



Hindsight for 2020: The Year's Top 10 Stories for the Bruce Museum



On October 8, 2020, Leaders of the New Bruce Campaign celebrated the start of construction on the centerpiece of the Bruce Museum's renovation and expansion project: a three-story, 43,000-square-foot addition which will include the William L. Richter Art Wing and vibrant new community spaces, featuring a restaurant with indoor and outdoor dining, a state-of-the-art auditorium, and a larger Museum store.

GREENWICH, CT, December 29, 2020 — What a year it's been! So much has happened in 2020 that it feels like a decade has passed since January. Some of the news was just awful and unforeseen. Other, more positive developments, were often years in the making and will have a profound impact on the Bruce Museum and the communities it has served for more than a century.

What follows is a listing of the Top 10 Bruce Museum stories of 2020, a year many of us would like to forget but will always remember.

10) Renovated Galleries Open with Major New Exhibitions of Art and Science

The Bruce Museum began the year with high hopes and grand expectations. Following an extensive, five-month renovation project, on February 1, 2020, the Bruce Museum reopened its newly expanded main gallery spaces with exciting new exhibitions of art and science. The Bruce was the only East Coast venue to host the major international exhibition, *On the Edge of the World: Masterworks by Laurits Andersen Ring from SMK—the National Gallery of Denmark*. The *Under the Skin* exhibition highlighted recent scientific discoveries through a combination of cutting-edge imagery and real biological specimens.

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9) \$1 Million New Bruce Challenge Match Completed

On February 3, leaders of the Campaign for the New Bruce announced the successful close of a \$1 million Challenge Match. Launched in late 2019 by two exceptional friends of the Bruce Museum who agreed to match all new gifts of \$10,000 or more, the challenge was met by close to 20 generous donors, raising a total of \$2 million and bringing the Campaign to 85% of its fundraising goal for the transformative New Bruce renovation and construction project.

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8) “Bird-Brain”? Think Again, Says Curator of Science Dr. Daniel Ksepka

In April, the Bruce Museum’s Curator of Science Dr. Daniel Ksepka made news worldwide as the lead author of a major new research study that traced the history of brain evolution from tyrannosaurs to modern crows. Published as a cover story in *Current Biology*, the paper authored by Ksepka and a team of international researchers revealed how many successful bird families evolved proportionally large brains to fill ecological niches created by the extinction of non-avian dinosaurs at the end of the Cretaceous Period.

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7) Bruce Museum Closes as Pandemic Forces Lockdown

The worst news of the year came on Friday, March 13, when the Bruce Museum announced it was closing to the public and staff in accordance with statewide mandates aimed at controlling the spread of coronavirus. With that closure came the cancellation of the Museum’s signature special events, including the annual Art of Design Luncheon, Outdoor Crafts Festival, and the 33rd Annual Bruce Museum Gala. But we all got a crash course on Zoom as we stayed connected as a community while keeping safe at home and preparing for the Museum’s eventual reopening on June 27.

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6) Shift to Virtual Museum Programs and Exhibitions

From that dire moment in March rose new opportunities for the Bruce to continue to fulfill its mission to promote the understanding and appreciation of Art and Science to enrich the lives of all people. Museum staff switched rapidly from focusing primarily on in-person experiences to developing an array of virtual exhibitions, online special events, and multi-media educational programs about the wonders of art and science.

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5) Junior Art Competition: *Seeing and Feeling During the Pandemic*

“Art truly does inspire, and it will help us all get through these trying times,” said Executive Director Robert Wolterstorff in kicking off this creative outlet for children in grades Kindergarten through grade 8. Using the prompt, “What do you see and feel during this time of pandemic?” the art competition asked kids to use their creativity to share their unique experiences during this unprecedented health crisis. “These are uncharted territories for students, and with schools no longer in session, we wanted to find a new way to channel their creative expression,” says Felicity Kostakis, who along with fellow Museum volunteers Lily deJongh Downing and Cricket Lockhart, served as judges for the art competition, which attracted scores of entries and memorable artwork from the seven award winners, announced in July.

