

experience

This section presents discussions around artworks culled from actual programs in MoMA's galleries as well as thoughts and reflections from participants and MoMA staff on their experiences. The discussions in the galleries, fragments of longer conversations, highlight poignant remarks rather than document the full exchange in front of each work. The quotations touch on how participation has enhanced the quality of life for the person with dementia, his or her caregiver, and the MoMA staff who facilitate the program.

A timeline of the Museum's community and access initiatives is included at the bottom of this section. It provides a sketch of MoMA's long history and its commitment to serving all audiences.

We invite you to step into the Meet Me at MoMA experience.

It's 2:00 and already there are couples seated in the lobby area exchanging greetings, hugs, and stories. The program officially begins at 2:30, but it's not unusual for people to come early. For them the visit is never just about the art or the group discussion. It's also about the ritual: going to MoMA, seeing the staff, chatting with the other participants. It's about sharing what has happened over the past few weeks, what their children are doing, where they went on vacation. But, of course, it's also about the art. "What are we going to see today?" someone asks as she walks up to the registration desk. Even these exchanges, the camaraderie, the socialization, the being-part-of, the civic pride — it's about all of that too.

EDUCATOR: How's everyone doing? Just to give you a little preamble to our whole visit today, we're not going to be walking around the whole Museum. We're going to look at four or five works in depth, and we're going to talk about the importance of those works in the history of art. Also, every time I do any program, we have a theme, and since this month is January and it's the New Year, and people are making resolutions and new plans, my theme today is New Beginnings, a twist on an earlier theme, Tradition and Innovation. So, we'll talk about tradition, what that means; innovation, what that means; and relate it all to the idea of new beginnings.

"Even on the telephone the staff are different. They are not at all, 'Oh, what are you bothering me for?' It is quite different here. The whole program from the beginning, from the first telephone call, has been extraordinary. You feel totally welcome." MoMA participant



HISTORY OF COMMUNITY AND ACCESS INITIATIVES

1929 The Museum of Modern Art is founded as an educational institution, dedicated to helping people understand and enjoy the visual arts of the time.

1937 The Museum's educational programs are founded. The first program is an art-appreciation course in the Young People's Gallery.



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1942 The Armed Services Program is established to send materials and exhibitions to the Armed Services and to provide therapy programs for veterans with disabilities.

1944 The War Veterans' Art Center is established.

“It’s even at the level of printing first names on our name tags, so that when there is back-and-forth between the educator and somebody in the group, it’s always on a first-name basis. Everything is geared to draw people in and to break down those barriers.” MoMA participant

“As I walk from gallery to gallery I find myself grinning with a strange feeling of joy. I love the Museum environment. Being there without the crowds is a gift.” MoMA participant





1972 A grant from the Edward John Noble Foundation allows the Museum to establish an Education Office.

MoMA is one of the first art museums in the world to offer “Touch Tours” of original sculptures for people who are blind or partially sighted.

EDUCATOR: So what do you all see in this painting? What do you notice first?

PARTICIPANT: This is the field where they've been walking. And then you get the water.

PARTICIPANT: There are no people. Just grass and the water.

EDUCATOR: Exactly. There are no people.

PARTICIPANT: I see the light.

EDUCATOR: Very interesting. The light, right. Can everybody see what Jane is referring to, this light that seems to be there? Very good point. What else?

PARTICIPANT: It's peaceful.

EDUCATOR: Peaceful, very nice. And what makes you say that it's peaceful?

PARTICIPANT: Well, it's very still.

EDUCATOR: Okay, that's right, very still. It's true, there's not a lot of action, right? Very still. And yet just sort of a suggestion of quiet

flowing water. Anything else that you notice?

PARTICIPANT: Dots. The technique.

EDUCATOR: Great, you notice the technique. Okay, so tell me about the technique.

PARTICIPANT: All the dots don't appear as dots when you stand back, but they are in the sky, in the clouds, in the water.

EDUCATOR: That's right. So, Mary is mentioning the dots. When we're up close, we see the dots, right? When we move back we don't see the dots. What's happening to the dots?

PARTICIPANT: They're blending in.

EDUCATOR: They are blending in. How are they blending in?

PARTICIPANT: They're merging.

EDUCATOR: They're merging, okay...And what's making them merge?

