Teening the museum: an adaptable teen program for art and history museums

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Teening the Museum:

An Adaptable Teen Program for Art and History Museums

By

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Museum Education

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Teening the Museum: An Adaptable Teen Program for Art and History Museums

By Julia Doak Fields

Abstract

The teen program delineated in this document was inspired by artist Fred Wilson’s 1992-1993 exhibit *Mining the Museum* at the Maryland Historical Society. This program is designed to be used by art or history museums with object collections, with a static group of teenagers. During the program, teens learn about the inner workings of museums, explore a social issue of interest to them, and produce an exhibit within the museum on the topic of that social issue. The program has three central goals: to enrich the lives of teens, to inform the museum about what community members are interested in seeing in the museum space, and to diversify the leadership of museums in the long term. This document includes information about why and how to execute this program, plus some specific lesson plans and reading materials and suggestions for evaluation.
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I. Introduction

*Teening the Museum* aims to get teens involved and interested in museums by allowing them to use a museum’s collection as a tool to speak to the community about what matters to them. In *Teening the Museum*, you’ll find a plan to create programming that encourages young people in the community to take an active role in museums, examine issues of social justice, and create lifelong thinking and working skills. The program is flexibly designed to be led by a few museum professionals with a group of interested teenagers in almost any art and/or historical collection.

Inspired by Fred Wilson’s exhibit *Mining the Museum*, the program allows a group of teenagers to decide on a current social justice issue of interest to them and mount an exhibition in a gallery space using objects from the collection to highlight their concerns. Wilson’s example also encourages the teens to give the project dimension by incorporating humor and subtlety.

*Teening the Museum* promotes a sense of ownership in the young people we serve so that they are more likely to come back to the museum and have relevant careers in cultural institutions, such that their generation’s legacy might be a more diverse and inclusive one. We want to involve them and to develop their critical thinking skills, looking skills, frameworks, and interpretive skills. While young people are learning, working and becoming a part of our institutions, the institutions itself is finding out about what our communities are seeing when they look at us and how we can best serve them.

While the content focus of this program is inspired by “Mining the Museum” and similar museum-centric efforts towards awareness of social justice issues, the structure of
the program is based on programming presented by established institutions like The Andy Warhol Museum and The Brooklyn Museum, where young people generate something inside the museum that can be consumed by the public. Young people will thus practice the work of museums by creating what they want to see, getting feedback, seeing their work appreciated, and becoming part of discussions.

Included here you will find the building blocks of a museum program for teenagers that could take place after school through an academic year or over the summer. Look to the literature review to find out how this program relates to other teen programming and why the content is appropriate for both teenagers and museums. The literature review may also act as a guide when pitching this programming within an institution. You’ll find a schedule of lessons and steps to take structured into units, plus an explanation of each unit’s core elements and a few accompanying lesson plans for activities that require more explanation. Also included are steps to take to evaluate your outcomes and to plan for the improvement and expansion of further rounds of *Teening the Museum.*
## II. Goals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Immediate impacts</th>
<th>Longer-term impacts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teens from diverse and/or disadvantaged backgrounds feel comfort and ownership in museum spaces</td>
<td>Teens from disadvantaged backgrounds and their families visit museums and cultural institutions often, benefit from the programming, educational opportunities, and recreation available there.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diverse Teens from disadvantaged backgrounds consider careers in museums/cultural institutions.</td>
<td>Teens from disadvantaged backgrounds take on leadership roles in cultural institutions, making the leadership of such institutions more diverse, insuring that history is not only created and recorded by rich white people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Museum leadership gets a sense of what their community thinks of the programming, and what the community would like to see.</td>
<td>Museums create programming that is relevant and interesting for the community, increasing visitorship and cultural stewardship.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
III. Rationale

Through his lauded exhibition *Mining the Museum*, Fred Wilson proved that museum collections are not static or neutral, and paved the way for other museums and curators to look to their own collections for inspiration and surprises. Around the same time, art museums in the United States were committing to teenage participation in their programming through teen planning committees or curatorial projects. This program, *Teening the Museum*, brings together teen programming and the ideas behind Wilson’s exhibition and fulfills needs on both the community and museum sides. Museums can be effective spaces for social change and they have a responsibility to work to have a positive impact on the communities that surround them (Sandell, 2002, p. 3) through programs such as this one.

Teenagers need activities for a number of reasons. They need to be developing and exploring their interests, they need to consider their college choices, they need to stretch their intellectual muscles individually and in groups. Many teenagers just need a safe place to be and a mentor to trust. Teenagers from past art museum programs report feeling satisfied with the experience. One said “for the first time in my life, people would listen to me and were interested in my opinions” (Floresa, 2014, 287). Similarly adult leaders of teen programs noticed that teens who participated in art museum programs had “c[o]me out of their shells, connected with art and community, and discovered new pathways” (Linzer, 2014, p. 237). Teens will also benefit from relationships with museum professionals. They will gain new role models, friends, mentors, and
recommend. These relationships can only be effectively built by the prolonged interactions between teens and museum professionals for which the program allows.

