

GUIDE FOR Museums

This guide details how to establish a museum program for individuals with Alzheimer’s disease and their caregivers. Educational programming is at the heart of a museum’s public mission and serves as a gateway for exploring works of art and cultural history. Offerings should extend to all audiences, including individuals with cognitive disabilities. The program should focus on participants’ abilities in order to create an accepting and engaging environment in which the disease is a nonissue.

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Designing a Program

Program Goals

It is important at the outset to have a clear idea of why you want to develop a program for individuals with Alzheimer's disease and what you hope to accomplish. Think about the following:

- What are your goals?
- What would you consider a successful program?
- Who is your target audience — people with Alzheimer's disease living in their own homes or those in assisted-living facilities, or both? What about caregivers?
- What difference will your program make for your museum? For the community?
- How can you use what you learn through working with this audience to improve other educational programs?

Once you have answered these questions, discuss them with other management staff in your museum. Talk to all the people who will need to support the initiative for it to succeed — involving them in framing the goals encourages their support from the beginning. It is also vital to keep an open line of communication between museum staff involved in the program and individuals affected by Alzheimer's disease and specialists in the field. Their recommendations and input are essential to the success of your program.

Program Content

The museum setting is an ideal environment for both art-looking and art-making experiences. Depending on

the size of your museum, the collection, spaces available for creative activities, and other considerations related to staffing and logistics, both of these types of engagement could provide meaningful experiences and could be sustained over time.

When developing the museum's offerings, you will need to take into account the number of programs and the types of activities participants will engage in. It is possible to create separate art-looking and art-making programs, and it is also perfectly feasible to create models wherein participants look at works and subsequently go into classrooms or designated spaces to create their own works.

Program Types

Below are two types of programs you can offer on-site at the museum:

1. Programs for groups coming from care organizations — such as residential care centers, nursing homes, or other assisted-living facilities — or from support groups or other organizations. These could be regularly scheduled or offered upon request and could be initiated by either the museum or the outside organization. If possible, send educators from the museum off-site to work with participants at the facility. Ideally, if the condition of participants allows, extended off-site programs should include at least one visit to the museum. You may want to begin by focusing on a small number of care organizations, and then add others over time. If you already work with a specific facility, check to see if they have a dementia division that you could connect with.
2. Regularly scheduled programs for individual families in which a person with Alzheimer's disease



visits in the company of one or more family members and/or a professional caregiver. These families would come to the museum and tour the galleries with other families in a group led by a museum educator. Participants would be required to register for the program in advance, and registration would be handled on a first-come, first-served basis.

The number of regularly scheduled programs for groups of individual families would depend on the museum's capacity. Start with one event per month or every other month to allow you to make adjustments. As your audience grows, you may consider increasing the number of programs or implement changes.

Dates and Times

The dates and times you select must match the needs of your museum but also the needs of people with Alzheimer's disease.

Identify dates and times that are best for the museum. These might include times when the museum is closed to the public, when other tour groups are not scheduled, or when normal attendance is typically low. With these dates and times in mind, consider what might be best for your participants. Typically, later mornings (after 10:30 A.M.) are better than early mornings for people with Alzheimer's disease, and early afternoon, shortly after lunch, is better than later in the day. Programs should last no longer than two hours. Depending on the time you select, you may want to find a suitable space for participants to have refreshments before or after the gallery program.

Number of Participants

It is important to keep the size of each group small, ideally limited to eight people with Alzheimer's disease plus their family members and caregivers, for a total of sixteen people. You may be able to host more than one group at a time, but the total number of groups your museum can accommodate will be determined by:

- the museum's size.
- the presence of general visitors or other groups, such as school groups or membership groups.
- staffing.
- available funding.

Again, start small. After you gain experience, you will have a better sense of how many people you can accommodate and still offer an effective program. As demand for the program grows, you may find that your requests exceed your capacity. If so, share your needs and limitations with your colleagues to see if adjustments can be made to meet the demand.

