Creative Sparks Fly
This Summer!

In late June, kids bounding up the ramp to the Museum's second floor, and the adults who trail behind them, will discover something new and thrilling: the first installation of the Museum's long-awaited Creativity Initiative.

For over 40 years, we've been the first cultural institution that kids in southern New England encounter and explore. Providence Children’s Museum is the most visited museum in the Creative Capital, and the place where young children not only run and play, but also where they find their voice, confidence and agency.

The Creativity Initiative launching in June is a ground-breaking three-year enterprise that galvanizes the creative community to build creative confidence in the next generation of creative problem solvers. For the next three years, the Museum will commission and collaborate with local artists, designers and makers to create unique immersive installations and co-lead workshops for families. With design, art and STEM-rich experiences, the Initiative aims to unlock children’s innate creativity by exposing them to a diverse community of designers, makers, engineers and artists, as well as the creative process.

With our team, which includes national voices in the Maker Movement, and the depth of our partnerships on this project, including the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) and local elementary schools, we’re thrilled to offer authentic and inspiring experiences that expose every child in Rhode Island to the essential 21st century skills of creativity and innovation.

During the last week of June, the Museum will officially kick off the new Initiative with the first in a series of installations designed in collaboration with local artists, designers and engineers. The current IWAY gallery will be the new home to a local creative’s work. (Don’t worry. The Steamroller and Rock Pit will live on in new homes on the Museum floor.) Each installation will be complemented by exhibit components designed and fabricated by the Museum’s exhibit team.

Our first creative collaborator is Nick Carter, whose work explores the 2D and 3D world of points and lines in space and the geometry of the world around us. His immersive space challenges visual perceptions, delighting visitors with the interplay of pattern and shape. Kids and their grown-ups will play with light, color, geometric forms and patterns, and then create their own designs.

The inspiration that will spring from each installation will be echoed and further explored in new family programs. The Museum is excited to open two state-of-the-art spaces: Maker Studio and Innovation Lab, spaces outfitted with the tools, materials, and technology with which little hands can explore and create.

From building a cardboard arcade to beginning woodworking, families are invited to join us this summer to investigate materials and tools, and spark their own creative ideas on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday afternoons, and during MetLife Free Friday nights in July and August.

The installations and workshops invite whole families to create together, strengthen our relationships, and provide meaningful experiences for caring adults that help remind us of our own inherent creative spark, inviting us all to slow down and carve out time and space to explore, experiment and create.
Nick Carter will be the first creative collaborator to join the Museum for our Creativity Initiative. His work investigates pattern, color and perspective, and is inspired by quilting motifs, urban architecture and camouflage. His practice is based in painting and printmaking, and may use dyed, painted and bleached fabric. Using translucent and reflective materials, he creates dynamic situations in site-specific environments, like the Museum. Similar to flags, his paintings are often installed on wires or poles, and subject to shifting vectors of air and light. His work has been seen hanging outdoors everywhere from South Providence to PVD Fest.

His projects are usually meant to be seen in-the-round and in a state of flux. He states, "When I move through the world, I’m constantly distracted by the colors, shapes, and patterns around me. Life in 2019 is full of images- people and things that aren’t really there. What interests me are the moments when layers of the visible world unintentionally collaborate to create sublime and uncanny optical experiences. I try to distill these moments into objects."

His goal is to make art that is accessible to anyone, so a collaboration with PCM is the perfect chance to design for kids. "It struck me as a fun challenge," he comments. "I love the art young people make, and I hope my installation is up to their standards. When I teach drawing to my students at AS220 Youth, I try to get them to develop trust in their own eyes. ‘Grass is green’, but it is also yellow, blue, brown; I think creativity comes from questioning everything, and not being afraid of new ideas, even if they might seem ridiculous."

When it comes to encouraging creativity in your own kids, Nick has some great advice. "I have a note in my studio that says, ‘Don’t hold the ball’. I can overthink things, so I try to encourage myself to make quick decisions. Less rules, more words; less routines, more games; less sugar, more sunlight; less screens, more paper and markers. And go to the Children’s Museum!"
Growing Philanthropic Support

Not only is the creative community coming together for kids under 10, but so is the philanthropic community. We are delighted to receive our first National Endowment for the Arts grant, as well as local support for elements of the Creativity Initiative from the Rhode Island State Council for the Arts (RISCA) and the Rhode Island Council for the Humanities (RIC), an independent state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities. The Council seeds, supports, and strengthens public history, cultural heritage, civic education, and community engagement by and for all Rhode Islanders.

We are grateful for major gifts from The Norman and Rosalie Fain Foundation, The Murray Family Foundation, Carol Peterson, The Hassenfeld Family Foundation and The Carter Family Charitable Trust.

These grants will help assure that all families throughout Rhode Island will be able to participate in the Creativity Initiative without barriers to access. Along with access and equity, our funders’ interests include art and design, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math), early childhood education and workforce development.