PARTICIPANT: Our eyes.



1978 The Department of Education is established.

1988 Infrared listening systems are installed in MoMA's theaters to enhance access for deaf and hard of hearing individuals.

TTY/TDD pay telephones are installed in the Museum.





1992 The Museum receives the Manhattan Borough President's Access New York Award.

The Museum organizes its first teleconference courses for homebound individuals.

EDUCATOR: Your eyes. Exactly. Your eyes are merging them, blending them together, right? That's exactly what's happening. Georges Seurat did not use big brush strokes. He actually just used the tip of his brush and did these little dots. Most of the time, when artists wanted to get many different colors, they would mix them, but Seurat didn't mix them. He put little dots of color next to each other. Very interesting move, revolutionary. So as you move away from the painting, your eyes are going

to blend these dots of color together. So Seurat is really interested in color theory, and in the way we see things. The way our eyes create images.

PARTICIPANT: He's innovative.

EDUCATOR: He's innovative, great. And so what we want to delve into a bit is, what does artistic innovation bring, to us, to the artists, to the world? Let's ponder that a bit as we look at this painting ...



1993-1994 A study is conducted at MoMA to test the effectiveness of tactile diagrams and verbal descriptions for blind and partially sighted adults in a museum setting.

1994 Francesca Rosenberg, the first full-time Access Coordinator, is hired.



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“My husband’s family lives predominately on the West Coast, and twice different members of the family came to visit, and he very proudly brought them to the Museum as his guests. That made a huge difference for him and he normally wouldn’t have done that. He looked forward to his monthly visit to MoMA. We started calling it David’s museum.” MoMA participant

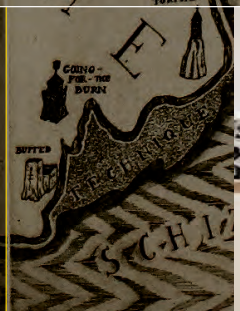
1995 The Museum offers the first art history course specifically developed for blind and visually impaired visitors.

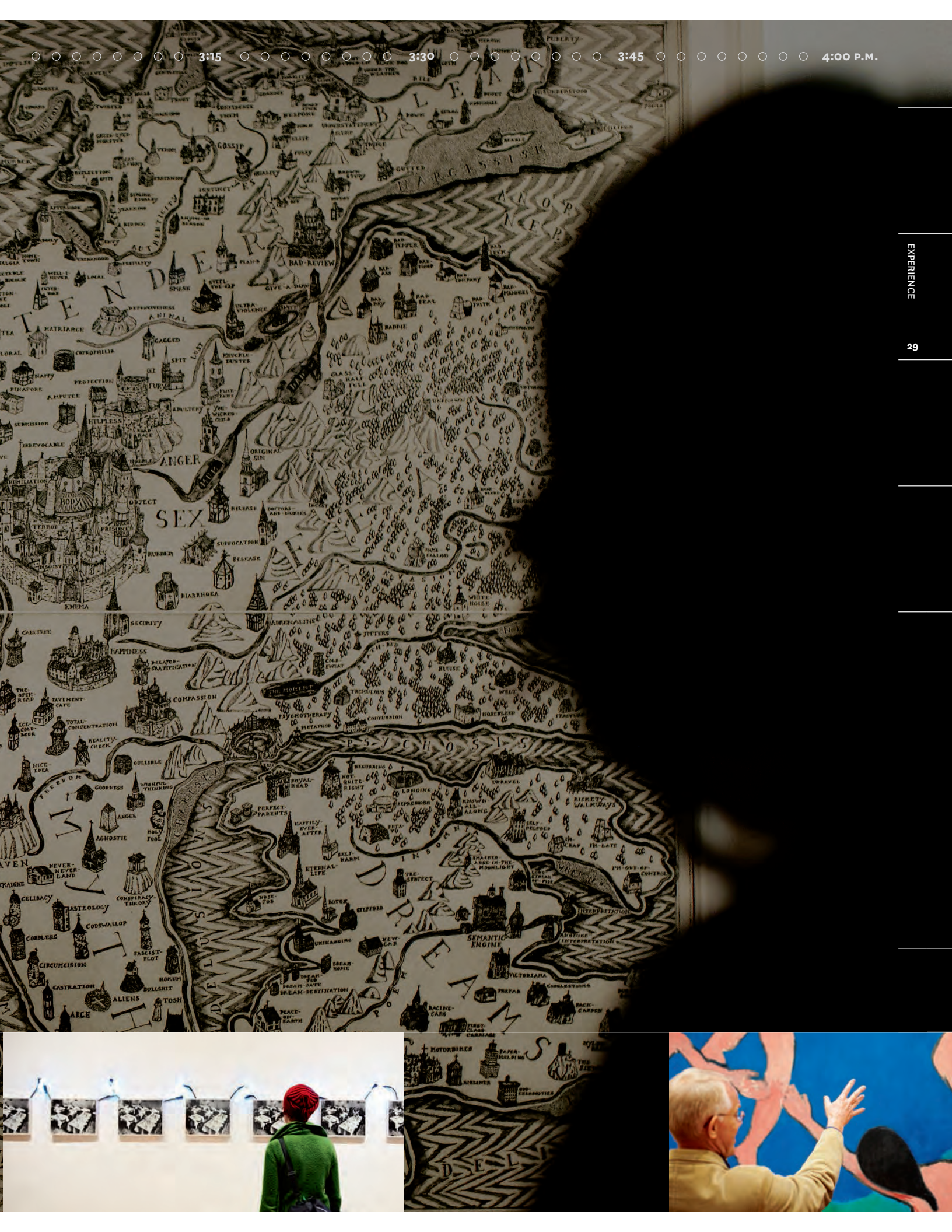
The Museum installs touchable objects and Braille labels for the first time as part of the exhibition *Mutant Materials in Contemporary Design*.

