and productively together is central to life's purpose," Mrs. Questrom said.