Costs

Ideally the program would be free of charge for participants, but it also must be financially sustainable. Some ways to minimize costs are to:

- train volunteer docents or have full-time staff lead the program.
- have participants cover their own transportation costs.
- schedule group tours during open museum hours to avoid additional security costs.

“Working with this audience has improved my overall practice as an educator. The communication strategies used to ensure that the participants are getting the most out of their experience can really be applied to interactions with all visitors.”

MoMA educator

- form partnerships with organizations and agencies that serve people with Alzheimer’s disease.

When you are beginning to plan your programs, look for potential sources of funding in local businesses, foundations, and the health-care industry. Invite the museum’s decision makers, board members from Alzheimer’s disease organizations, and city, county, and state officials to join you on a tour to get them interested in the program. Letters of support from participants may help make a case for additional funding.

Contact Information

Ensure that people interested in the program are able to learn more about it and to register. To the extent possible, establish:

- an e-mail address and a Web site.
- a phone number that connects directly to staff involved in the program.
- a staff member who can answer phone inquiries and handle registration.

Evaluation

Think about how you will evaluate your program from the very beginning, taking into consideration the goals you have established. How will you measure success? What is the best way to collect information? What tools and criteria will you use? Build your evaluation plan as you design your program rather than waiting until the program has already been implemented.

Staffing the Program

Effective programs rely on trained, capable staff. For this program in particular, you will need a team of educators, reservationists and check-in staff, program assistants, and security personnel.

Educators

Good educators are essential for a successful program. You will need one educator for each group of sixteen participants, eight people with dementia and their accompanying caregivers. Your program’s educators do not need to have prior experience working with people with Alzheimer’s disease or knowledge of the effects of the disease. They can acquire this information through training workshops and informational resources. They will expand their knowledge as they gain experience facilitating the program.

There are, however, some aspects of their backgrounds, experience, and expertise that are very important. Consider the pool of educators currently engaged in the other education programs at your museum — the full-time staff, freelance educators, and docents — especially those who:

- are comfortable and experienced with people of varying ages and abilities (older adults, special-education groups, nonverbal individuals).
- have a strong knowledge of art and art history.
- have a strong knowledge of the nuances of art education in general and museum education in particular.

Of the educators who have these qualities, approach those who best demonstrate patience, kindness, creativity, flexibility, and humor during their programs,

“It’s really a professional growth moment, as we’re picking apart what we do, fine-tuning parts of it, using the skills that exist, but also enhancing them. It’s fostering growth among all of us.”

Courtney Gerber, Assistant Director of Education, Tour Programs, Education and Community Programs,
The Walker Art Center, Minneapolis

and who do not simply lecture. Invite educators to a general information session about Alzheimer's disease and the issues involved in working with people with dementia to gauge their interest.

Ideal educators for your program know how to invite and facilitate conversation while providing art-historical information at appropriate moments. They weave together the points made in the group's conversation and manage the varying responses and opinions. They use their reservoirs of knowledge to give insight into the works and also to validate participants' responses and ideas.

If your programs are led by docents, it might be useful to have guidelines for their participation in this particular program, such as requiring them to have previously worked with older adults; led interactive gallery tours on-site within the past six months; attended docent training on a regular basis; and been evaluated positively within the past year.

Other Staff

Whether you will be hosting a group attending as a single unit from a care organization or individual families that call in and register, you will need staff and/or volunteers to perform some important functions.

Reservationists/check-in staff

If possible, two staff members should be responsible for registering participants over the phone ahead of time and planning and coordinating the check-in process on the day of the program. Sharing this responsibility allows for backup in case of illness or vacation and ensures that someone knowledgeable is always available to talk to participants. These staff members should be paid individuals who are familiar

with your museum and able to aid participants as needed. They should also have broad experience with visitors with disabilities. If your museum already provides accessible programs, the staff of those programs will be well suited to this one, too. Having consistent, dedicated employees for these two functions makes for closer relationships between staff and participants.

