The Campus Art Museum: A Qualitative Study

III. Museum Art in Everyday Life

A Report to the Samuel H. Kress Foundation

By Corrine Glesne
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University of Arizona
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Museum Art in Everyday Life

With art museums or exhibition galleries included in at least 700 academic institutions in the United States (Russell & Spencer 2000, 6), academic art museums contribute to the formal education of many. Art museum educators reach out to children in public schools and develop programs for colleges and universities. Increasingly, campus art museums create a position for a person to assist faculty in incorporating art into teaching, assignments, and research across disciplines (Goethals & Fabing 2007, Villeneuve 2007). Less recognized is the role of academic art museums in contributing to informal education and the everyday lives of people. This report focuses on such contributions and is based on interviews at seven academic institutions identified as having exemplary art museums, conducted as part of The Campus Art Museum: A Qualitative Study. As interviewees said, what is important is to “get them through the door.” Then, the art and accompanying didactics become the educators and the muses.

The report begins with descriptions of the roles art museums can play beyond contributions to teaching and research. Nearly three-fourths of the participants in the research were involved in the arts—teaching, studying, or working at art museums. Most of those remaining interacted in some way with art museums. The second section, therefore, focuses on how interviewees became engaged with art and art museums. The third section attends to how participants talked about what art and art museums mean in their lives. This report concludes with thoughts about what having a campus art museum can contribute to an institution and the people who study and work there. See Appendix A for a list of acronyms used.

How to Get Them in the Door: Interacting with the Art Museum Outside of Classes

"So, the real issue is to get them in the door and get them to look."
Campus Art Museum Director

I’m a firm believer that the best education is actually self-education... engage students to be so compelled by something that they will follow up. So, the real issue is to get them in the door and get them in to look. (campus art museum director)

1. A version of this report has been published: see Glesne, Corrine. 2012 (spring). Museum Art in Everyday Life, LEARNing Landscapes (available at http://www.learninglandscapes.ca/).

2. The seven institutions include Indiana University, University of Notre Dame, Oberlin College, University of Arizona, University of Chicago, University of Kansas, and University of Missouri. Site selection procedures involved “extreme case” sampling in that we asked campus art museums that had received Kress Collections (twenty-three) to self-identify as exemplary of what campus art museums at their best could be, and to submit evidence if interested in participating in the study. With the resulting pool of those museums that we also perceived as exemplary based on supporting documents (11), we used maximum variation sampling to select cases that varied widely on indicators such as private/public institutions, large/small campus populations, rural/urban locations, and recipient or not of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation’s College and University Art Museum Program multi-year grants. In total, 129 people were interviewed.

3. Ellipses (...) indicate that words have been edited from the transcripts for the sake of space. Care was taken to not change the meaning of transcribed responses.
It’s about getting students into the museum, doing social activities in the museum, maybe getting people into the galleries that never would have ordinarily entered a gallery… Once you see one thing in the museum, you want to see another thing. It’s kind of like a contagious type thing. (student)

General wisdom has it that once people visit art museums, they are more likely to return. Museum directors and staff tend to believe in the power of intrinsic motivation, in people’s ability to learn through individual interests and engagement. Students, faculty, and community members indeed make use of the museums on their own, taking visitors there or seeking refuge when a quiet space is needed. Campus art museums generally are free, at least to students and faculty,\(^4\) making it easy to drop in for a few minutes or several hours as time allows. Two museums in the study have popular cafes that attract people for coffee and, ideally, a visit to a gallery. Individual visits are sporadic, however, and do not work well to engage those who have never visited art museums before. Each museum is committed to inviting and enticing students, faculty, and community members to the museum in ways that go beyond the curriculum or individual drop-ins. Museum staff and students organize social gatherings, talks, and art-based activities. The museum is also a source of student employment on some campuses, occasionally attracting students who have not previously been to an art museum. This section reports on respondents’ use of campus art museums through individual visits, social events, and work.

Finding Solace and Inspiration and Sharing with Others

Some faculty and students liken certain works of art to *family* and say that whenever they have a few minutes, they go for a brief visit. A professor in the sciences said, "I have a favorite gallery. There’s a painting up there that’s my favorite in this building and if I’ve got five minutes, I’ll go up and say ‘hello.’" Perhaps because the art history department is located in the same building as the Spencer Museum of Art (Spencer), students there mention how they frequently visit the museum over class breaks: "I’ll come up for ten minutes and just go look at something I like." This undergraduate in art history talked about how seeing things in the museum led her to want to know more about the pieces and so she’d use them in assignments: "I’ve seen things that I like that because I like them, I’ve used them in papers, but I liked them like months before I’ve gotten an assignment and so when I’ve got the assignment, I’ve used them." A graduate student talked about how he visits the campus art museum as a way to relax, but in the process, the visit inspires his own work: "I feel it is a release to come here and just relax and to look at other people’s prints rather than work on my own. I feel it really helps me process how I want to further my own work, my own education by looking at these material objects that are collected here."