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4) The Bruce Museum Receives Major New Addition to Its Mineral Collection

In June, The Bruce Museum announced a significant new gift of minerals from the renowned private collection of Robert R. Wiener. The recent donation follows the gift of nearly 100 world-class minerals that Wiener pledged to the Museum in 2018 and includes a number of exceptional – and exceptionally large – museum-quality specimens. “The Bruce team is creating a new state-of-the-art gallery to showcase these world treasures, and thanks to Mr. Wiener’s foresight and generosity, our Museum and its soon-to-be Robert R. Wiener Mineral Gallery will be among the nation’s preeminent destinations for enjoying, and learning from, these scientifically fascinating and aesthetically beautiful objects,” said Dr. Daniel Ksepka, Curator of Science.

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3) The Bruce Museum Re-opens June 27

After a closure of more than four months and upon receiving the necessary certification from state agencies, the Bruce Museum re-opened to the public on June 27. Museum staff made many changes to health-safety procedures and protocols to make visitors safe during their visit and instituted a limited-capacity admission policy with timed ticketed entry by advance reservations – practices that remain in place as 2021 begins. The Museum was pleased to be able to extend the run of the exhibition of masterworks by Danish artist L.A. Ring, and to showcase the talents of emerging artists with the annual *iCreate* exhibition of high school students from throughout the region.

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2) \$500,000 Challenge Match Results in \$1.7 Million in New Donations

Needing to close a funding gap in order to stay on schedule with its plans to begin construction of the New Bruce building addition in the fall, three supporters of the Bruce Museum came forward to launch a \$500,000 Challenge for the Campaign and agreed to match all new gifts by the October 8 Groundbreaking. The Challenge was met by over 100 donors, including past Campaign contributors. Lynne and Richard Pasculano were inspired by those who launched the Challenge and close to the end of the Match made a new pledge of \$500,000. This means that the \$500,000 Challenge was matched – and then, doubled! This was followed by an additional match of \$100,000 by anonymous donors who had previously supported the Campaign with an impactful gift. Such generosity from our community enabled \$1.7 million to be raised within the past few months, a measure of how beloved the Bruce Museum is by its family of friends and supporters.

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1) Groundbreaking! Construction Begins on Expansion of the Bruce Museum

The New Bruce Campaign Committee, Museum leadership, and staff hosted a “shovel-in-the-ground” ceremony for major donors and other key stakeholders and supporters on October 8, 2020. In keeping with local and state COVID-19 guidelines, the event was conducted in accordance with state mandated capacity limits, social-distancing measures, and health-safety protocols.



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Press Release

Construction is now underway on the centerpiece of the Bruce Museum's renovation and expansion project: a three-story, 43,000-square-foot addition which will include the William L. Richter Art Wing and vibrant new community spaces, featuring a restaurant with indoor and outdoor dining, a state-of-the-art auditorium, and a larger Museum store. The renovation of the existing Museum building will include the new Steven & Alexandra Cohen Education Wing and Robert R. Wiener Mineral Gallery, as well as reimagined science exhibition galleries. The Grand Opening of the New Bruce is planned for Fall 2022. The New Bruce will transform how the Museum relates to its community of Greenwich and Fairfield and Westchester Counties, and we're especially proud that the Bruce Museum is making this tangible investment in the future just when the world is such a challenging place.

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About the Bruce Museum

The Bruce Museum is a community-based, world-class institution highlighting art and science. Accredited by the American Alliance of Museums, the Bruce has been voted the best museum in Fairfield County by area media in recent years. Located in a park setting just off I-95, exit 3, at 1 Museum Drive in Greenwich, Connecticut, the Bruce Museum is a 5-minute walk from the Metro-North Greenwich Station. The Bruce Museum is open in accordance with current state and local guidelines and with advance reservations for timed ticketed entry. To make a reservation or for additional information, call the Bruce Museum at 203-869-0376 or visit brucemuseum.org.

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