Museums get social

Beer gardens, hikes and concerts grab new audience’s attention

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Q uietly contemplating a masterwork while
perched on a bench in a museum isn’t, for
some, considered an Instagram-worthy
endeavor.

But friends on social media will have
some serious FOMO — fear of missing out
— when they see that besides the opportu-
nity for quiet reflection there was a beer garden, a tour of
an exhibit and a band setting a live soundtrack for the
event.

Very Snapchat friendly.

Adapting to a world with millennials — a larger and more
diverse group than the baby boomers, according to the U.S.
Census Bureau — means adapting to what they’re looking
for. And it’s not likely the same thing as long-time arts
patrons.

That’s one of the catalysts for the addition of after-hours
programming for museums in recent years.

“People who are younger, they work during the day.
They can’t really come to the museum on a Wednesday af-
afternoon at 1 p.m.,” said Jessica Eisenbrey, marketing
manager for Hagley Museum and Library in Wilmington.

The later hours and additions — food and drinks, games,
family activities — can infuse an energy into the sites.

“I think it kind of plays into the idea that people want to
have an experience,” Eisenbrey said.

Go to a bar and you have a good idea of what to expect.

Not as much at a pop-up happy hour.

Hagley Museum & Library, on the Brandywine in Wil-
lington, focuses on the history of American industry and
its impact on the world. It’s fitting as the 235 acres are
where E.I. du Pont founded his gunpowder works in 1802.

To re-introduce the site to young professionals and fam-
ilies they’ve tweaked programming to include screenings
of pop culture classics like “Mean Girls” and “The Matrix
over the winter. Summer brought back the return of their
popular Bike & Hike programs on Wednesdays, where guests
pay $2 to explore part of the grounds usually closed to foot
traffic.

Nights can draw about 500 guests who stroll
the grounds, play cornhole and, on a night where Dogfish Head
beers are featured, end the night with a brew.

“They want an inexpensive way to get outside and enjoy
the scenery and enjoy time with their friends and family,”
Eisenbrey said.

Cost is another factor museums have considered and, in
some cases, cut.

The Delaware Art Museum has for years had free ad-
mission on Sundays, but more recently introduced free ad-
mission from 4 to 8 p.m. Thursdays. They kicked off their
summer happy hours — a first — last week and will run them
from 5 to 7 p.m. Thursdays throughout the summer.

But it’s not a first for their social programming.

Over the past few years they’ve hosted date nights with
art projects, retro sketch nights and yoga classes have re-
turned. Their first summer music festival brought about
1,500 people to the museum in June, according to Jessica
Jenkins, manager of marketing and public relations.

“People now see us as a place where they can have some
fun, and they can have some social life here,” she said.

Adding social programming is about introducing some-
thing new, not taking away more traditional ways to expe-
rience the sites, according to Jean Cucuzzella McCuskey,
senior manager of adult and community programs at Wil-
terthur Museum, Garden & Library.

Having more diverse programs to fit different
wants and needs instead of a one-event-fits-all model
is the goal, she said.

Because long-time supporters are necessary. But
so are millennials.

“Millennials are our future do-gooders,” McCus-
key said. “They’re one of the first generations who
have grown up with social media and sustainability.

“That’s a big deal for places like us.”

Winterthur’s nearly 90,000 objects of American
decorative arts are displayed in Henry Francis du
Pont’s 175-room house, set on a 1,000-acre preserve.
That includes its 60-acre garden.

The site has long offered everything from in-
depth educational programming to family days in the
Enchanted Woods, but in 2015 it debuted something
different: A beer garden.

The happy hour spot was open select weekends
and drew crowds, but they stayed mostly at the visit-
or center, where the garden was located.

Since then they’ve rejiggered the concept and are
hosting after-hours and beer garden nights on select
Fridays. Instead of brews and food on the terrace,
there’s a beer garden as well as tram rides, live mu-
sic, short lectures by experts and the galleries are
open.

Visitors can discover the property in their own way,
McCuskey said.