The museum is thereby used as a solo experience for those seeking quiet moments of reflection, introspection, inspiration, or pleasure. It is also, however, used as a social space to share with others. Students, faculty, and community

\(^4\) The University of Arizona Museum of Art has recently begun charging an admission fee to everyone except university students, faculty, and staff.
members often see the campus art museum as a place to take family or friends, as witness these testimonials:

*When I have visitors... it is the first place I take them in Oberlin because it’s the thing we are really proud of and that’s why I agreed to volunteer at the museum to do whatever I could to make sure that it continues.* (community member, Oberlin College)

*There’s something called Junior Parent Weekend and juniors invite their parents to campus for the weekend to let them know what’s going on on campus, to kind of show off what’s going on. And we notice a big uptake in student visitors to the museum. They bring their parents to the museum.* (museum staff, University of Notre Dame)

*I feel like I evangelize when I’m in the museum. I tend to bring everyone here. If someone wants to meet up for coffee or something, I say, “Hey, we should just go to the art museum because it’s free”... I’ve met blind dates here because it’s a safe space and the guards know me... I bring my family every time they come to town.* (student, University of Kansas)

Students working at the museum talked about getting their friends there, sometimes to see an exhibit, sometimes to help them prepare for an event:

*When I started as a docent, I would take my friends here and practiced on them, give them the tours, and they were like, “Wow, if you had never brought me here I wouldn’t have ever come”.* (student, Indiana University)

Five of the museums have small gift shops, but they do not appear to attract visitors to the museum. I observed few people in the gift shops other than one that was part of a lively café. An administrative assistant at one museum told me that with the downturn in the economy, people are not buying things at the shop and that the museum has to stock only relatively inexpensive items. The director at another museum said that they used to have a gift shop, but closed it to make a gallery space for works on paper. Since space is at a premium at all of the museums, this may be useful advice for some of those still hanging onto shops.

The museum is thus a venue that some people seek out and make frequent use of, taking others with them from time to time. Nonetheless, museum personnel and students on all of the campuses talked about the challenge of getting students and faculty, particularly those in disciplines other than the arts, to come to the museum. Students sometimes mentioned that other students do not even know where the museum is located. Indeed, this is true. I wandered across two of the large campuses in the study asking directions to the art museum and received perplexed responses. Museum staff, student groups associated with the museum, and community associations such as *Friends of the Museum* all work to create and host social events to attract others to the campus art museum and to make the spaces better known and used.
Engaging Through Social Events

Social events as used here refer to organized occasions hosted at the museum with the hope of linking an event with a visit to the galleries. Some social events, such as lectures and artist demonstrations are commonly free. Other social events are organized as fund-raisers. Campus and community groups can also rent museum spaces for closed receptions. A political science professor, for example, arranged a wine and cheese reception at the campus art museum for faculty in his department, including a short talk by the museum director. At another institution, a group of students planned a Fancy Night with a chocolate fountain to be held in the cast gallery of the museum.

Events for Campus and Community

Social events for both the campus and the larger community include exhibition openings, talks and performances (often music), art demonstrations, and money-raising events such as art auctions or banquets. Although money-raising events are more directed toward the larger community than students, students often partake in them by ushering or serving food to attendees, guiding tours, or even modeling “wearable art” for an art auction. Allen After Hours is popular in Oberlin where once a month the Allen Memorial Art Museum (Allen or AMAM) opens its doors in the evening to students and community members. Music (often played by students from the Oberlin College Conservatory) and food accompany an event, such as an artist demonstration or a talk. Docent-guided museum tours are available. The Snite Museum of Art (Snite) at the University of Notre Dame creates special programs on football Saturdays, making the museum part of the tailgate parties by welcoming students, parents, and alumni coming to the games. As one interviewee said, “Our biggest exhibit season is fall and it’s no coincidence that our exhibits tend to open with the first football game and close with the last football game.” The College of Arts and Letters collaborates with the Snite and provides a Saturday Scholars lecture in the museum at noon on football Saturdays. Again, docents are at the ready to give tours.

At the University of Chicago, Sketching at the Smart is an-going program coordinated by the David and Alfred Smart Museum (Smart) in conjunction with the studio and visual arts departments. Once a quarter, the museum hires a model to pose in the lobby of the museum and invites students, staff, and community members to come and sketch. The museum provides paper and other art-making supplies and graduate students in the Department of Visual Art provide instruction if desired. The University of Missouri Museum of Art and Archaeology (MU Museum of Art and Archaeology) attracts people from the community and the university through events such as a Crawfish Boil on the green outside the museum, a Slow Art Day promising “slow food, slow conversation, and slow art” (Museum of Art and Archaeology, 2011), and Art in Bloom, an annual event where local florists and garden club members create flower arrangements inspired by and paired with a work of art in the museum.

5. The museums host various kinds of fund-raising events, such as Fresh Paint at the University of Arizona Museum of Art where works of local artists are auctioned or the Paintbrush Ball at the University of Missouri Museum of Art and Archaeology where a $70 ticket treats one to a cheese and wine reception, dinner, a silent auction, and dancing.
Museum personnel have learned that by specifically collaborating with students and faculty in departments not usually associated with visual arts, they are able to extend the reach of the museum. For example, a curator at the University of Arizona Museum of Art (UAMA) advertised for three students from the Math Department to work with her on an exhibit. Together she and the students developed plans for the exhibit, chose works from the collection, and wrote up educational didactics that took the viewer from line to fractals. I was visiting when one of the math students and his professor spoke on *Jackson Pollock and Fractals* to an over-flow crowd in the exhibition gallery. As we waited for the session to begin, I chatted with two male students and asked if they were studying math or art. They were both math students and neither had ever been in the campus art museum before. Attendance was not required.