During the teenage years, young people are ready to embark upon long-term projects in museums. Intellectually, they benefit from having a place to take creative risks and make controlled mistakes (Kusuma, 2014, p. 279), plus they enjoy open-ended projects in which they are “creating something without really knowing where you were going” (Floresa, 2014, p. 287). Emotionally, they are ready for the invested mentorship that can be found in the leaders of teen museum programs (Floresa, 2014, p. 286 and Linzer, 2014, p. 245). Socially, museum projects provide alternative spaces for important peer bonding, and group leaders do best when this bonding is prioritized (Kusuma, 2014, p. 279). For more information about how teens respond positively to museum work, please see the literature review.

Teenagers are not the only beneficiaries of art museum programs in which they participate. The museums themselves also can experience benefits. In Teening the Museum in particular, art museums are also given a much-needed chance to examine parts of their collection that have been long overlooked, and take advantage of dormant objects. The Maryland Historical Society Library writes that “when a museum acquires an artifact, it often goes directly into some dark storage area never to see the light of day again” (Maryland Historical Society, 2013), and Judith Stein concurs, writing

With his tongue only partly in his cheek, High Museum director Ned Rifkin once likened the historical role of museums in our culture to that of the word processor which offered the user two main options: "save" and "display." Some social critics
are interested in going beyond those two functions and fostering introspective examinations of the value judgments encoded in what and how museums preserve and present. That task can be as daunting as trying to program computers to ‘reflect.’ (1993)

Teens can be the brain power needed to reflect on long-cached objects, and the turnover of objects in a museum space could spark new interest in returning visitors. Further, the museum will benefit from finding out about the interests of the community, with a focus on young people. By directly asking teenagers to work on a subject that matters to them, the museum may gain insight into what kinds of exhibitions and tones will be fascinating to their audience. Focusing on subject-matter that is relevant to young people is key to creating participation and visitorship (Wyrick, 2014, p. 231). In addition, museums will find that by putting their trust and resources into young people, they have created long-term museum-goers. Teens who become involved in a museum are more likely to remain involved with arts organizations (Kusuma, 2014, p. 282).

While teen programming is relatively common in American art and history museums, *Teening the Museum* is unique and valuable because it’s a program planned to be used in almost any museum. Right now, teen programs are planned within the context of a particular collection or education department, and carried out right there. In contrast, *Teening the Museum* provides a flexible but ready-made plan, meaning that education departments that are looking to get into teen programming or ready to expand their current teen offerings to include more community awareness can jump right in. Overworked museum educators won’t have to start from scratch, they can simply pick up
the program and make any adjustments to fit their own institution. In this way, there is a possibility for museum educators all over the country to be engaged in similar projects. These educators could act as resources for each other, sharing suggestions and encouragement. Teens in their programs could stay updated on what their fellow groups are working on in other *Teening the Museum* programs, and in doing so become informed about what communities across the country are interested in. The ready-made quality of the program allows for these parallel programs to confer and learn from each in a way that is unachievable when each museum creates and carries out its own unique teen programming.

Apart from the concrete benefits listed above, museums should also respond to a loftier need. The positions of power in museums and the art world are largely dominated by people with wealthy white backgrounds, as in the case of the Maryland Historical Society where “Mining the Museum” was originally exhibited (Ginsberg). This means that not only are those people making the most money in their fields, but it also indicates that those people are doing the meaning-making and history-creating tasks of humanity. There is a danger that they will only tell one side of story, as seen in the centuries of public displays of live human specimens deemed exotic, documented by Coco Fusco in *The Other History of Intercultural Performance* (1994, pp. 146-7). In order to rectify this imbalance, museums need to involve young people in underserved communities and/or communities of color (Black, 2010, 272), with the idea that these people will stay involved in museums and go on to become the future generation of leadership (Kusuma, 2014, p. 282).
IV. Applications

*Teening the Museum* is designed to be used by a museum educator (or other interested museum professional) in an art or history museum, or similar cultural institution. The program will work best in an institution that owns a collection of objects, but the program is not designed to only work in a few museums. The plan and guidelines should be loose enough to work in many museums with only limited adjustments.

The educator will select and work with a group of teenagers (high schoolers are the best audience for this program) in the museum. Because one of the goals of the program is to help teens from diverse and/or disadvantaged backgrounds feel comfort and ownership in museum spaces, the program will be most effective if it is targeted towards a diverse audience, and a diverse group is selected.