Program assistants

At least one additional person, either paid or volunteer, should accompany each educator on the tour. This person's main function is to handle any logistical issues that arise, allowing the educator to concentrate on the group discussion. Common tasks include:

- distributing materials such as name tags.
- escorting participants to the restroom.
- getting wheelchairs when they are needed.
- distributing personal listening devices for sound amplification when necessary.
- carrying portable stools.
- protecting the art, along with the security guard.

Having a second staff member allows for one person at the front and the back of the group, keeping it intact as it moves through the museum. It may be possible for your staff to perform multiple functions, with one of the check-in personnel accompanying a group as it tours the museum and the other remaining at the check-in site for the first half hour of the program to greet late arrivals and help them join a tour already in progress.



In most cases, groups coming from care organizations will bring the appropriate number of professional caregivers and aides. Even so, a second staff member or volunteer assisting the educator with the logistics of the tour will create a smoother visit.

Security personnel

The security requirements and policies of your museum should be strictly followed. If the museum is closed, you will typically need one security guard for every group of up to twenty-five people. During open hours, you might not need guards assigned specifically to your group.

Staff Training

All staff and volunteers will need a working knowledge of dementia, its effects on cognitive capacities, its effect on caregivers, and the implications for the program. Plan an initial workshop for educators and volunteers to give everyone an overview of Alzheimer's disease. Consider inviting a representative from your local Alzheimer's Association chapter or medical center to provide this information. The workshop should include basic information about the program and communication techniques for working with this audience. Follow this initial training with a practical workshop that gives participants an opportunity to plan a tour themselves.

View your staff and volunteers as a team. Provide opportunities for strong and productive working partnerships, such as regularly scheduled meetings. Encourage educators to observe each other, to learn different styles, and provide critiques of teaching strategies.

Proposed structure for staff-training workshop

1. Invite all educators, docents, program assistants and other staff — anyone involved in the program at any level — to the workshop. Bring everyone up to date on the development of the program: the logistical issues, the dates the program will be offered, the number of participants you expect, and other matters. Go over the goals of both the program and the training.
2. Invite a representative from an Alzheimer's Association chapter or local medical center to give an overview of Alzheimer's disease and other dementias. Ask him or her to cover such topics as the definition of Alzheimer's disease, the number of people affected and what this means for the community as a whole, the effects of Alzheimer's disease on the cognitive capacities of those affected, and the impact of Alzheimer's disease on caregivers. It is essential to understand the disease and how it affects both the person with the diagnosis and his or her caregiver. This information will help educators and docents devise ways to tailor their gallery tours to this audience.
3. Invite a number of individuals living with the disease along with their caregivers to speak about their experiences. If possible, coordinate a panel discussion with these individuals, moderated by someone — whether from the museum or a care organization — that they already know and trust. A moderated panel will provide insight into the experiences of those affected by dementia, along with information about the types of experiences and programming they would value.
4. Demonstrate how to lead a tour. This demonstration should last about one hour and can take place in the galleries. Make the program's different steps very clear by describing and discussing each of the components. The demonstration should give your educators a better idea of how to construct a tour, including what kinds of questions to ask and how to balance art-historical information with an interactive discussion.

5. Give the staff an opportunity to create their own tour in the galleries using original works of art or in the meeting room using reproductions. This exercise is most essential for those who will be leading tours, though all staff should be welcome to stay. Divide the educators and docents into teams of no more than six members. Tell each group to select a theme using images from your collection. Their preparation should include:

- the selection of four works that they will discuss in relation to the theme.
- a sequence for the works.
- a route through the galleries and other spaces that covers the works they want to address and takes into account the physical limitations of the participants.
- three to five discussion questions per work.
- three to five art-historical points per work.
- a small-group conversation activity (Turn and Talk) to introduce toward the middle of the tour.

Give the teams up to thirty minutes to prepare their tours, with the training leaders floating between groups to observe and help.