Other than fundraisers, museum events targeted primarily at the wider community are often associated with the K-12 educational mission of the museum and focus on children and their families. For example, at the culmination of a fifth grade program at the Smart, students choose an art work in the museum and give a presentation on it at the museum. Pizza is provided and “it gets the whole family involved.” Although such programs are not directed towards the campus, college or university students are often involved as docents or as facilitators of arts-based activities.

**Events for Students on Campus**

Social events directed primarily towards students tend to have one thing in common: food. As a student security guard stated, “College students want free food, music, and something they can believe in.” Student socials tend to be organized by students, the main task of the Spencer student advisory committee, for example. Some of the events appear to be a creative innovation of a particular campus, but good ideas spread quickly through museum networks and the Internet. For example, the Smart holds *Study at the Smart* right before finals, a suggestion by a faculty member of an educational advisory committee, as described by Smart personnel:

> We were trying to think of ways to engage UC students, their dorms are right here. You can throw a rock and break a window but students don’t come to the museum for public programs.... They don’t really come to hang out and just have fun or relax because the degree programs are very rigorous here. So he [the faculty committee member], half-jokingly, said, “You should just have a study program because all the students do is spend time at the library anyway.” UC has this moniker “Where fun goes to die.” So we decided to have a study program and keep the museum open until one AM at the start of reading period and just set up tables and power strips for computers and have free coffee and food and see what happens.

On *Study at the Smart* evenings, the museum opens to students at nine pm:

> They are waiting outside the door and then... they are sprawled on the floors of the galleries. They take off their shoes.... It’s a social thing and it’s a motivating
thing for them to get organized for reading period and it’s a space that’s different from the library.

At eleven o’clock in the evening trays of food are set out in the lobby for a study break. According to students, gallery attendants, and curators, students who never come to the museum otherwise come on study nights. The Spencer has also begun a study night event during finals, providing free coffee and soft drinks. Their academic curator “got the ball rolling” and she happens to have studied at UC. One hundred and fifty to two hundred students attended and “really loved it,” reported a member of the student advisory committee.

Other social events for students include scavenger hunts (accompanied by free coffee and donuts) at the beginning of each semester at the Indiana University Art Museum (IUAM). When students have found the three items indicated by their clues, they can put a card in a box for a drawing. Doughnuts seem particularly popular. Dunk and Draw at the Spencer invites students to come to the museum to eat doughnuts and draw. The UAMA held a Postsecret event where, according to a student, “people send anonymous secrets in on postcards and… we called them Wildcat Confessions. And so every week they would put some chosen Wildcat Confessions up on the gallery wall and people could come to see if their secret was posted.” As students and the museums work together to attract campus students to the museums, they tend to not set up accompanying tours, but rather hope students will be introduced to the museum space, feel comfortable there, see something of interest, and more easily return.

When one museum tried to promote the museum as a good place to take a date, I heard resistance. As a student noted, “except on Tuesdays, the museum closes at four which doesn’t make it such a good place for dates.” The hours that the museums are open provide a consistent challenge for attracting students outside of classes. Curators, directors, and students wish that the museum could be open more at night. Staying open longer requires more hours for security personnel and results in other expenses for the museum. Most do not have that luxury.

Who attends museum events is another challenge. When asked about this, a student at the University of Kansas replied, “Lots of art history and fine arts students come because they feel comfortable, but they are trying to make it as welcoming as possible to others. But that’s who is interested too.” The AMAM at Oberlin is one museum that appears to successfully attract students and faculty across the disciplines. Size is in their favor. With around 2,800 students and a museum staff dedicated to integrating the museum throughout the campus and community, students know about the museum and by report, make use of it. A contributing factor is the general campus culture of valuing music and visual arts and Oberlin’s long history of honoring the arts as exemplified by the Art Rental Program.

The Art Rental Program was perhaps the most-loved museum event that I heard about. The tradition began in 1940 when founded by Ellen Johnson, an active professor of art history and former art librarian, who continues to be brought up in conversations at Oberlin. For a nominal fee ($5) per work of art, Oberlin students and members of the community are able to rent up to two original works of art each semester from an Art Rental collection of nearly 400 objects. A 1947 alum of Oberlin said she “always took part in the art rental,” even though she was a
conservatory student. Fifty-five years later, the event is as popular as ever. In fact, students begin camping out the night before rental begins:

“It’s interesting to watch students... some of the people who camp out, they just like really get into the thrill of it and they aren’t necessarily the people who know a lot about the art or get that excited about art otherwise, but they feel passionate about this. Some people will stand in line for a really long time and they will just choose works they like, so not by the name; some people won’t know how to judge it otherwise so it will just be a name they’ve heard about. Some people you can tell, they are really like connoisseurs when they are choosing the works. (curatorial assistant)

An art history professor described her perspective of the program:

“They love it. And you talk about the resonance and wonder coming out of their eyes as they carry their loot out of the place and they ran out this year. The kids slept out on the sidewalk over night and they ran out of pieces. There is this intensity here which really makes it wonderful.... There’s nothing that compares to the primacy of the actual object.... It is magical.

Students state that the art rental program “shows immense respect between the faculty and the students” and the ability to “have the art in your apartment takes away from that stigma of art being like something that can only be understood or enjoyed by the elite.” I asked museum staff if they ever had problems with damaged or missing pieces, and was told that because the program was a tradition at Oberlin, “students know the respect they should give the art.” All of the pieces are behind glass and over the years, some of the frames have become worn, but the museum received a gift from the class of 1960 to replace the art rental frames and they are using this process as a chance to attend to any conservation work that the pieces might need.

