

The J. Paul Getty Museum presents

Perspectives on Progressivism and the Museum

The Getty
Center

Museum Education Conference

November 4-5, 2011

Reflections on Progressivism and the Museum conference—November 2011

A number of colleagues who attended Progressivism and the Museum sent brief reflections on issues raised at the conference in November. Culling through the responses, topics emerged and questions were raised for continued discussion: professionalism in the field of museum education, the role of the education department as a laboratory, the recent shift in museum education practice from facilitation to production, and the role of artists working within museums and specifically working with education departments.

Continuing questions:

- 1) In the early 20th century, Progressivism was a professionalizing moment in educational policy and practice. What is the state of professionalism in museum education today? To what degree is there consensus in the field about education and training? Do the expertise, production and dissemination of knowledge, and democratic accountability today achieve the high level of professionalism that was originally instilled by Progressivism's influence?
- 2) Of particular importance for museums is knowledge of their history. How are the histories of museum practice relevant to our work today? What can we learn from the past and when are new approaches appropriate? Can the education department serve as a laboratory for innovation and a conduit for knowledge exchange?
- 3) A key issue was the shift in the work of Learning/Education departments from facilitation to production. How is this manifested within the institution? Does this shift realign or reshape our relations with curatorial and other colleagues? What models of "production" incorporate critical and reflective learning programs?
- 4) The artist presentations demonstrated a range of novel pedagogical practices going on in museums today. Have these contemporary practices altered the relationships between curator, educator, artist, art-object and the audience? What are the origins of the new pedagogies and how do they translate to museum practice?

Education



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