6. Have a spokesperson from each group present the tour. This is also an opportunity for everyone to discuss what to do in different scenarios that could unfold in a real program. Remind your staff that discussing these scenarios may help them to be more prepared, but that each tour will be very different and offer unexpected challenges and delights. For examples of situations that could arise, see the Challenging Scenarios section of *Foundations for Engagement with Art* (page 123).

7. Once you have shared the tours and discussed ideas, open the floor to questions and concerns. Assure the staff that the program will grow organically and that you will reassemble periodically to exchange experiences in order to improve the program.

8. Ask staff to evaluate the workshop, to tell you what worked, what did not, and what would improve the training in the future. Design simple forms for this purpose.

9. A homework assignment for the docents, to be presented in a follow-up workshop, might be useful. This will allow them the opportunity to practice, reflect, and decide whether they would like to lead tours, assist on tours, or not work with the program at all. It will also help the staff evaluate the docents and recommend those who are most committed.

10. Ask participants to read *Background on Alzheimer's Disease* (page 12) in this book and visit www.alz.org for more information on the disease. Furthermore, ask them to read *Foundations for Engagement with Art* (page 111). This guide includes basics for planning tours and facilitating group discussions and will reinforce what was learned during the workshop.

11. Invite educators and docents to observe tours in action. Seeing an actual program before leading one can alleviate any remaining concerns and put educators and docents at ease.

Spreading the Word

As you design your program, think about how you will reach out to your community and develop the strong partnerships that will help your program grow and thrive.

Developing Partners

Identify and develop relationships with key groups and constituencies, such as:

- Alzheimer's Association chapters and regional offices.
- local medical centers.
- assisted-living facilities.
- nursing homes.
- adult day centers.

Meet with representatives from these groups to familiarize yourself with the world of dementia care and to involve them in the program. The earlier in your planning you can do this, the better. Their advice and contributions will help your program meet your community's expectations and needs. Ask people in these groups to suggest other organizations to contact and to elicit support for your marketing and outreach.

When you contact assisted-living facilities, adult day centers, or nursing homes, explain the program, determine whether or not there is any interest, and answer questions. Once you have determined that you will develop a partnership, visit the facility in order to:

- meet key staff.
- meet some of the people with Alzheimer's disease.

- become more familiar with the environment and daily activities.
- learn about the special needs or requirements of individuals likely to participate in your program.

The visit should, if possible, include the facility's activity coordinator and a museum educator who is likely to conduct the program. You might also bring some postcards or posters of artwork that might be included on a typical tour in order to help familiarize facility staff with your museum's collection.

Informing the Community

You should use a variety of methods to let the community know about your program and invite participation. You can also share information and updates through the partnerships you have developed.

Regular mailings

Send invitations by regular mail and/or e-mail. At first you can use a mailing list made up of museum members and others included on community/access mailing lists, but eventually you should create a mailing list specifically focused on people with Alzheimer's disease and their caregivers. Send these invitations as often as you have programs. If you hold programs monthly, mail the notices monthly in enough time for recipients to register for the program you are advertising.

At each program, check that you have current mailing information for all of the participants and update and expand your address list accordingly. Ask your participants to help you by inviting other individuals and by informing facility staff who might be interested in the program.

“The woman who cares for my grandmother has recruited any number of caregivers to come with their charges. This experience has proved an important way for them to connect with the people they care for, as well as with each other.”

MoMA participant

Web site

Highlight the program on your museum's Web site with a link to more detailed information on the program, such as:

- an explanation of its intended audience.
- dates and times of programs.
- a brief description of what happens before, during, and after programs.
- clear instructions and contact information for people who want to learn more or register.
- suggestions for what participants might do before and after a program to extend the experience.
- details about accessibility, transportation, parking, cost, and other logistics.

Use large type that is easy to read. Remember to credit your funders and supporters. Images of art to be included in upcoming programs can help make the site more inviting and enticing. Once the program is underway, you might also post photographs of the program, participants, and educators, but be sure to get written permission from them ahead of time.