The art rental collection is not a compilation of the least valuable works in the museum, but rather a range of works by well-known to lesser-known artists. Each semester some lucky student gets to hang a Picasso or a Toulouse-Lautrec in her or his living space. As a curatorial assistant noted, “I was over at a friend’s house last night—she’s a senior, has her own off-campus house, and she had a Picasso in the living room.” The museum has a good relationship with a retirement community near the college and some of its members volunteer at the museum. Three volunteers told me how proud they were to get to live with the art rental collection on the walls of the central building in their complex during the summers. Photos of this event can be found at the AMAM web site: http://www.oberlin.edu/amam/artrent.html.

Learning Through Work

Student respondents working at the campus art museums enjoy being there. For many, experiences at the museum are helping them decide on majors or careers. Some of the students have paid jobs, some have internships or assistantships.
where they receive units of credit in return for their labor; and yet others have fellowships that involve a stipend plus tuition and fee waivers. As a rule, students more than enjoy their work at the museum, they are enthusiastic, as these accounts demonstrate:

The reason I am here at the art museum is that my parents, when I was a freshman coming here to the [institution], they said “you need to get a job before you get there.” So I said, “Okay” and started looking online and they had a posting for the business office, sort of an assistant... so I applied... and I got the job.... A little bit into my job there, I got asked to help with an exhibition and I said “sure” and now I’m kind of all over the place. I help with exhibitions and with the business office too so my new title is “curatorial museum assistant”.... It’s fun to know the process of how art goes up on the wall and to, you know, very carefully measure everything and you’ll be standing there and the curator will ask, even us the students, “Does this look okay? What do you think about this? Will you look at this? When you walk in, how do you feel?” It’s really cool to be part of that. I’ve been a part of every tiny little thing in the museum, I’ve been here since August of 2008 so I’ve spent lots of time here and am very happy here and I’ve obviously not quit because I love it.

The reason I’m working here is that my mom actually suggested looking at the museums on campus for a job. Because I’m a history major, I particularly really like European art and history and, like right now, I’m a history major with classics and Chinese language minor. So, I started working here and I just absolutely love it. It’s wonderful to get to know the people around here and the people who come in to look at the art and it’s just really fun to see how everything goes on. I’m starting to work with the curator of education and as well will be doing internships with the curator over the summer and into the fall. So I’m really looking forward to that because I’d like to go to graduate school in the museum studies realm so this has definitely helped me, has given me invaluable insight into the world of museums.

Through hands-on learning, students become familiar with planning and preparing exhibition space, curating a show, writing labels, handling and storing art, record keeping, provenance research, leading tours and educating others about art, and with security concerns—the many and varied tasks associated with running an art museum. The work often changes for students, providing them with multiple experiences in the museum. An interesting paradox is that some of the museums with the fewest resources rely heavily on students’ input and work to remain active. As a result, those students appear to receive even more responsibility and experiences in museum work than in museums with more resources and these students are excited about their opportunities.
How Participants Became Engaged with Art and Art Museums

How do those who are interested in and supportive of art and art museums become that way? What happens in their past that they not only become enamored with art but also, perhaps, choose a career that allows them to be immersed in art or museum life? I was talking with a select group—with art museum directors, curators, and other museum staff; with students who, often, are studying art history or art education; with faculty who make use of the museum in their classes; and with community members who are museum docents, volunteers, or board members, or alumni who remain connected in some way with the museum. From them, I sought to learn about aspects of their past that helped them become interested in the arts and, ultimately, art museums. Four factors seem to have had the largest influence:

1. **Art.** As a child, they were surrounded by art, often because a parent was an artist. They grew up with art and, sometimes, with a gift for drawing or painting.

2. **Course.** As a college student or, sometimes, as a high school student, they took an art history course that, generally in combination with a fantastic teacher, interested them in taking more courses and got them interested in art and art museums.

3. **Job.** They took a job in an art museum (or gallery or frame shop) and, through the exposure and associated experiences, decided they wanted to pursue work in an art museum.

4. **Museum.** They visited art museums and became interested in them.

Often, a combination of the above factors coalesced to encourage the respondent to pursue studies, work, and/or frequent interactions with art and museums. One would lead to the other, as when growing up in an art-centered environment led to taking courses in art and/or art history which led to a degree in the arts and a subsequent job in an art museum. Sometimes, however, the interest in the arts came more suddenly through a visit to an art museum or through a course. The following table focuses on different categories of respondents and the factors that appear as primary in interesting them in art museums.

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6. The thirty-four interviewees who are more removed from the art museum world are campus administrators, faculty loosely connected to the museum, and a few students who are at the museum because of a job. Many are, nonetheless, champions of the campus art museum.
Table III.1. How Interviewees Became Interested in Art Museums

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent Category</th>
<th>Art (exposure to as a child)</th>
<th>Course (college or high school)</th>
<th>Job or Internship (in art museum, gallery, etc.)</th>
<th>Museum Visits (as a child or later in life)</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Museum Staff &amp; Volunteers (31)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1 (frame shop)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>directors, curators, educators, registrars, docents, volunteers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students (24)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>undergraduates &amp; graduates in the arts of working in the museum</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts Faculty (6)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>studio, art history, art education, design</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty, Admin, Alum (18)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4 (research, photography, collaborations)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>disciplines other than visual arts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: This does not reflect the total number of participants in the study, but rather the number that talked about what interested them in art museums.

