

PEM staff installed this uplifting message in the windows of historic East India Marine Hall.



ADAPTING

On March 12, 2020, we posted a red “closed” sign on the front door of the Peabody Essex Museum. Nothing could have prepared us for the shock of this moment, created by a pandemic that has remade daily life around the globe.

While the majority of staff quarantined, PEM’s facilities and security teams reported to work each day to care for the museum. After Salem Mayor Kim Driscoll issued an emergency call for personal protective equipment, they filled a pallet with gloves, Tyvek suits and N95 masks to donate to local healthcare workers.

Over time, the strangeness of video calls and working from home offices that sprouted from family rooms and bedrooms was replaced by the bond of our shared experience. We met children and pets who made cameos on screen. We sewed masks for one another, traded recipes and confided fears. The #PEMfromHome campaign introduced new digital content to help those in quarantine engage with lifelong learning; meanwhile curatorial teams planned exhibitions via Zoom.

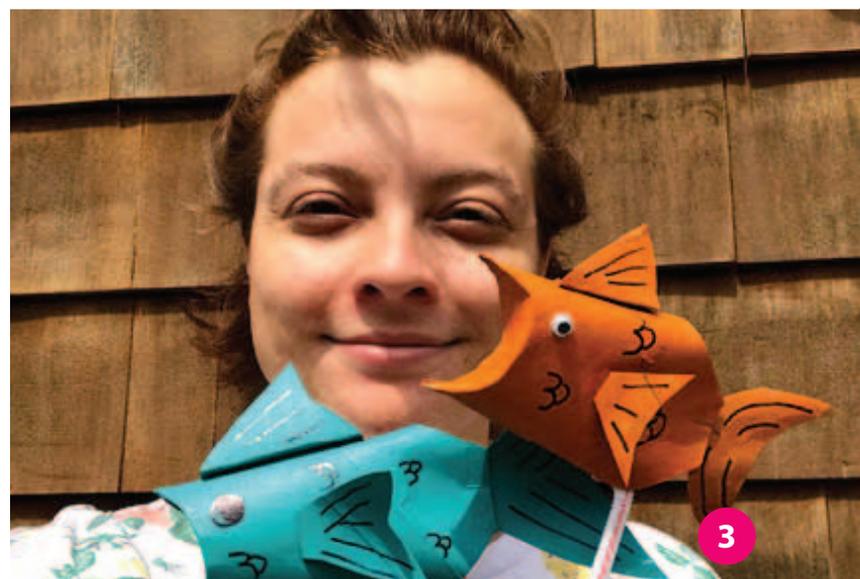
When news broke in May of the killing of George Floyd by police, many people spoke out about injustice and racism. While the museum has more to do to become more inclusive and address systemic inequities, amid this tumult we commit to becoming even more relevant to our community.

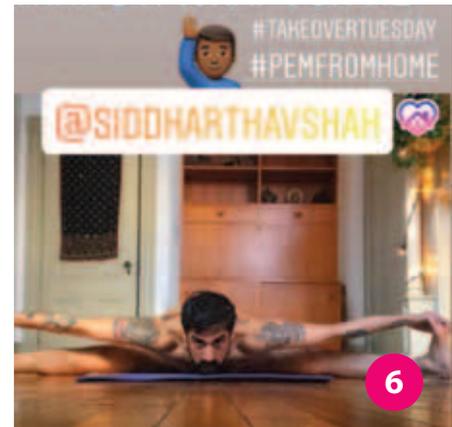


STAYING CONNECTED

With the doors to the museum closed, the #PEMfromHome campaign created new opportunities for engagement and fostered a sense of community. The portfolio of programs will continue to grow under a new effort to expand and promote PEM's digital campus.

To support at-home parenting, our education teams turned PEM Pals, the much-loved early literacy program, into a weekly virtual production complete with its own theme song. Staff also created a wide range of art-making videos for YouTube with complementary downloadable handouts. These activities provided content for an expanded e-newsletter sent weekly to some 25,000 subscribers.





to promote the collection, give sneak peeks of upcoming exhibitions and candidly share their experiences in lockdown.

a special series about Creative Constraint, in which curators talk about artists' creative responses to harrowing circumstances.

The museum's podcast, the PEMcast, launched

1. Brian Kennedy introduced virtual conversations with guests from the arts community in the *Director's Dialogue Series*, which featured artist Bethany Collins on August 25. **2.** Weekly PEM Pals, our story hour for preschoolers, went virtual with Miss Bethany. **3.** Education team members introduced art-making tutorials for YouTube. **4.** PEM staff installed signs with uplifting messages throughout Salem. **5.** Our Creative Services team created coloring pages inspired by works in PEM's collection. **6.** Curators (and sometimes their children) took over our Instagram accounts, connecting with our more than 40,000 followers. **7.** With in-person field trips no longer possible, Associate Curator Lydia Gordon joined a Zoom call to answer questions from high schoolers studying artist Jacob Lawrence.



CAMPAIGN RECOGNIZES HEROIC HOSPITAL WORKERS

To express gratitude for healthcare workers on the frontlines of the pandemic and to demonstrate the consoling power of art, the museum launched #WeArePEM last spring.

The fundraising campaign, supported by generous museum members, patrons and donors, helped provide 300 memberships to essential caregivers at North Shore Medical Center (NSMC) in Salem.

The healthcare professionals were also invited to PEM for two special preview days before the museum reopened in July.

“We are so grateful to PEM for thinking of our team at this extraordinary time,” said Laura Fleming, a NSMC spokesperson. “As lead institutions in this region, NSMC and the museum have a long history of collaboration to enhance the quality of life in our community. It is so gratifying to see their support and care.”



OUTDOOR CLASSROOM CROPS UP

Little Green Thumbs, our community planting project, invited people of all ages to learn the basics of gardening. Over the course of the month of May, wearing face coverings and practicing physical distancing, nearly 40 families worked alongside Head Gardener Robin Pydynkowski in the Ropes Mansion Garden. The volunteer crew embraced the opportunity to get their hands dirty, reconnect with nature and bring the space to life.

Records indicate that in 1944 and 1945 the garden was used as a community victory garden to provide fresh vegetables for local residents dealing with shortages and rationing resulting from World War II.

Similarly, we hope that Little Green Thumbs inspired a sense of community and created a spirit of camaraderie.



We had to get creative to snap the all-staff photo this year!

PHYSICALLY DISTANT BUT TOGETHER

The constraints of being apart have encouraged PEM staff to be more connected than ever. At the very beginning of quarantine, Director of Education and Civic Engagement Siddhartha V. Shah created a series of short videos and invited staff to meditate “together” online. It seemed an ideal time to turn our present situation into an opportunity to go inside — physically and metaphorically.

Meanwhile, Director Brian Kennedy hosted a weekly Director’s Address on Zoom to share updates and answer staff questions. On Instagram,

#PEMquaranTEAM put a daily spotlight on colleagues working from home who, in turn, offered recommendations for good books, hiking trails and movies.

The Museum Messenger, an internal e-news for staff, went out weekly with important and uplifting information. And, in a first for PEM, an ambitious curatorial team created two new exhibitions from their respective homes, *Salem Stories* and *The Salem Witch Trials 1692*, both of which opened in September 2020.

Best PEM memories

“Dancers on the
bridge for *Rodin*.”

