

Inside Business

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The Main Event raises \$581,000 for the arts community

By Nate Delesline III
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A Plinko-style game art installation at The Main during The Main Event, a weekend arts celebration and fundraiser.



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A sculpture displayed at The Main Event on Saturday, March 25, 2017 at Hilton Norfolk The Main.



Stephen M. Katz | The Virginian-Pilot
The Fraim Center for Excellence is The Main's multi-media theater. As seen Monday, March 20, 2017.



Stephen M. Katz | The Virginian-Pilot

The Main's entire third floor is meeting space, called The Exchange. As seen Monday, March 20, 2017.

Neon, moss, clay and cloth.

Earthy elements were a frequent theme in the art galleries and exhibits featured at The Main Event, a weekend celebration and fundraiser for the arts at The Main, a recently opened Hilton-branded hotel in downtown Norfolk.

A white neon horse glowed and buzzed in one room. In another, a handmade moss design was cool to the touch. In another gallery window sat a stoic, sad sculpture head. Cloth costumes filled the hallway.

The winning bell from another art installation, a Plinko-style game, a la "The Price is Right," reverberated throughout the exhibition space. Although the Exchange's designated role is conference and meeting breakout space, it seemed a perfect fit for a collection of pop up art galleries.

The Chrysler Museum of Art, the Virginia Museum of Contemporary Art, the d'Art Center, The Governor's School for the Arts, the Hermitage Museum and Gardens, the Norfolk Botanical Garden and the NEON District provided exhibits and galleries.

The Main Event raised \$581,000 for the Business Consortium for Arts Support, organizers said in a news release. Although that's short of the ambitious goal to raise \$1 million, organizers expressed pride in the community's response and support.

"We're extremely pleased to have played host to such an amazing weekend of events, one that raised both funds and awareness of local art programs," said Bruce Thompson, CEO of Gold Key | PHR. "I think this weekend helped cement Norfolk as the center of culture for the Hampton Roads area, and we're honored to have been part of it." Thompson's company developed The Main.

Thompson, Norfolk Mayor Kenny Alexander, former Norfolk Mayor Paul Fraim and Gov. Terry McAuliffe also cut the ribbon for the Paul Fraim Center for Excellence, which is located in the hotel.

The Main's official public grand opening is slated for this weekend, March 31 through April 2.