The numbers reported here are meant to indicate patterns and should not be taken as significant in themselves. As previously noted, respondents often talked about a combination of factors, and, for this table, I forced the issue, reporting only the item that seems the one that cemented their involvement with art museums. For example, a curator said,

*I grew up going to the St. Louis Art Museum when I was in high school.... I went to college planning to study history which I did, but then added in an art history and art double major, kind of as a lark because it was fun, not because I had any intention to do anything with that. And through happenstance..., I ended up doing a museum internship to replace a class I had dropped part way through a semester and that... gave me the behind the scenes window into the atmosphere and energy of a really great museum. And I did another internship at the Contemporary Art Museum in Houston and that’s where I really fell in love with museum work, it was actually in education... and helped me to think about the power to reach audiences.... That sucked me in and I ended up getting a curatorial assistant job there after I graduated and going back to get a masters, but from the time I started that curatorial assistantship position, I was totally hooked in.*

She was counted in the *job or internship* category, although her visits to the St. Louis Art Museum and the courses she took “as a lark” were also important. See Appendix B for more quotations from interviewees on influencing factors.

Looking at this table, it is obvious that growing up in an environment where people make art or crafts and appreciate various forms of art helps greatly...
to set the context for being associated with art throughout one’s life. Visits to art museums are often part of growing up in an environment friendly to the arts, but sometimes they take place later on and the experience may inspire that person to pursue studies, a career, or volunteer work with a museum. Visiting art museums was particularly important for the group of faculty, administrators, and alumni who had not pursued careers in the visual arts. Their interactions with art museums made them want to make use of and support campus art museums. A course (generally an art history course) that a student just happened to take to fulfill liberal arts and humanities requirements or signed up for because it was receiving rave reviews from other students worked to interest others in arts and art museums. This group had not necessarily received early socialization into the arts. Similarly, some found their niche or at least expanded their interest in art and art museums through a job or internship with a campus art museum. Some respondents knew nothing about art and art museums before getting a job with a museum; others were interested in art or art history but became more intrigued with museums through their work and decided to pursue museum careers.

When interviewees mentioned particular people who had interested them in art and/or art museums, they tended to talk about family—often their mothers. Teachers are also important, with specific teachers receiving credit. Following are a few examples of respondents talking about those who had influenced them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table II11.2. People that Influenced Interviewees’ Interest in Art: Example Quotations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mom</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Extended Family</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gender was not specifically asked about and mentioned only by a few; nonetheless the imbalance is striking as shown in Table III.3. Of the twenty-seven curators, museum educators, registrars, and other professional staff interviewed in the campus art museums twenty-one or 78% are female and out of the thirty-four students who are interns, student docents, security guards, or connected in some capacity with the museums, twenty-seven are female (79%). Docents or volunteers at the museum are more likely to be female than male, while museum directors, faculty, and administrators, whether in art disciplines or not, are more evenly divided in gender.
Table 111.3. Gender of Research Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Museum Directors</td>
<td>3 (43% of all directors)</td>
<td>4 (57%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Museum Staff</td>
<td>21 (78%)</td>
<td>6 (22%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Docents, Volunteers, Boards</td>
<td>9 (82%)</td>
<td>2 (18%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students active in the Museum</td>
<td>27 (79%)</td>
<td>7 (21%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts Faculty</td>
<td>9 (56%)</td>
<td>7 (44%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Faculty and Administrators</td>
<td>15 (48%)</td>
<td>16 (52%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note 1: Three more people were interviewed including an artist, a grade school teacher, and a recent alum and not included in this table. Two of these three are female.

Note 2: These figures reflect the interviewee population, not the total population of people in any category (other than museum directors) at the colleges/universities in the study.

In a conversation where gender was discussed, a faculty member in art education raised the hypothesis that art is more “okay” for girls to pursue than for boys. She stated, “As a child I was always interested in art, in drawing, painting, making things, crafts. I was encouraged and allowed to go into art, I think, because I was a girl.” Similarly to the feminization of teaching, work as museum assistants, particularly educators, became deemed appropriate for females in the early 1900s (Kletchka 2007). Colleges for women such as Vassar and Wellesley began preparing young women as museum assistants and educators, and art history became a suitable subject for young women pursuing college degrees. In the first half of the twentieth century, women began playing important roles in museums, but after World War II, their positions often were replaced by returning veterans (Schwarzer 2007). Women continued participating in the life of museums, but did so through volunteer associations, taking visitors through the museums and raising funds for museums through social galas (Schwarzer 2007). In the 1970s, women again began seeking professional positions in museums until, today, women make up almost two-thirds of all professional staff in museums (Schwarzer 2007). In difficult economic times, the professional jobs and programs cut first tend to be fields that have been “feminized,” occupations such as education and social work. Museum curatorial and education positions risk similar cuts.