A portable FM sound enhancement system is purchased to provide individuals with hearing loss better access to gallery programs.



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3:15

3:30

3:45

4:00 P.M.

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EDUCATOR: Natalie, you're laughing.

PARTICIPANT: I never realized how absolutely masculine these women were. *(Laughter)*

EDUCATOR: Oh, okay. I'm going to ask you to elaborate. I'll repeat: Natalie said, "I never realized how absolutely masculine these women were." What about these women makes them look masculine?

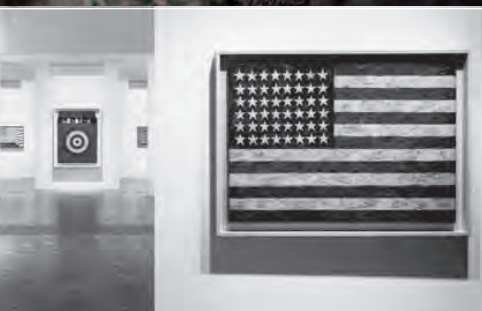
PARTICIPANT: Okay. Well, the woman to the left — well, take a look at her arm. It's almost a man's arm. The legs and feet are almost men's feet. Even her long arm has a sense of strength that is not really akin to a female

arm. I mean, these are brothel women, so they should be very sexy and intriguing, and yet they're not.

EDUCATOR: Did everybody know that these were women in a brothel? What are these women doing?

PARTICIPANT: They're showing themselves.

EDUCATOR: They're showing themselves. They're posing. This is a traditional idea, right? A portrait of nudes. But you mentioned that their features are not necessarily what we'd expect from women in a brothel. They're strong, muscular; they're manly, right?



1996 The Museum installs its first interactive, universally designed installation in conjunction with *Jasper Johns: A Retrospective*, in the Edward John Noble Education Center.

1997 The first all-staff disability awareness training seminar is held. Special viewing hours for older adults are first offered.