Brochures

Prepare pamphlets or brochures that include much of the same information as the Web site. Use large print and images to enhance readability. Place these brochures in a prominent location at the reception desk of your museum. Mail them to key groups, constituencies, families, and healthcare professionals working in the field. Distribute them whenever you meet with or speak to community groups.

Meetings and conferences

Speak about your program's offerings at support groups, community meetings, and local or regional conferences. Present the information and discuss the benefits for participants and the community as a whole.

Logistics

Paying attention to the administrative logistics early in your planning will pave the way for a smooth program later. Some important aspects are reservations and scheduling, transportation and parking, check-in and checkout procedures, and how you will handle last-minute adjustments.

Reservations and Scheduling

The person who handles phone reservations is the first point of contact for most participants. The initial telephone interaction sets the tone for your program and should be as clear as possible. When taking a group reservation it is important to find out:

- the number of participants with Alzheimer's disease, their gender, and their age.
- the number of caregivers.
- whether any of the participants are nonverbal.
- whether any of the participants needs a wheelchair.
- if applicable, the relationship of the caregiver to the person with dementia.
- whether any participant has other disabilities, including hearing difficulties.



- whether participants have any previous museum experience.
- whether participants have any previous art-making experience.
- how they learned about the program.
- any other special needs or information.

Be sure to share the reservationist's name and number for questions, your cancellation policy, and the cost of the program, if any. If you are registering a group, follow up a few days before the tour by contacting the group leader. Confirm all relevant information, including the date and time of the program, the number of participants, and arrival instructions.

If you are registering participants individually, take the same information for each reservation and compile it as you go. If many families register, it may be difficult to confirm with them before the program. It is always best to expect that some families will not make it, while others may show up without preregistering.

Transportation and Parking

Think ahead about how participants will get to and from the museum. Tell them about various options and help them as much as possible in their planning. Everyone will greatly appreciate a trip that is made as simple as possible. For individuals or groups providing their own transportation, consider:

- how far away they are and how long the trip will take.
- what the best route is to the museum.

- whether public transportation is available or there are free (or inexpensive) means of transportation for people with disabilities (such as Access-A-Ride or other services).
- whether there is reasonably priced parking close by or a lot that gives a museum discount.

Check-in and Checkout

Determine the optimal place for check-in and check-out. Look for a site that:

- is relatively small.
- is wheelchair accessible.
- has a coat rack or checkroom nearby.
- has restrooms nearby.
- is as close to parking and the entrance as possible.
- is protected from heavy pedestrian traffic coming in and out of the museum.
- is quiet and free from distracting noise.
- has enough chairs or benches for participants to sit comfortably while waiting to begin.
- is within a short walking distance to your destination or is close to elevators.

In addition to a list of all registered participants, arrange to have supplies and equipment at the check-in site: portable stools, wheelchairs, coat racks, personal listening devices (which amplify the sound of the educator's voice), name tags (which help you communicate on a first-name basis with individual participants and will help them remember staff names), and information about future programs. If you are going to have more than one group at a time, assigning



different-colored name tags to each will help to distinguish them. Finally, plan what you will do at the end of the tour, including:

- sharing information about upcoming programs and offerings.
- collecting stools and personal listening devices.
- helping participants get their coats and other belongings.
- guiding participants to the restrooms.
- asking participants to complete written or oral evaluations (keeping in mind that individuals with dementia may need assistance).
- helping to locate cars, vans, buses, or other transportation.

If possible, provide small reproductions of works of art for participants to take home and offer participants passes so they can return to your museum on their own for free.

Last-Minute Adjustments

Very few plans are implemented exactly as designed, so expect the unexpected. When your program is in its early stages, try to meet with the staff the day before the program. Revisit your plan and identify any changes:

- Have there been cancellations?
- Has the number of participants changed?
- Do the groups need to be adjusted?
- Are enough educators/staff/volunteers available and ready?

