Quarterly, a publication of the Erie Art Museum, 20 East 5th Street, Erie, PA 16507, is published four times a year in May, August, November and February.
While over the course of the next several months you’ll see many changes at the Erie Art Museum please know we are keeping an eye on the past as we look to the future. Tremendous energy has gone into planning this upcoming year and I am pleased to say we’re already seeing results. Our goal? Broaden the definition of what the Museum is and does.

We’ve talked with members, local artists, community leaders, visitors and non-visitors, and the feedback has been consistent and heartening. People want more ways to engage with the Museum. They want more convenient hours, a wider selection of programs, and better in-gallery experiences. In response, we’ve spent the summer rethinking our offers. We added a monthly lecture series, open storage tours, extended hours on Thursdays and Fridays, and more.

You will also see changes in the presentation and interpretation of our collection. The second floor of the new addition will be turned into a rotating highlights gallery. We want to share the quality and depth of our collection on a more regular basis. Believe it or not, we have works by Goya, Hogarth, Whistler, Picasso, Matisse, Duchamp, Dali, Miro, Stieglitz, Klee, Rauschenberg, Frankenthaler, and Warhol to name just a few.

Lastly, I want all of you to know just how thrilled I am to be here, how wonderful the people of Erie have been, and how excited I am for what’s to come. This is a great museum with a great history. Now it’s time to build a great future.

Onward,

Joshua R. Helmer
Director and Chief Executive Officer
Tell us a little about the cataloguing situation upon your arrival?
There hasn’t been a registrar or assistant curator for a while, and with so many galleries to program, exhibitions always took priority over collections. There were about 200 objects that needed accessioning, boxes of old books and other objects without documentation, and no space in storage. Most of the 8,000 + objects in our collection have a basic record, but only a fraction are photographed, and most don’t have descriptions or condition reports.

What have been some of the biggest challenges when it comes to cataloguing the collection?
The database we were using just did not meet our needs. So we bought specialized museum software and migrated all our information. This, however, took a lot of time, and I am very grateful to our new Registrar Torie Pesta who just recently managed that project. The other challenge is the Tetris-meets-Rubik’s-Cube nature of art storage. One object must move before you can store the next. Properly housing the objects requires time, dedicated space, archival supplies, drawers, boxes, and shelving.

What’s it like to dig through storage?
Exciting and overwhelming. Think *Indiana Jones’ Temple of Doom*, but the treasures are buried behind 30-year-old exhibition posters, dusty books, knickknacks, rejected Spring Show entries, building plans, and historic archives.
Is there anything in the collection that you think will surprise people to know we have?
We have prints and drawings spanning centuries by many art-historical luminaries: Goya, Hogarth, Miro, Daumier, Picasso, Matisse, Stieglitz, Frankenthaler, Warhol, Rauschenberg, and yesterday we discovered a textile self-portrait by Chuck Close (see page 7). We are looking forward to reinstalling our collection and bringing a selection of our best works out of storage this spring.


What’s the strangest thing you’ve found so far?
A human skull from Mexico. It made its way into the collection with the James Baldwin gift. The skull spent three decades in storage wrapped in bubble wrap. We’ve contacted the Mexican consulate and are working together to find a respectful final resting place.

What does having the collection completely catalogued allow you to do?
Having the collection fully catalogued and photographed is key to creating compelling exhibitions. For example, we recently found 38 photographs by Alfred Stieglitz. I never saw them before because they were not photographed—ironic I know. They are spectacular and are going to make a really wonderful show. Being able to search the collection will also allow us to prioritize conservation, update insurance values, analyze collection strengths and weaknesses, and develop a collection strategy. The trick now is raising funds for this type of work.

ART TALK

WITH JOSH HELMER
Art Talk is a monthly lecture series dedicated to blowing your mind. Free for members and $5 for non-members plus the price of admission.

UN-CONFUSING CONFusing ART
Sept. 14 from 6 - 7 pm
Ever look at something in a museum and think to yourself “how is that art?” We all have. Join us for a lively discussion that promises to un-confuse even the most confusing art.

PHOTOGRAPHY MURDERED PAINTING, RIGHT?
Oct. 12 from 6 - 7 pm
Wrong. Join us as we discuss how the invention of photography raised one of the most important questions in the history of art—what does it mean to be a painting?

MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE
Nov. 9 from 6 - 7 pm
Join us as we discuss the first “nude selfie” in the history of art, the hottest piece of seventeenth-century Dutch porn you’ll ever see, and other deceptive works full of hidden meaning.

NEW HOURS
Starting September 1st, the Museum will be open:

THURSDAYS: 11:00 am – 9:00 pm
FRIDAYS: 11:00 am – 9:00 pm
SATURDAYS: 10:00 am – 5:00 pm
SUNDAYS: 10:00 am – 5:00 pm
Closed: Monday – Wednesday

HANDS-ON

WITH SUSAN BARNETT
Hands-On is a monthly opportunity to handle some of the best objects in our collection. $10 for members and $15 for non-members plus the price of admission. Capacity is limited to 15 people per session.

PRINTS
Sept. 28 from 6 - 7 pm
From Goya to Dali to Warhol, join us to get a rare hands-on look at some of the best prints in our collection.

SOUTH ASIAN SCULPTURE
Oct. 26 from 6 - 7 pm
South Asian sculptures were often treated as if alive. They were touched, clothed, and even fed. Join us as we get up close and personal with some of these sacred objects.

O’KEEFFE LETTERS
Nov. 30 from 6 - 7 pm
Georgia O’Keeffe was a prolific letter writer and we have several of her letters. Join us as we share these letters with the public for the first time.
ART CLASSES

ABSOLUTE BEGINNER DRAWING WITH EHREN KNAPP
This class will introduce you to basic drawing techniques and materials. You’ll learn the fundamentals of drawing including looking closely, drawing what you see, and learning to use a variety of drawing media such as pencils and conté crayons.
Class Meets 9/20, 9/27, 10/4, 10/11, 10/18, 10/25 from 5 - 6:30 pm $125 ($100 Members)
Materials not included.

ASIAN WATERCOLOR PAINTING WITH ESTHER HONG
This class will introduce you to the art of Asian watercolor painting. You’ll learn to paint traditional motifs such as bamboo, orchids, plum blossoms and chrysanthemums with traditional materials. Small class size allows for personalized instruction.
Class Meets: 9/13, 9/20, 9/27, 10/4, 10/11, 10/18 from 4 - 6 pm $125 ($100 Members)
Materials not included.

TO REGISTER: Go online: erieartmuseum.org, Call the Museum at 814-459-5477, or Stop by during Museum hours.

SECOND SUNDAYS

Second Sundays are perfect for spending time with your kids at the museum. Different art making activities every month and admission is Pay-What-You-Wish.

CRAZY FOR COLOR
Sept. 9 from 2 - 4 pm
This week we're playing with color. You and your kids will be using a super cool wax resist technique to transform watercolor paintings into something crazy colorful.

DIY HALLOWEEN COSTUMES
Oct. 14 from 2 - 4 pm
Halloween is right around the corner and your kids don’t have costumes?! No worries. We’ll have everything they need to do it themselves.

PINK BOYS & BLUE GIRLS
Nov. 11 from 2 - 4 pm
Make prints with local artist Roman Glass and introduce your kids to the idea that blue is not always for boys nor pink for girls.

HOLIDAYS

AT THE MUSEUM
TRICK-OR-TREAT
Oct. 28 from 1 - 3 pm
Trick-or-treat through the galleries with your kids or grandkids. Prizes for the best art inspired costumes.

MEMBERS ONLY THANKSGIVING
Nov. 16 from 6 - 9 pm
We are thankful for our members. So, let’s all get together for a little holiday pre-gaming. Food, music, art and each other—who could ask for more?

COLUMBUS DAY & VETERANS DAY
Oct. 8 & Nov. 12 from 10 am - 5 pm
Kids off from school and you’re looking for something to do? We got you! Art making, scavenger hunts, and more plus admission is Pay-What-You-Wish.
ARTIST TAKEOVER: ROMAN GLASS
Starts Sept. 21
Roman Glass will transform one of our largest galleries into an immersive environment that will completely change the way you think about art making as well as look at the city of Erie.

DONNA NICHOLAS: THE SPACE BETWEEN
Opens Aug. 31
Inspired by her time in Japan, tornados, and the sheer love of creating, we are honored to celebrate the life’s work of local clay sculptor and Edinboro professor Donna Nicholas.