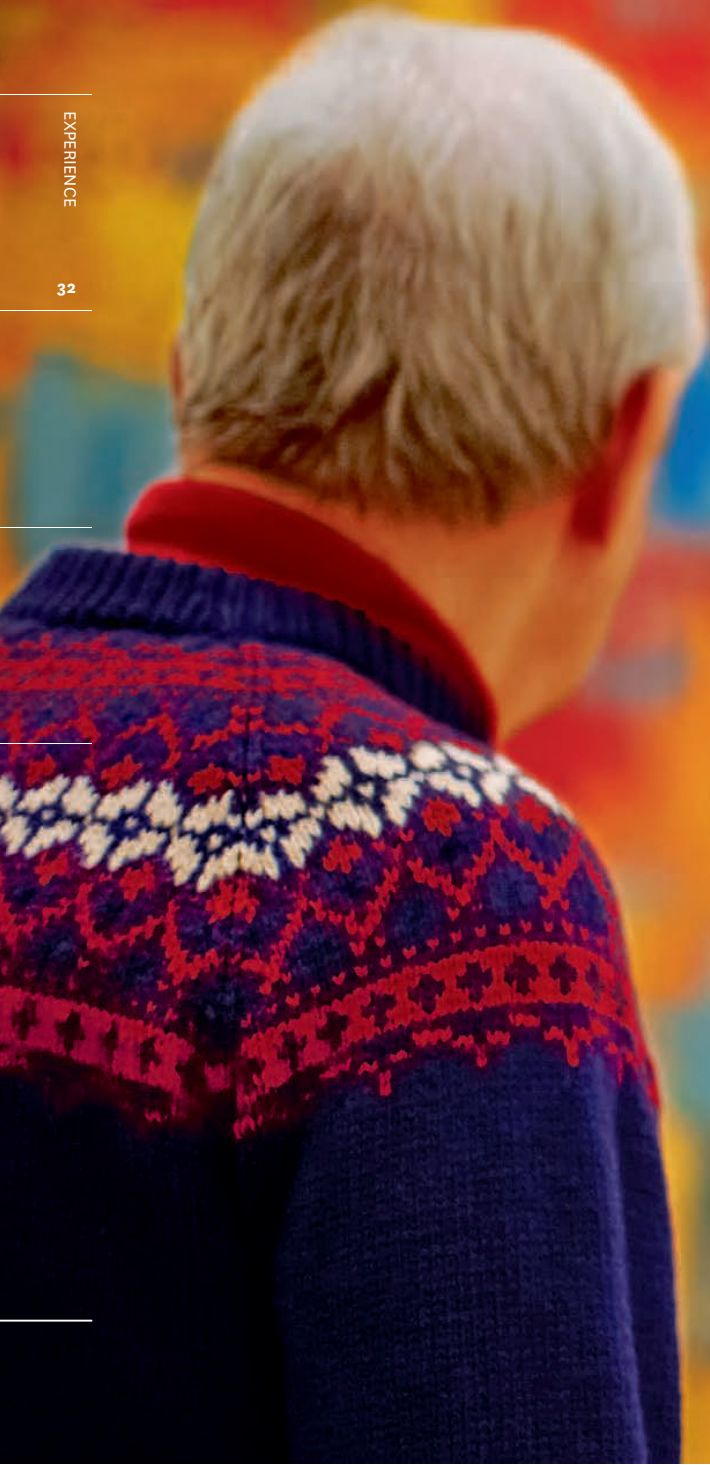
PARTICIPANT: However, he breaks everything up. Everything is broken up, including the mask-clad faces.

EDUCATOR: Exactly. These are very geometric, right? Look at these hard angles, semicircles, triangles. And if you bring it all together, you have geometric shapes, you have color schemes, you have different perspectives. You even have a different scale, a very large painting. This was finished in 1907 and is considered one of the first paintings in a movement that becomes very famous. Does anybody know the name?

PARTICIPANT: Cubist.

EDUCATOR: Cubist, exactly. This is the beginning of what gets to be called Cubism. You see a lot of geometric shapes, you see elements within the scene from multiple perspectives, and in places we're getting very close to abstraction, but we're not there yet. Lots of very interesting operations wrought on painting's tradition in this work, which we don't have time to really cover completely, unless we spend a few days here together, which I'm sure many of us would be fine with. *(Laughter)* But we did touch on some very interesting aspects of the work...





2000 VSA Arts and MetLife Foundation award MoMA the Access Innovation in the Arts Award for the Museum's programs for visitors with disabilities.

A panel discussion on the exhibition *Workspheres: Designing the Workplace of Tomorrow* is the first program for the general public to include both sign language interpretation and open captioning.



"For me the joy was more watching him enjoy it so much. But he has in fact studied art more than I have. Watching him and talking to him afterward about how much he got from it — and he was so excited about it — that just meant so much." MoMA participant



2001 MoMA and the Metropolitan Museum of Art reestablish the Museum Access Consortium (MAC), a group of representatives from museums in and around New York City and people from the disability community who convene to discuss access issues and **advocacy**.





