

MoFA invites conversation with ‘New Landscapes’

Amanda Sieradzki Council on Culture & Arts

Preston McLane, director of the Florida State University Museum of Fine Arts (MoFA) wants to know what you — the Tallahassee community — would like to see and hear about. His approach to his role is always one of a collaborator, working with colleagues and professional partners on and off-campus to provide out-of-the-box exhibitions.

“We follow the forum model of museums, not the temple model,” says McLane. “You don’t have to come in and be reverential towards the space and art. Instead, we want you to come in and join a conversation.”

Given how the COVID-19 pandemic irrevocably transformed and challenged numerous museums worldwide this summer, McLane and his team continued to find innovative ways to keep



Preston McLane in the museum’s “Live from MoFA” booth, the space they used to host virtual tours, artist talks, and conversations with virtual visitors, students, and project partners.

their doors open. They bucked tradition and looked towards virtual realms for “New Landscapes,” an in-gallery exhibition that became virtual and now has a

physical component as well.

McLane says the museum’s permanent contemporary photography collection served as the driving force behind

the exhibition, as well as their partnership with Arts4All Florida, an organization dedicated to facilitating the creative work of community members with disabilities.

When news broke that they would no longer be able to host in-person events or walk-throughs, McLane and his colleagues pivoted quickly to building an interactive, virtual show that is available to view through the end of 2020.

“Museums have a reputation for being intimidating,” explains McLane. “But you can reach people through social media, websites and themes so that you’re actually earning the respect and the confidence of future audiences. When circumstances change and we can be at the museum again, we will have gotten to know one another virtually and we’ll be comfortable being together in the space, and that’s exciting.”