“People don’t have to come and sit through an hour-long
lecture if that’s not their cup of tea.”
5 WAYS TO GET SOCIAL IN JULY

1 DELAWARE ART MUSEUM

Summer Happy Hours run from 5-7 p.m. Thursdays through Sept. 14. Visitors can sip on retro-inspired cocktails and view the exhibition “The Original Mad Man: Illustrations by Mac Conner,” hang on the terrace or Copeland Sculpture Garden or listen to live music (select nights). July 13 will feature music by Seth Tillman, and July 27 will be a special Game Night, with cornhole, Jenga, and outdoor games. Admission is free Thursdays from 4 to 8 p.m. A dog-friendly night is slated for Aug. 31.

The museum also is hosting an Artini from 7-9 p.m. July 14 with “Mad Men”-era drinks and retro painting project. Beer, wine, snacks and supplies are provided. $35-$40.

2301 Kentmere Parkway, Wilmington. delart.org or 302-571-9590

2 BRANDYWINE RIVER MUSEUM OF ART

Concerts in the Courtyard: The Swinging Foxes will bring boogie woogie and blues to the museum’s rustic courtyard from 6 to 9 p.m. Friday, July 14. Tickets are $12-$15, and $8 for students with ID in advance. The day of, tickets increase to $20-$25, and $10 for students. There will be a cash bar and food available for purchase.

The following Saturday and Sunday, July 15-16, the museum hosts its Beer Garden on the Brandywine from 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Enjoy beers from the Kennett Brewing Company and an Oktoberfest-inspired menu in the Courtyard before heading inside to see the museum’s massive exhibit “Andrew Wyeth: In Retrospect” or explore the Brandywine River behind the museum. The beer garden is open to the public. Admission to the museum is $15-$18, $6 for students with ID and children 6-18, and free for children 5 and younger and members.

1 Hoffman’s Mill Road, Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania. www.brandywine.org or 610-388-2700

3 WINTERTHUR MUSEUM & LIBRARY

July’s Winterthur After Hours and Beer Garden is set for Friday, July 28.

Guests can grab a drink and explore the grounds, including a sunset tram ride to the site’s barns and outbuildings. The sights of the Reflecting Pool will be paired with the sounds of Los Monstros, whose music is influenced by Latin roots and jazz. Guests can also take a garden stroll with an expert or visit the temporary exhibition “Treasures on Trial: The Art and Science of Detecting Fakes.” Admission is pay what you wish, but reservations are requested at 302-888-4600.

5105 Kennett Pike, Wilmington. www.winterthur.org or 302-888-4600

4 HAGLEY MUSEUM, GARDEN & LIBRARY

Guests hit Hagley on Wednesday evenings for Bike & Hike, exploring miles of the property usually closed to foot traffic. Picnics are welcome although food is available at the Belin House Organic Cafe; some nights feature Dogfish Head beers. Upcoming themed nights include July 12, Bike, Hike and Brews with Dogfish Head and music by Sporadic Static; July 19, Ice Cream Night with Dino’s Ice Cream & Water Ice Truck; and July 26, Dog Days of Summer, with pups on leashes allowed. Call or visit the site for more themed nights throughout the summer.

Admission is $2, free for members and children 5 and younger.

200 Hagley Creek Road (use entrance off Del. 141), Wilmington. www.hagley.org or 302-658-2400.

5 DELAWARE MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

Night at the Museum: In the Dark offers a family-friendly happy hour on Friday, July 14. From 5:30 to 7:30 p.m., families can check out the museum while munching on snacks and beverages (yes, there will be some grown-ups-only drinks available). One of the highlights is “In the Dark,” the latest travelling exhibit to take up temporary residence at the museum. The exhibit’s three zones allow visitors to learn about animals that thrive in the dark, what happens under the soil and life in a cave. Admission is $8-$9, $3 for toddlers 1-2 and free for members and babies younger than 1 year.

4840 Kennett Pike, Wilmington. www.delmnh.org or 302-658-9111.