“\textit{I love it when I hear a college student say, ‘I had no idea art spoke like this.’}”

Curator of Education

Art Talk: How Participants Talk about the Meaning of Art & Art Museums in their Lives

The words \textit{captured, inspired, spoke, struck, and fell in love} recurred in interviewees’ responses to questions about their engagement with art. They remember being struck by some work of art, stopped in their tracks, unable to move. They describe ways that museum objects inspire them in their own art endeavors or in life in general. They reflect upon how art helps them make connections, and how ideas, thoughts, or plans click into place. Many touch upon the power of art to move them; a few speak of personal revelations. In general, however, respondents find
Art Talk: How Participants Talk about the Meaning of Art & Art Museums in their Lives

It is difficult to express in words exactly what art has meant for them in their lives, not because it has not been meaningful—most are involved in the arts in some way—but because art is a different language and that is, perhaps, the source of its strongest impact. As a different language, it allows other ways of viewing the world, other ways of being in the world. I talked with a math senior, after his presentation in a crowded gallery room, and jotted down his words as he spoke about what he learned by being part of a team of three math students and museum curator creating an exhibit on math and art at the UAMA:

*I don’t think I could ever look at some things the same way again. I’m taking an art history course now. Art is like math. It is all structure and patterns. Math and art describe the abstract. I couldn’t have told you that a year ago. This work has really shaped my worldview.*

Art is a language that can engage senses, emotions, and analytical thought. Many respondents have vivid memories of a particular painting or museum exhibition that affected them deeply, and sometimes set them on a course for increased explorations of and experiences with visual arts, as in the following accounts:

*I remember being six or seven and going to the Nelson Atkins Gallery... and that was really the first art museum environment that I encountered. I still remember going and sitting in front of the Caravaggio that they have there of John the Baptist. It’s so bizarre that I’ve ended up sort of culminating my academic career so close to that work, because it really was the thing that sort of incited my interest in art history... I remember being obsessed with his toe nails, I mean the toe nails are so perfectly rendered and this fur is all around them and the way that Caravaggio depicted fur is so tactile and that was the point that I started thinking about how miraculous art works can be. That’s a piece I go back to every time I go to that museum. My significant other calls it my Caravaggio... I love that piece. (graduate intern)*

*My poor mother when I was a child took me to the Philadelphia Museum of Art and she never knew what happened. I fell in love with tapestries there in the entry way... I was in second grade, I was really young. When I saw that tapestry, I couldn’t believe these things existed and was just completely overcome by every aspect of it. (curator)*

*When I was twelve, my mother and father took us all to Europe and I remember the moment where everybody else was sort of going through, “Ok, we’ve seen this and we’ve seen this” and I’m dead stuck in front of a Degas drawing. I have this incredible awareness of the pastels—it’s a small pastel—and the paper and that creative imagination, that creative expressive merging.... And, I have to say, I was never the same. I knew... this was a place for me to find myself, this art world place, and worlds within worlds and that has never left me in hard times and good times, I can still find myself there.... Visual Arts started there for me, twelve years old, in the Louvre. (campus art museum director)*
Sometimes such moments were matched with serendipity. The emotions evoked by the art brought clearly to the forefront something one wanted to pursue, as for this woman who became a docent for a campus art museum:

_"I was in the art institute in Chicago and said, “I could just stay here for the rest of my life”.... It was like a wish. And I said, “Oh, I just wish I could stay here.” And when I got back to Bloomington, there was a thing in the paper about becoming a docent and doing a lot of stuff in the museum, and that was that."_

Sometimes the moment of impact was more drawn out, for example, over a semester course, as for a scientist working as an administrator:

_"I grew up in India mostly.... When I got to Harvard—I had gone to boarding schools all over Europe—I had seen a lot but I didn’t know the art history that connected these famous works. [I took an art history class to fulfill a requirement] and it was so much fun. We called it “Darkness at Noon,” it was great. This was Fine Arts 13, met at noon, and when the lights went out and the lecturer began showing slides, it was just the most exciting thing. I could hardly stand it. It was drawing connections among things I had seen in my life, and it wasn’t just simply Western art.... It just made a whole bunch of things click into place."

Respondents struggle with articulating exactly how art had “moved” them. A student security guard described a Rothko, her favorite work in the campus art museum, as “a feeling that is painted rather than an image, a subconscious feeling.” More often, respondents, particularly those who are in the arts, talked about how the collections in the museum inspire them, as stated by a student: “It’s inspirational. When I need to draw something for one of my classes, I walk around and something inspires me. There’s so much here.”

**What Difference Can A Campus Art Museum Make?**

Some colleges and universities don’t have a campus art museum. At the institutions with art museums, neither all students nor all faculty make use of it. At some places, however, the art museum is well-integrated into not only the academic lives of faculty and students, but also their day-to-day lives. In mission statements, vision statements, and strategic plans, colleges and universities often make reference to _quality of life_ for students, faculty, and sometimes the larger community. Such statements assert intentions to provide quality co-curricular experiences, venues for enhancing personal growth, vibrant environments in which to live and work, etc. The campus art museum easily augments goals like these.
What difference does having an art museum make beyond contribution to research and academics? Three main effects of the museum on participants’ lives emerge from the interviews. It can influence:

- decisions to come to that particular college/university
- decisions about future studies, careers, or avocations, and
- perspectives of oneself as well as of the college or university

For some, the campus art museum was a deciding factor in their decision to attend a particular school as a student or to accept a position as faculty. Following are quotes from both a student and a faculty member talking about the role of the Snite in their attraction to Notre Dame:

_Actually I had never visited the art department before I was accepted. I came here for conferences related to art... and I came to the Snite on both occasions because I usually gravitate towards museums wherever I go. I was incredibly impressed with the collection. I was just expecting it to be very small and unimpressive—university museums don't have to be that large, so when I saw it, I was very impressed. So when I was accepted, that was definitely something that factored into my decision._ (student)

