

# Nicholson promotes The Frick at PowerBreakfast

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**NEW HORIZONS**—Frick Pittsburgh Director Robin Nicholson tells PowerBreakfast attendees his plans for exhibitions and partnerships that will build a larger, younger and more racially diverse audience.

Though he's been here for two years as newest director of The Frick Pittsburgh museum, Robin Nicholson, a transplanted Scotsman most recently from Virginia, few in the business community know him. But a lot are going to want to, because he's done something most around here haven't—he's partnered with Google.

"It's interesting with all cultural institutions and big Google presence in the city how everyone is so frustrated that they can't get in touch with these people at Google who have all these great ideas and presumably all this money—and nobody was getting any sponsorship," he told the audience at the African American Chamber of Commerce PowerBreakfast. "Fortunately at my previous institution, the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts had worked with them on Google art project—taking high resolution images, creating online exhibition and using their street-mapping to create 360 walk-arounds of the interior. If go to google maps they just launch it for the Frick two weeks ago."

Nicholson is in the process of entice and develop new audiences for the Frick, and he's hit on a concept that so far appears to be a winner in that regard—fashion.



**WELCOMING WORDS**—Doris Carson Williams jokes that all her African American Chamber of Commerce members will want Nicholson's card because he knows how to partner with Google. (Photos by J.L. Martello)

“It brings in a new diverse and younger audience and I thought the Frick had an opportunity to establish a niche, as we have an extended collection of Gilded Age fashion in permanent collection,” he said.

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“So I got in touch with an associate in Brooklyn working on a show call Killer Heels: The art of the High-Heeled Shoe. It spoke to history, with some dating back to the 17th century, but also a lot of cutting edge designers and in-your face shoes. We anticipated about 14,000 visitors. We got 24,000. And of those, we estimate 10,000 were new visitors. That’s an extraordinary capture rate.”

Given that, Nicholson said the museum will present to follow-up fashion exhibits—Undressed: A Brief History of Underwear, will be the only U.S. venue for the exhibit, which is getting rave reviews in London, and an exhibition by contemporary Belgian artist Isabelle de Borchgrave, who recreates intricate Elizabethan and contemporary clothing entirely from paper.

Nicholson said the museum is also working to become more relevant to younger audiences by contemporary artists, and will be doing so with a unique show by Elise Adibi, who uses natural materials—from rabbit skin to gold—and essential oils to create her pieces. Her work will be exhibited in the Frick campus greenhouse next year.

“That’s entirely unlike the highly controlled environments required for most art,” he said. “The work she creates will actually degrade, and interact with the environment. Her work will also smell because of the oils like peppermint and eucalyptus—they change with humid and temperature.”

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The Frick will also be showing its extensive permanent collection of art, ceramics and clothing.

He also said from a business perspective, the Frick wants to collaborate on programming and events. “We want to offer a Frick experience,” he said. “Not a one-off.”