- Are there any special issues (such as building maintenance, works no longer on view, special exhibit installations) to take into account?
- Is there anything else that could potentially affect the program, such as weather or holidays?

Stay in touch with each other during the hours preceding the program. Go over the details and make last-minute modifications, if necessary. Success requires close and direct communication among committed staff.

Most importantly, be flexible. Some participants will be early, others will arrive late. One of the check-in staff should remain at your check-in location for thirty minutes beyond the program's scheduled start time to accommodate late arrivals. Welcome everyone who wishes to participate.

Art-Looking Programs

Whether you will be hosting a group from a care organization or a group of individual families for an art-looking program, you should develop a model that fits the specific needs and interests of your participants. Foundations for Engagement with Art (page 111) describes in detail the process outlined below and provides specific examples. If you are working off-site at a care organization, the essence of your program will be similar to the museum experience. You will, however, need to use reproductions or digital images, and take into consideration other logistical issues relevant to the site you are visiting. Guide for Care Organizations (page 143) touches on issues to consider at facilities outside the museum setting.

“Particularly for people who have Alzheimer’s and their caregivers, it is important to have a focused experience without any distractions—and that certainly is provided.”

MoMA participant

Preparing a Tour

Selecting a theme

Your theme should be appropriate and relevant for individuals with cognitive impairment and should capture the interest and imagination of all participants. You can focus on a particular artist, topic, or period, highlight important works from your museum's collection, or focus on special exhibitions.

Selecting the works of art

Choose four to six works that fit into your theme and plot your route between them. Sequence the works in a way that connects them to the theme that you have chosen. The location of the works relative to one another (if using original works in gallery spaces) and the activities that will take place in front of them will also help determine the sequence. Make sure to take into consideration the scale of the works as well as the number of adjacent works: do not select artworks that are too small and avoid walls or areas where there is an overload of images. Avoid excess travel: do not choose works that are too far away from each other. Also consider the comfort level of the galleries you will visit (lighting, seating, temperature) and be aware of other events that might be taking place and could potentially distract participants.

Preparing art-historical information

Research the works and artists that you will be showing and discussing using your museum's resources, exhibition catalogues, museum wall labels, and books. Plan to weave information into your conversation that will enhance participants' understanding, help validate their interpretations, and spark their interest. You may also prepare to answer questions relating to general museum operation,

such as protocol for acquiring work, planning exhibitions, and the logistics of displaying works. This "insider information" makes participants feel that they are getting a behind-the-scenes tour.

Preparing discussion questions

Plan three to five concrete discussion questions that invite exploration of each work. Start with simple questions like, "What do you see in this painting?" or, "What colors does the artist use?" As the group gets more comfortable, you will move on to more interpretive questions such as, "What would you title this painting?" or, "What do you think happens next?"

Planning a small-group conversation (Turn and Talk)

Prepare a discussion-based activity connected to one of the works to facilitate further discussion and foster interaction among the participants. The activity should be straightforward and allow participants to connect the work and theme to their personal lives and imaginations.

The Day of the Program

Welcome

On the day of the program, prepare all necessary materials for check-in. As participants arrive, greet them warmly. Give them name tags, stools, and personal listening devices, if necessary. Take their coats and do whatever else you can to make them as comfortable as possible.

Starting your tour

While waiting for the program to begin, try to connect with the participants by chatting, asking about their day, or sharing some personal information about yourself. As the program begins, put participants at ease by giving them information about where they are and what they will be doing. Let them know that the program is meant to be an interactive, discussion-based exploration, not a lecture, and that they will concentrate on only a handful of works. This program may be quite different from what they are used to. Introduce the theme and mention the names of some of the artists whose works you will view.

In the galleries

As you move toward the first work, let the participants enjoy the space and environment of the museum itself. Move slowly, pointing out various elements of the architecture and design. Share some anecdotes about the history of the museum and its development. Allow the presence of the artworks and the museum environment to become a part of the experience.