_I was aware of the Museum when I came here because of the pre-Columbian collection. That really interested me... I was actually kind of blown away when I first came here and saw it. Part of the interview was to visit the museum—it was part of everything the university could offer._ (professor)

_Might they have come if the campus had no art museum? Art history professors at several institutions said that since faculty positions are difficult to find, they would have gone somewhere without a museum, if that were the only choice available, but that they are happy to be at schools with museums with extensive collections. Students, however, have more choices about which institution to attend and those who already have an interest in art history, museum studies, or arts in general are likely to opt, if they can, for a school with a good art museum. The possible influence of the art museum on helping to decide a student’s career is significant. One student stated, “I probably wouldn't have realized I wanted to have a career in the arts if it hadn't been for the museum. It has helped me discover what I want to do. I really appreciate this museum.” Others made similar comments. This influence most often comes through the opportunity for students to work at the museum. Some students who begin their studies planning to become an art history professor or studio artist discover, through a job at the museum, that they want to work in the future with art museums. Some students from disciplines outside the visual arts learn through their work at the museum that they want to pursue museum studies. Some students from across the disciplines who have the opportunity to be docents for public school groups, like those in education who work with children through museum education programs, find that they want to continue working with museum education in some way. At Oberlin, for example, I talked with a group of six art history students who are also docents at the_
museum. I asked what careers they hope to pursue at this point in their studies. Four of the six desire to continue with museum work as either curators or educators. Through work with docent programs and other opportunities that museums afford them, students realize possible careers associated with art museums and become interested in them.

Interaction with the museum can also affect future avocations of students. I talked with a 1958 graduate who, although he has had a long work history in the sciences, became interested in the arts through a class at his alma mater. He subsequently became an art collector and donor to the campus art museum of the institution where he graduated, created an endowed fund for collecting contemporary works, and is currently serving on the campus art museum’s “visiting committee,” the committee that provides advice, support, and expertise to the museum director.

Finally, the campus art museum can have an effect on students’ perspectives and identities. Some talked about how being around art and creativity makes them “happy” or how just being in the museum is peaceful, and even if working, they find the job relaxing and a way to feel less stressed. One student talked about how serene she felt when painting gallery walls for a new exhibition while guitar students played music over the Friday lunch hour amidst the Renaissance paintings at the UAMA. Another student who works as a security guard said, “I don’t feel like a freshman. I feel like I know more. Some students here have never been in the museum. Some art students haven’t been to the museum. I feel more mature.” She and others talked about how they feel “privileged” to have such intimate contact with art and to have the access to programs and speakers that they have had. The fact that the museums’ collections include works by famous artists and range over extensive periods of history and cultures also gives students a sense of pride, not only in the museum, but also in the institution they attend. “You really care about what’s here,” stated a University of Arizona student. Another student, this one at Oberlin, was talking about the AMAM when she said, “It gives us a certain amount of pride and ownership. It’s our Monet. It makes me proud to go to Oberlin.”

Art matters. “Art is one of the fundamental things that defines the human experience and the human condition,” stated an art history professor. He continued:

The urge to create, the urge to respond to the world around us through imagery, through colors, through space, and when it is done at a high level..., it is profoundly moving and exulting and enriching. It enriches life. It can give us pleasure, it can also disturb us..., it can cause us to see the world in different ways. It can bring us to experiences and emotions that we haven’t had before.... It makes us think about the differences between languages and how languages express cultures and how identity is conveyed through language and writing and culture.... Anything you can think of in the world is transformed through art and given back to you in a way you never thought of before. And sort of turn this around. When you look at a Sudlow7 landscape... and then you go

7. Robert Sudlow (1920-2010) was a landscape painter who taught in the College of Fine Arts at the University of Kansas.
drive through the country, you see it a different way because Sudlow taught you to see it.

Art museums are public spaces where many sorts of dialogue can take place, creating not only sites of learning, but also locations of connection, creativity, inspiration, and deep pleasure.
## Appendix A

Acronyms or Abbreviations Used for Academic Institutions and Art Museums along with Total Student Enrollment Numbers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Enrollment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IU</td>
<td>Indiana University</td>
<td>40,500&lt;sup&gt;8&lt;/sup&gt; students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IUAM</td>
<td>Indiana University Art Museum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KU</td>
<td>University of Kansas</td>
<td>28,400 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spencer</td>
<td>Spencer Museum of Art</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MU</td>
<td>University of Missouri</td>
<td>33,800 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MU Museum of Art and Archaeology</td>
<td>University of Missouri Museum of Art and Archaeology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notre Dame</td>
<td>University of Notre Dame</td>
<td>12,000 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snite</td>
<td>Snite Museum of Art</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oberlin</td>
<td>Oberlin College</td>
<td>2,900 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMAM or Allen</td>
<td>Allen Memorial Art Museum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UC</td>
<td>University of Chicago</td>
<td>5,400 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smart</td>
<td>David and Alfred Smart Museum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UA</td>
<td>University of Arizona</td>
<td>39,100 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAMA</td>
<td>University of Arizona Museum of Art</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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8. Enrollment numbers include undergraduate, graduate, and professional students and are rounded off to the nearest 100.
**Appendix B**