EDUCATOR: Here's a scene, and every single person on earth has **probably** gone and seen one of these **guys**. All right, so, what do you **see** in this painting?

PARTICIPANT: A fat doctor. A doctor who needs to **go on** a diet.

EDUCATOR: A doctor who needs to go on a **diet** is one of the comments. All right. Everybody agrees **with** the fact that it's a doctor? **Yes?** What gives it away?

PARTICIPANT: His **white** robe.

EDUCATOR: **Yes!** Anything else, or is that it? The title of the painting is *Dr. Mayer-Hermann*.

So if we had any doubt, the title tells us who this is.

PARTICIPANT: I think he's a surgeon.

EDUCATOR: He's a surgeon, okay, because of ... ?

PARTICIPANT: The light.

EDUCATOR: The light, okay, very nice. An operating room is suggested by the lights. Dr. Mayer-Hermann was actually a surgeon. You're right. This painting is by a German artist, Otto Dix, and it's from 1926. Dix was one of this doctor's patients. Now, here's an interesting thing. Otto Dix is known for

2002 MoMA is honored by the New York State Association of Self Help for Hard of Hearing People for providing access to individuals with hearing loss to its exhibitions and programs.

The National Endowment for the Arts requests copies of MoMA's Access Programs brochure to distribute to accessibility coordinators throughout the country as a model of accessible design.

“You feel younger, more vibrant, when you go home ... more connected with the world.” MoMA participant

depicting the miseries of life in paintings of crippled war veterans, prostitutes, people who were suffering. But here you get a portrait of a very well-established, respected person. But how is Dix portraying this doctor, and what do you think he's commenting on?

PARTICIPANT: I think he has a pinky ring.
(Laughter)

EDUCATOR: Wow, talk about looking at detail. You're right, Olga.

PARTICIPANT: My mom just said he looks like a fat cat.

EDUCATOR: Like a fat cat! Okay!

PARTICIPANT: I feel the anxiety even looking at him that you would in a doctor's office.

EDUCATOR: That's right, that's right. He's bringing out the anxiety that we feel when we go to the doctor, and the doctor's office, especially since we're right in front of him, right? It feels like we're there, that he's interrogating us, like he's going to examine us or something. So the very interesting thing that Dix does is that he paints a frontal portrait of this doctor with all the elements seen in the office. What else?



2003 Community Programs is officially established within the Museum's Department of Education.



“I realize that when you have Alzheimer’s, you don’t know if your memory is correct. The program gave me the confidence to know that I had been able to retain my appreciation of art and that I could zero in on the points that were necessary in the artwork that I was seeing. And that was important. That really was important. And to verbalize it...because first you’re talking about a perception of it, and recalling it, but then you verbalize that perception, and you are able to verbalize what that means. And boy, is that important!” MoMA participant





2003 Art inSight, a program for blind and partially sighted individuals, is launched.

MoMA pilots programs with groups of people with Alzheimer's disease from assisted-living residences.

EDUCATOR: All right, now, everybody look at this painting and tell me, how many different kinds of shapes do you see here?

PARTICIPANT: Two.

EDUCATOR: Two — rectangles and squares. That's it. So, very simple, because we only have straight lines. This is all straight lines, horizontals, verticals. Now, what about the colors? Tell me the colors that you see.

PARTICIPANT: Yellow.

PARTICIPANT: Red.

PARTICIPANT: White.

PARTICIPANT: And it jumps around.
Broadway Boogie Woogie. We're dancing.

PARTICIPANT: Right there. Gray.

EDUCATOR: Gray, right. So we have blue, red, yellow, the primary colors, plus white and gray. So we have two shapes, straight lines, and the three primary colors, plus white and gray. And then Jane called out its title, *Broadway Boogie Woogie*, and started to dance. What does this painting make you think of?

PARTICIPANT: LEGOs.

PARTICIPANT: Well, New York streets.

PARTICIPANT: Buildings with lights.

PARTICIPANT: Happiness.