While in the galleries, it is important to keep in mind the following structure and guidelines, which are

also detailed in Foundations for Engagement with Art (page 111). Adhering to these steps creates a supportive and engaging environment. Maintain a sense of humor and sincerity in your conversation while you take participants through the following phases of their engagement with each work:

OBSERVATION

Invite participants to take a close look at the work of art before they take their seats. Give them plenty of time to settle in and get comfortable. The seating arrangement should allow for every person to have an unrestricted view of the work. Once they are seated, encourage participants to observe quietly for about one minute before they begin to describe what they see.

DESCRIPTION

Start by simply asking people to list what they see and to describe the work. Ask questions that prompt description, talk directly to each participant, and make eye contact. Repeat and summarize all the observations to create a full visual inventory of the work.

INTERPRETATION

After taking a complete visual inventory, prompt interpretation of the work. Encourage breadth and variety of interpretation. Ask different kinds of questions to foster more creative explorations. Provide art-historical information that is relevant to the group's responses and interests.

CONNECTION

As the program progresses, have participants connect the artwork to their lives and experiences and to the world. This will enable the group to gain new insights about the work and each other. Do not hesitate to invite opinions or share your own perspective.

“I think for the people who are planning these programs and giving the tours we have to remember to be as selfless as possible. We should not get too tied up in our own anxieties and live in the moment as the people in the program are.”

Celeste V. Fetta, Manager of Adult and Higher Education and Acting Chair of the Adult Education Department,
The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, Virginia

SMALL-GROUP CONVERSATION (TURN AND TALK)

At the second or third work, integrate a smaller-group discussion. Divide participants into groups of six or fewer individuals to discuss works more intimately. Give the groups a prompt that will encourage them to explore an idea further or to connect the work to their own personal life experiences.

SUMMARY

Toward the end of the discussion of each work (and at the end of the program), bring together the various threads of conversation, summarizing and synthesizing the ideas and opinions that have come up. Show your enthusiasm, and focus on the value of these explorations. Thank the participants for sharing and open the discussion to final comments.

Art-Making Programs

There is a wide range of mediums, materials, techniques, and strategies that you can use within art-making programs. Projects will depend on the educator's areas of interest and expertise, as well as the interests and abilities of participants. This portion of the guide provides an outline for general planning and implementation of art-making programs both at your museum and off-site. For sample projects related to specific themes, see the Art Modules included with this publication.

It is important to determine the participants' interest in making art. Some adults who have not made art regularly throughout their lives may not be comfortable with this type of expression, while others may be very keen to get involved. When determining whether you will offer art-making programs, take the following into consideration:

- The experience and comfort-level of your staff. Are the educators comfortable facilitating both art-looking and art-making programs? Are they interested in working with the same group over time, if requested? Are they available to work off-site at a care organization, if necessary?
- The size of the groups. Is the group too large? Will members be sufficiently interested and engaged? Will group size affect their ability to participate?
- Logistical considerations related to the art-making program or to a program that includes both art-making and art-looking components. For example, if you are thinking of looking and discussing art in the galleries followed by an art-making activity, will you have enough time? (A program should not exceed two hours.) Will a studio space be available? Are the studios close to the galleries and easily accessible?

Designing the Projects

Project goals

Consider the goals of your program and the ways in which you will complement art-making projects in the studio with discussions of original works of art or reproductions. If you are working off-site, think about the amount of time you will spend discussing artwork and the amount of time you will spend creating artwork. Also, the nature of the project will depend on how many programs you will have with the same participants. You can produce more in-depth work if you have multiple art-making programs with the same group, but you can also create interesting work in one program.

Overall, keep the projects clear and enjoyable. You want to tap into participants' artistic potential and creativity without overwhelming them with complex instructions. Design projects that are interesting and intriguing to participants, but do not necessarily demand advanced artistic skills, and avoid those that could be deemed childish. Provide some structure while leaving plenty of room for flexibility and individual adaptations. Be sure to take into account the physical limitations and reduced dexterity that may come with aging when choosing materials and processes. Invite caregivers to participate when possible and appropriate.