Example Responses of Why Respondents Become Interested in Art and Art Museums

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influencing Factors</th>
<th>Example Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Art</strong></td>
<td>“When I was a young kid… I was always high energy and the first person done on tasks, the first person done on everything and had a lot of time to fill. And I was always sketching and always drawing. In my school system… they didn’t have an art program. So in second grade, my classroom teacher, one of my favorite people I remember for many reasons and this is one of them… she had this parent-teacher conference and told my mother, ‘you have to get this kid art lessons….’ So I started private painting lessons as a seven year old and my mother made sure I could go once a week and do drawing and painting with our, at that time, most important painter in Paris, Illinois. And so, I very early had art lessons.” (curator of education)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I loved cartoons when I was little…. My father and mother were farmers, but I was always drawn to imagery and sequential artwork. I don’t know, I always liked to keep my hand busy… I had the opportunity to take art classes at a regional art center and that really got me introduced to print making.” (graduate student)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Course</strong></td>
<td>“When I was in high school, the emphasis was on sciences and if you were good at school you were supposed to become a doctor or a dentist or that sort of thing so I enrolled in pre-med… but before doing that, I decided I’d get my fill of the arts by doing a one year foundation program at a really really small school… that taught the history of science, history of math, history of music, history of literature, history of art and that was my very first art history class. So I had that one-year program under my belt and then I went to [the university] and discovered that the sciences just didn’t do it for me anymore. I wanted to get back to the liberal arts and by that time it was too late to transfer so I spent a year and a half in France teaching English to a family there and also taking French classes. And then, at that point, I went to Baylor and Baylor had an interdisciplinary program that allowed you pretty much to choose your own major and so I did everything from philosophy to German and French literature to Latin and music. You could pretty much take whatever you wanted. Toward the end of my degree, the last two years, you were supposed to declare a concentration of some sort and I took some more art history because I had been interested every since I had that first class… and had, of course, been to tons of museums when I was in Europe, so I started taking more art history classes at Baylor and just realized that that was what I wanted to pursue in graduate school.” (graduate student)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“My connection to art is one of those fluky things in college. I stumbled onto somebody who was reading a huge book and I asked her what it was. It was Jansen. She said it was art history 101, she was loving it. I was a freshman and so I took it the next semester. And I just loved art history. I had never liked history, but art history suddenly made all of history come alive… so I stayed with it…. I loved it… art history felt like what I wanted to know.” (art education professor)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Job/Internship

“I don’t think my parents were particularly excited when I chose to become an art historian…. I was at Ohio State and I needed to earn money and I signed up to show slides for an art history class – I didn’t even know what art history was. And Abigail Smith… gave a lecture at Ohio State on classicism and she compared a Mondrian painting to a Greek sculpture and I sat there slack jawed in amazement. I thought THIS is what I want to do. She suddenly made all this stuff make sense. And I just went up to her after the class and said, “What is it that you do? What is this called?” She said, “I’m an art historian” and I said, “Well, how do you become an art historian?” and she said, “Well, you have to major in it, you know.”… I never looked back. I was so happy, in fact I was so happy that I thought, ‘It can’t be right to be this happy.” (campus art museum director)

“As an undergraduate, I majored in psychology. My junior year, I took a couple art history courses and really liked them…. If I had taken the first course back when I was a freshman or sophomore, maybe I might have considered majoring in art history or at least double-majoring…. I moved to Indianapolis and looked for a job and they had this big museum there…. and I was lucky to be hired in their development division helping the person in charge of their annual campaign. It was supposed to be a temporary job, but they extended it to a full-time job…. I did that about a year and a half or so and decided that I really didn’t like development work, but I did love working in museums…. Again, by luck, a job opened up in their education division…. and then I worked for another two and a half years…. By that point, I realized I loved working in museums, but what I really wanted to do was work with the art and it was clear I would need to go back and get some sort of advanced degree.” (curator)

Museum Visits

“I wasn’t really exposed to art when I was young. My family never went to art museums. We went to Las Vegas a lot actually, and there’s this hotel there called the Bellagio. We were there once when I was 16 and the guy that owns it… has an art collection of like Picassos and stuff and sometimes they’d be on display in the hotel and you could go in there and look at them. Me and my dad went over and there are like bodyguards standing at the entrance to the museum part and my dad is like, “Hey, can we go look at this art.” And the bodyguard said, “Mr. Winn is taking his art elsewhere.” And at the time I didn’t think of that in a bad way, but I think my Dad realized that they just didn’t want us in. That kind of like stuck with me a little and then I took an AP art history class the senior year of high school. As a fieldtrip, we went to see this traveling Rembrandt exhibit and that was like the first time I’d been in an art museum. And it really struck me,… I loved it and I thought, ‘you know, that time in Las Vegas, that was really messed up, that not everyone has access to art. That not everyone is allowed to see it is just so very, very wrong.’ And that kind of inspired me, like I want to bring art to everyone.” (student)

“I’m originally from Lenore, Kansas which has 250 people. The closest international airport is a six hour drive and the closest Walmart is eighty miles…. Needless to say there weren’t a lot of art museums or art opportunities or cultural opportunities around. But there was one really tiny art museum thirty miles from my hometown… and they would get exhibitions every few months from like the Smithsonian or from other really big museums and I used to go there pretty much every other month with my family…. and when we would go to the museum as a family, it was the only time we would actually talk about things that mattered to all of us. It was so fantastic. So that’s how I got interested in museums.” (student)
Sources