Annual Meeting

Tuesday, May 7 • 5:30 - 7:30 PM
Get a sneak peek of the new Innovation Lab and hear from the Creativity Initiative’s first collaborators about their creative paths. Free and open to grownups only.

Matt Littlefield will be leaving our Board of Directors after 14 years, including two terms as Board President. Since 2005, Matt has consistently demonstrated how much he values the Museum’s work and has guided our course toward an exciting future. Matt’s personal involvement, generosity, guidance and advocacy all demonstrate outstanding leadership. He will leave a legacy of helping the region’s children and families to thrive.

Thank you, Matt!

The Museum welcomes charitable gifts of all sizes.

For more information, please contact Denise Costello at Costello@ChildrenMuseum.org.
Staff Spotlight: Exhibit Technician

Mark DeSantis, Exhibit Technician, officially started working here at the Museum in January of 2017, but joined us even earlier as an independent contractor for the renovation of our renowned Coming to Rhode Island exhibit. He hails from Baltimore, Maryland, but now calls Providence home. We pulled him away from his tinkering duties to ask him a few questions about working here at the Museum, his thoughts on Creativity, and what it is like to have the unique job of Exhibit Technician.

What does an Exhibit Technician do at the Museum? I maintain the integrity of the exhibit spaces by repairing worn down and broken exhibits.

How did you study to become an Exhibit Technician? Did you have to go to school or apprentice? Well, you don’t really study to become an Exhibit Technician, but I earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree at Rhode Island School of Design (RISD).

What is your favorite Exhibit to work on or fix? Airplay, for many reasons. It is easy to fix for one thing. It is fun, and I get to interact with the visitors.

Which part of the Museum is your favorite? I like Waterways the best. Playing with water in various states is always exciting.

Can we see any of your art at the Museum? Yes, the CrANTston Ramp Boxes. I worked on that with Manon Bogerd-Wada, a RISD graduate student.

Creativity is a complicated concept. What does it mean for you? I don’t think creativity is complicated. I think creativity manifests itself differently to everyone. Nearly any activity can be creative, so long as the activity allows one to express themselves.

Can anyone learn to be creative and encourage this in their children? How so? Creativity is not an exclusive skill only artists and designers have. Everyone has the capacity to be creative. It is a matter of how creative you allow yourself to be. The easiest way to engage children to be creative is through play. Imagination and pretend play are some of the best avenues for children to learn and interact with each other, as well as engaging in their creative side.

Exhibit Developer, Jessica Neuwirth, notes that, “Mark makes almost all of the loose parts that you see here in the Museum. From the tools in IWAY, to the squishy rocks in Littlewoods, the new bricks and wheelbarrows in the Irish Gallery of Coming to Rhode Island, to the shadow animals in ThinkSpace, there’s very little out there on the floor that he has not had a hand in.” Chris Sancomb, Exhibit Designer and Manager of Exhibits and Facilities, agrees, “Without an Exhibit Technician, it would be tough to maintain the level of functionality and cleanliness necessary to keep the Museum running. Mark is essential to keeping the Museum safe, fun and open for our visitors’ engagement.”

I am very proud to work at Providence Children’s Museum. As an Experience Coordinator, my goal is to make sure that children and adults of all backgrounds and from all communities feel welcome. We strive to create a safe environment in which our visitors and staff share with and learn from one another. One way we do this, in the city of Providence where 33.6% of the population speaks Spanish, is by making Spanish more visible to our visitors.

While working here, I’ve witnessed how important this small gesture is to our Spanish speaking visitors. As an immigrant, this is precious to me. I remember one experience involving two visitors, a woman from El Salvador and the North American child in her care. They have been coming regularly to the Museum over the past year. The caregiver speaks only in Spanish to the 2-year-old, as she speaks only a little English herself. I enjoyed seeing how this did not taint their play, but improved it.

I remember the first few times they came to the Museum the child only felt comfortable playing with her caregiver. One day I found them in Fefa’s Market, the bodega in the Dominican Gallery of Coming to Rhode Island. They were playing with the fruit display, naming the produce items in Spanish, and using them to make a traditional El Salvadorian dish. Later, the woman told me how comfortable she feels in that exhibit, as it reminds her of the bodegas she would visit in her native country. Now, whenever I run into them playing in Fefa’s Market, I feel happy and proud knowing that we can provide a special place for them.

I have noticed with every visit how the child begins to interact more and more with others, in both English and Spanish. I made my observation to the caregiver, in Spanish, of course, and she told me about how coming to the Museum encourages her to interact with other kids, and how, by pretending while playing, she finds different ways to communicate, learn, and share. This is only one example of how our mission at PCM, which is to inspire and celebrate learning through active play and exploration, is evident every day.