Selecting a theme

Your project should have an overall theme to provide structure and purpose to the experience. In relation to this theme, research artists whose work you can show as examples. If you are in the museum, you can visit the galleries prior to the studio component or after launching some of the activities. There should be a lot of synergy between discussion of artworks in the museum and the hands-on engagement of the participants. Make it clear that you are showing these works as reflection and study pieces only and not suggesting that the participants should try to produce similar results.

Making samples

Showing samples of finished artwork or works in progress will help participants get a better idea of what they can create. A handmade example will create an opportunity for you to share something personal with the group. The sample should demonstrate a level of ability that is accessible to all participants.

Preparing materials and supplies

Make sure you have enough supplies for everyone. Anticipate that some participants may want to make more than one object. If you are traveling off-site, make sure to plan ahead regarding what materials you need to bring and what the off-site facility can provide.

Providing instructions

Use step-by-step directions that are easy to understand and follow. For projects that have a limited number of steps, write out the instructions ahead of time to share on the day of the program. Showing examples of works in progress can help to make instructions easier to understand.

Implementing the Program

Introducing the program

Welcome the group with warmth and enthusiasm. Ask if any participants are artists or have experience making art. Explain what participants will be creating and how. Introduce them to the supplies you have brought and explain how to use them. Tell everyone the overall theme to help provide a framework for the project. Explain the amount of time you will be spending in the studio and the way you will connect the work in the studio to conversations in the galleries.

Discussing artwork

Using the strategies outlined in Foundations for Engagement with Art (page 111), lead participants in a discussion of one or more works by other artists, relating them to your overall theme. Make sure to address materials and techniques and the formal



properties of the works. Although it is always best to look at original works of art in the galleries, you could also use reproductions in the studio. Remember to leave images visible as participants work on their own projects. If you are working off-site, make sure to bring reproductions and/or plan to show digital images.

Creating a positive work environment

Choose the most comfortable and least distracting classroom or studio space available. The seating, lighting, and temperature should all be optimal in terms of comfort. During the participants' first program, you might even tell them about the function of the studio for this and other programs at the museum in order to familiarize them with the space. If you are working off-site, make sure to plan with the staff of the facility ahead of time to reserve and prepare a space with minimal distractions.

Help participants get started with their projects by assisting them at any level necessary. Share instructions and repeat as often as needed. Make sure to balance your aims for the program with the particular mood and interests of the group. Do your best to adjust to distractions of all kinds.

Supporting participants

Create a "failure-free" experience, one that is safe and that builds confidence, and be ready to adjust if needed to accommodate differences in ability and interest. Show patience with your words and your tone, use humor, and share personal stories to set an informal mood. Do not be condescending. Offer positive reinforcement with specific praise; for example, "I like your use of green in this painting" is more useful than a general evaluative comment such as "This is great."

Presenting artwork

Have participants share their work with the rest of the group and say as much as they like about it. They can do this alone or together with their caregivers. Presenting the work allows participants to connect with each other as well as with staff, and it helps everyone feel validated and successful.

Displaying artwork

If the museum has a space to display work created as part of education programs, consider reserving that space for an upcoming exhibition of the participants' work. If you have secured the space and know that the exhibition will take place at the conclusion of the programs, let participants know from the outset. Invite family, friends, funders, and others you believe might be interested. Participants will be empowered by viewing their own and others' creations. Works should be accompanied by labels that provide the artist's name and title of the work in large, legible type. If you are working off-site, encourage the staff of the facility to display the participants' works. If your studio programs have involved different groups, the final exhibition can include a chosen piece by each participant. After the show, return the work to the participants.

"We have witnessed incredible responses from participants. Many have been inspired by the gallery discussions and have made numerous connections to their own lives. In addition, working with our partners has been an extremely fulfilling and rewarding experience on many levels for the museum staff."

Karleen Gardner, Curator of Education, The Memphis Brooks Museum of Art, Memphis