EDUCATOR: Happiness! Interesting. And Jane was kind of pointing to the rhythm and the flow of this painting, *Broadway Boogie Woogie*. This was painted in 1942 and 1943. And Mondrian was what you can really call an abstract artist, because you don't immediately recognize something that you see in real life. But in fact he's going to the profound structures and he's bringing out the flow, the rhythm. Broadway suggests all that you guys were saying. Streets, buildings, lights, movement, rhythm, action, dances, people, cars, chaos, and order, and he achieves this effect with this syncopated play of colors, right? But he also does it in an arrangement that makes you think of all the things associated with a particular city, instead of just one specific element of that city, right? It's where style and content and form really come together.



“It’s one thing to have a wonderful, rich experience for an hour and a half. It’s another thing to take something home with you from this experience that improves your life. It’s just once a month, and I say that because during the course of a month all I hear about is, ‘When do we go back to MoMA?’ First it was just the Museum, then it was MoMA by name.” MoMA participant

2004-2005 With the opening of the expanded Museum in Manhattan, extended outreach programs are created for older adults, with educators working both at the Museum and off-site at senior day centers, nursing homes, and other care organizations.

The Visual Descriptions audio guide, an audio program designed for and by blind and partially sighted individuals, is offered.





MoMA expands and deepens its commitment to **working with individuals** with Alzheimer's disease and their families. **All MoMA** Community and Access Programs educators receive **training** from local Alzheimer's organizations. Educators **also participate** in internal professional development workshops that focus on gallery teaching strategies, artwork selection, communication techniques, and activities appropriate for people with Alzheimer's disease.



2005 Annual Grandparents Day is established, allowing older adults — with or without grandchildren — private access to the Museum for a day of intergenerational art activities and gallery programs.

CreateAbility, a family program for children and adults with learning and developmental disabilities, is launched.

Community and Access Programs partnerships are formed with a select number of schools and community organizations.

It's 4:00 P.M. Hard to say goodbye. It's been such a great experience for participants and staff alike. There are smiles all around, we're giving out Museum passes and reproductions of the works we saw, and everyone is getting ready to go. We start to head toward the elevators and back down to the lobby. Downstairs, a participant unexpectedly takes me aside. She keeps coming to the

program even though her husband passed away not so long ago. They used to come together all the time and always participated and truly enjoyed it. Now, she still comes when she can, a part of the group, a part of the family. "This is so great," she says now, during our private moment together. "You know, for two years, this was our happy hour."

2005 Several new community programs that provide access to a host of new and intergenerational audiences are launched, including Wider Angles, Double Exposures, and Welcome to MoMA.

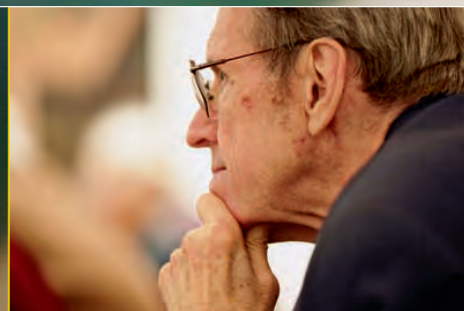
2006 MoMA establishes Meet Me at MoMA, regularly offered interactive tours of the collection for individuals with Alzheimer's disease and their caregivers. The Fan Fox and Leslie R. Samuels Foundation provides important early program support.

“Then there is the fact that one has art cards to take home to reinforce the experience, and also Museum passes to come back to visit the works of art in a different environment during days when the Museum is actually open, and realizing that this is not a quiet tomb with beautiful works of art. It’s actually a living, breathing institution with an awful lot of people that revere those works of art, and the fact that you’re part of that experience is quite remarkable. That makes for a tremendous long-term experience.”

MoMA participant

2006 The Lewis B. and Dorothy Cullman Education and Research Building opens, with induction loop systems installed in The Celeste Bartos Theater and one of the Edward John Noble Education Center’s classrooms.

2007 MoMA is asked to present the Meet Me at MoMA program during the opening plenary session at the fifteenth annual Alzheimer’s Association Dementia Care Conference.



MoMA receives the Ruth Green Advocacy Award from the League for the Hard of Hearing.

MetLife Foundation awards MoMA with a major grant to develop The MoMA Alzheimer's Project.

2008–2009 MoMA continues to expand the reach of The Alzheimer's Project. By June 2009, **MoMA** educators have held workshops and training sessions in fifteen states for staff from over fifty museums.