I am honored to be part of a Museum that respects diversity and supports inclusivity. It is a rare privilege, and I am sure that these experiences will stay with me wherever I go.
Celebrating Earth
Friday, April 19 & Monday, April 22 • 10:00 AM – 3:00 PM
Saturday, April 20 & Sunday, April 21 • 11:00 AM – 2:00 PM
In celebration of Earth Day, art and science will meet as visitors build nature mandalas, weave natural materials, and sort and trace shells and stones. Staff will read from their favorite children’s books celebrating planet Earth and themes of ecology and environment.

Legopalooza
Weekdays, Tuesday, April 23 – Friday, May 3 • 10:00 AM – 3:00 PM
Challenge your Lego building skills through creative prompts and imaginative free building. Build bridges that span waterways and explore solutions to help a Lego person climb out of a cave.

Children’s Theater Weekends: After the Beanstalk
Saturday, April 27 & Sunday, April 28
Saturday, May 18 & Sunday, May 19
10:30 AM, 11:30 AM and 12:30 PM
Help Jack and Jill solve the giant’s puzzling spatial challenges in an interactive performance that expands on the classic tale. Presented by Nancy Worthen, in Memory of Margaret L. Worthen

Making Tricks, and teach children how to animate their very own stop motion films.

Girls Rock! RI
Saturday, May 4 • 10:00 AM – 11:30 AM
Come rock out with Girls Rock! RI. Wander through an instrument petting zoo where you get to hold and play exciting instruments like electric guitars, tambourines, ukuleles, and more. Then join us for a jam session. No experience needed, just lots of energy!

TalkWorks!
Saturday, June 1 • 10:00 – 11:30 AM
Join the actors of TalkWorks as they explore how to become upstanders, not bystanders, in any bullying situation. Try your hand at acting in interactive skits!

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Cultural Connections
On the first Saturday of each month, families are invited to join the Museum in welcoming Rhode Island artists, musicians, historians, and all kinds of makers. Launched last May, Cultural Connections invites talented individuals and groups to share their skills and passions with families. In the spirit of “Show, Tell, and Do It Yourself”, our creative partners talk about their careers, why they love what they do, and what inspired them as children. Families then enjoy the unique opportunity to engage in the artists’ craft.

In just the past year, families have stepped into history, learned traditional dances, enjoyed special performances, and more! We had a Café Recuerdo Workshop with Marta Martínez from Rhode Island Latino Arts. We played ukulele with Unlikely Strummers, and all kinds of instruments with Rhode Island Philharmonic Music School. We even delved into history with The Haffenreffer Museum of Anthropology at Brown University.

More recently, Trinity Repertory Company shared immersive storytelling and dramatic play practices, as well as showing families how to vividly enter stories using their voices, bodies, and imaginations. Providence Children’s Film Festival also joined us to share movie making tricks, and teach children how to animate their very own stop motion films.

On May 4, we’re excited for opportunities for kids to rock out with Girls Rock! Rhode Island, and, on June 1, practice acting and empathy skills with TalkWorks!, a group that uses interactive skits to explore the complicated bullying issues that arise as we grow older.

At the heart of Cultural Connections, is our priority to build children’s creative confidence. By introducing families to creatives from all over Rhode Island, we expose children both to careers that can inspire them and other creative spaces they can visit.

Supporting children’s play and learning is a community endeavor. Cultural Connections is made possible through major funding support from the Rhode Island Council for the Humanities, an independent state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities. The Council seeds, supports, and strengthens public history, cultural heritage, civic education, and community engagement by and for all Rhode Islanders. We are proud to partner with organizations that support creativity and combine our practices to provide enriching experiences for families.

Program sponsors include Amgen Foundation (family maker programs), Providence Tourism Council (special school vacation programs), Rhode Island Council for the Humanities (Cultural Connections), and Rhode Island State Council for the Arts (family maker programs).

Most Museum programs are planned to accommodate a wide range of ages and abilities and can easily be adapted or extended. While the events page recommends specific ages for some programs, older or younger children are welcome to try most activities.
Pattern Play
Anyone can be creative! Explore pattern making at home.

What You Can Use:
- Water based paint
- Paper
- Scissors
- Interesting items:
  - Clean, recycled materials (paper towel tubes, yogurt tubs, etc.)
  - Bubble wrap
  - Water bottles
  - Sponges
  - Cut vegetables (like potatoes)

What You Do:
1. Cut and create shapes from the interesting items.
2. Stamp the shapes into the paint.
3. Stamp the painted shape onto paper to create a repeating design.

Challenges:
- Combine shapes to create different patterns.
- Use repetition and layering to change the shape of your pattern.
- Combine different colors to experiment!

Questions:
- How many different patterns can you make with one shape? With two?
- What do you notice about how shapes fit together?
- Where can you see a pattern in your house? In the city? In nature?