TYANNA BUIE: RECOLLECTIONS
Opens Oct. 5
Having grown up in foster care, Tyanna Buie doesn’t have a lot of family photos or mementos so she makes art to make up for the lack of physical evidence from her past. She’s literally re-creating her personal history through largescale, mixed media works.

GALLERY NIGHT
SEPTEMBER 21 FROM 7 - 10 PM
It’s like a pub crawl, but with art. Shop, eat, listen to music, and spend time with friends and family while visiting as many local galleries as you can. There’s no better way to get a feel for Erie’s arts scene. Be sure to check out our website for a list of participating galleries.

POP-UP WORKSHOPS
Don’t be surprised to find pop-up art making demonstrations in our galleries on Thursday and Friday nights. Spoon carving, figure drawing, and more.

OPEN LATE
THURSDAY & FRIDAY NIGHTS
OPEN TILL 9 PM
Starting in September the Museum is open late on Thursdays and Fridays. Stop by after work or before dinner to grab a drink, listen to music, make art or just hang out. FREE parking after 5 pm.
While cataloging our collection we were thrilled to find a work by Chuck Close (fig. 1). Close lives with prosopagnosia (a.k.a. face blindness). Early in his career he painted massive, super realistic self-portraits to recognize himself (fig. 2). Then, he wanted people to see what he saw when looking at a face. From twenty feet away, these portraits look fine but become completely unrecognizable up close (figs. 3 & 4). In 1993 he began experimenting with weaving and that is what you see at left—the Erie Art Museum’s woven Chuck Close self-portrait. We’ll be putting it on view in the Spring. Or, if you just can’t wait, feel free to stop by and ask us to take it out for you.


[fig. 2] Chuck Close, Big Self-Portrait, 1968

[fig. 3] Chuck Close, Self-Portrait, 1986

[fig. 4] Chuck Close, Self-Portrait, 1986
How long have you been at the Museum?
I’ve worked at the Erie Art Museum now for a little over four years as the Director of Development.

Did you ever see yourself working in an Art Museum?
Although I’ve always appreciated art, I never thought I would work at an art museum. Before the Museum, I worked at Cathedral Prep/Villa Maria Academy. I started as a database manager then moved to Director of Communications. In 2014, I interviewed for this job and the rest, as they say, is history.

What’s your favorite part of your job?
There is so much about this job that I love. I enjoy connecting new people to the Museum and getting to know them and their interests. In other words, I enjoy the development dance. Especially here where I know we are actively working to make people’s lives better and open the Museum up to all those who’ve never felt welcomed. We are building something here and you can feel it.

What’s the most difficult part?
The most difficult part of my job is competing with more than 350 community non-profits who all share the same donor pool. With more and more non-profits popping up every year the community keeps spreading itself thinner and thinner in terms of giving. At some point, we’ll have to completely rethink the giving model in Erie. Maybe form some kind of “Justice League” of cultural organizations.

What are you looking forward to the most at the Museum?
It’s a privilege to be working with Josh Helmer, our new Executive Director. Having been an Assistant Director at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, he brings a wealth of knowledge and energy to the EAM. It’s like the entire museum just woke up. There’s just a great energy here right now. It’s electric. We’ve made a commitment to make the world a better place and who doesn’t want to be a part of that!

Good Reads: Art as Therapy
Our encounters with art do not always go as well as we may want them to. We are likely to leave highly respected museums and exhibitions feeling underwhelmed, or even bewildered and inadequate, wondering why the transformational experience we anticipated did not occur. It is natural to blame oneself, to assume that the problem must come down to a failure of knowledge or capacity for feeling.

Art as Therapy by Alain de Botton and John Armstrong argues that the problem is not primarily located in the individual. It lies in the way art is taught, sold and presented by the art establishment. Since the beginning of the 20th century, our relationship with art has been weakened by a profound institutional reluctance to address what is art for. What makes Art as Therapy such a good read is that Botton and Armstrong address this question in plain terms. They approach art as a tool and explore what kind of tool it is—and what good it can do for us.
More to see  
More to talk about  
More to be a part of

Never been a member?

First-time memberships are now only $15 onsite.

Individual  
Only $6 + admission = $15 membership!

Senior membership  
Only $8 + admission = $15 membership!

Student  
Only $3 + admission = $10 membership!

Family  
Only $16 + admission = $25 membership!

The Erie Art Museum receives general support from Pennsylvania Council on the Arts and the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority and is a partner of Erie Arts and Culture.