

## All's ducky in Norfolk as sun, art and pics converge

### Giant Rubber Ducky Delights Virginia Visitors

The Chrysler Museum of Art in Norfolk, Va is hosting the floating installment 'Rubber Duck' by Dutch artist Florentijn Hofman as part of the Museum's grand reopening. (May 21)

AP

By Teresa Annas  
The Virginian-Pilot  
© May 19, 2014

#### NORFOLK

Thousands of people strolled by the Hague on Saturday, and nearly everyone had their cameras or cellphones pointed at something enormous and yellow bobbing in the Ghent inlet.

Selfies, family portraits, pictures of couples all had Norfolk's blue sky and Florentijn Hofman's "Rubber Duck" for a background.

Dave Häeberle and Jessica Griffith-Häeberle brought a framed photo of their wedding party with the giant inflatable duck looming large over them, shot in Pittsburgh last fall.

The couple lives in Virginia Beach.

---

**More pictures The duck and you**  
(<http://hamptonroads.com/rubberduckandyou>)

---

Bill Hennessey, director of the Chrysler Museum of Art, which is hosting the duck across from the museum's entrance through May 26, happened to take a cellphone picture of the Pittsburgh wedding party.

He couldn't believe it when the couple showed up in Norfolk on Saturday, and he showed them his snapshot.

"I kind of feel like a duck groupie today," Griffith-Häeberle said. "I just love the duck so much."

They got in line at a museum lawn tent to buy a duck T-shirt (adults, \$22) and signed-and-numbered rubber duckies (\$22 each). Hofman, the Dutch artist who created the duck, was autographing items and chatting with people.

He was in town Saturday and this morning, roaming museum grounds and the Hague to greet the public. He leaves this afternoon to fly home to Rotterdam.

Hofman, 37, was friendly and especially playful with shy children who approached him. He's the father of three small kids, he said.

Like his work, Hofman is big. He's just over 6-foot-5, so he often popped up for a requested photo, only to kneel deeply to get in the frame with his fans.

"We're the wedding couple," Griffith-Häeberle said to Hofman, when their turn with him came. Along with his signature, Hofman jotted a bonus message: "Enjoy each other!"

Jennifer Olgers, 25, and a friend drove from Chesterfield just to see the duck. Olgers came because she likes rubber ducks.

"They're cute," she said.

Derrick Borte, a Virginia Beach filmmaker who brought his 3-year-old son, said it reminded him of the fall Venice Biennale exhibition, a top forum for new art. He remembered walking around that Italian city and seeing comparably large and whimsical sculptures.

Jimmy Olivero of Virginia Beach showed up with his flying camera system. At mid-morning, he remotely sent his drone above and all around the duck, shooting stills and video. He plans to post his video on YouTube early next week, he said.

Chris Craychee, project manager for the Norfolk duck, said a 10-member team worked on the installation for several days, even through Friday's deluge, and finally inflated it around 6 a.m. About 75 people were there to see the duck rise with the sun.

Hofman arrived at dawn and said he watched wary geese keep their goslings on the Hague steps a few minutes, until it seemed safe for them to paddle around the newly inflated duck.

The crowds built through the day but never grew uncomfortably dense.

By 2 p.m., Hennessey said, the museum had clicked in 1,400 visitors, 100 more than on reopening day Monday. By closing, three hours later, 3,362 people had come in.

Hofman said he was enjoying the easy-going atmosphere. Last year in Taiwan, he said, the security left with the politicians.

“Suddenly, I was alone with 100,000 people, and they wanted to eat me! It was like Michael Jackson. So I run!” he said, looking humorous and horrified.

On Saturday, the artist took a break to slip inside the museum’s glass studio and watch Robin Rogers, assistant manager, lead a team in blowing a glass duck.

Hofman had suggested this challenge, so he sat on the front row, rapt.

“I never worked with glass,” he said earlier in the day. “I’m all about new materials and techniques. It may lead to new work.”

Rogers and his assistants spent 40 minutes blowing out an elongated globe, pinching it into a head and body and stretching out a tail. Lastly, he added an orange bill and two round black eyes.

“What do you think?” Rogers asked his audience, which erupted in applause. Hofman joined in, grinning widely.

*Teresa Annas, 757-446-2485, [teresa.annas@pilotonline.com](mailto:teresa.annas@pilotonline.com)*