*Teening the Museum* has not yet been used in any museums. However, the plans are based on research and experience, and some of the activities and methods were inspired by ones I have experienced during Brooklyn Museum teen programs.
V. Literature Review

Exhibits Examine Social Issues Artfully

_Teening the Museum_ is based in part on the idea that museum spaces can be home to exhibitions that use the traditional language of the art world ironically, to point out social injustices. An important part of my research was finding other exhibitions that have done the same thing. My main inspiration was _Mining the Museum_, which was a 1993 exhibit designed by artist Fred Wilson in a collaboration with the Maryland Historical Society and The Contemporary (Corrin, 2012, p. 114). When designing the exhibition, Wilson had full access to the Maryland Historical Society’s collection of objects (Maryland Historical Society, 2013), and he used pieces from the collection to “create an emotionally charged exhibit that raised awareness of the way cultural institutions suppress, consciously or unconsciously, aspects of history that don’t fit into a specific narrative” (Maryland Historical Society, 2013).

Throughout the history of the museum, objects from Maryland’s history had been on view from the angle of the founding board, which was made up of white people (Ginsberg), but Wilson used techniques of detournement and culture jamming (Ginsberg), to show some of the same objects, and many that had never been on display before (Corrin, 2012, p. 117), in a

Figure 1. Installation view of “Metalwork” in Fred Wilson’s _Mining the Museum_ (Maryland Historical Society)
different way to tell the stories of African Americans and Native Americans in Maryland’s history (Corrin, 2012, p. 117). Wilson used sound design, wall text, and lighting — all standard museum fare — to tell a social justice story through a museum lens (Ginsberg; Stein, 1993; Corrin, 2012, p. 117). For example, a section titled “Modes of Transport” ironically paired a model of slave ship next to a sedan chair. The pairing was accompanied by a painting of a sedan chair in use that “highlighted who carried whom” (Corrin, 2012, p. 118). Since the 1993 exhibit, Wilson has curated other mock museums, all in an effort to inspire debate and conversation (Corrin, 2012, pp. 115, 119), pointing out that the arrangement of objects in not neutral, and that museums have a responsibility to examine their methods of presentation for bias.

Another precedent exhibition of great interest to me was *Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit*... (the title would be filled in with the current location as the show travelled). This portable piece of performance art by artists Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gómez-Peña travelled in the early 1990s as a commentary on the history of the colonial tendency to put live human bodies on display when they were unfamiliar to colonizers (Fusco, 1994). Fusco’s writings about the piece detail dozens of examples from history.
During the performances, the two artists presented themselves in a cage as specimens of human life from a previously undiscovered (fictional) South American island. They dressed fancifully, partly in contemporary clothing and partly in garb stereotypically associated with South American first nations. They listened to music and engaged in relatively normal tasks while visitors watched from outside the cage. Special guards were placed by the cage, urging visitors to pay a nominal fee to see extra behaviors (Fusco, 1994).

Like Wilson the artists used aspects of traditional display, like guards, text, and a cage, to ironically make their point about colonialism and the display of humans in cultural institutions. Fusco notes that often in the past such exhibits, often at worlds fairs, were commonly the sites of European’ first encounters with non-whiteness (Fusco, 1994, p. 149). Because Westerners were creating these displays, they could entirely control the received messages about other peoples and places (Fusco, 1994, p. 150), and could use them to confirm social Darwinist ideas and the existence of a racial hierarchy (Fusco, 1994, p. 152), thus justifying colonial expansion.

I was particularly drawn to this piece of performance art because I think it will be interesting to a teen audience; the absurd humor and concrete demonstration are easy to grasp and quite intriguing. It will make a good case study for teen participants because the writing is accessible and there is a short documentary movie to bring the piece to life. Further, Cusco addresses the issue of the prejudice of museum display head-on, writing that “we found this particularly ironic, since museum staff are perhaps the most aware of
the rampant distortion of reality that can occur in the labelling of artifacts from other
cultures.” (Fusco, 1994, p. 155).

**Background on Teen Programs in Museums**

Teen programs in museums, like the one proposed here, became part of museum
education catalogues relatively recently, in the early 1990s (Floresa, 2014, p. 284). The
Los Angeles County Museum of Art and the Walker Art Center had two of the earliest
teen programs in the country (Floresa, 2014, p. 284). Now, such programs are widespread
and sometimes even involve collaborations with third parties, like in the case of the Frick
Collection’s partnership with the Ghetto Film School (Sheets, 2016), and the Brooklyn
Museum’s partnership with the Center for Curatorial Leadership.

Essentially every major art Museum in New York City has teen programs,
including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Guggenheim, The Whitney, The MoMA,
the Brooklyn Museum, and the Museum of Arts and Design. I first experienced museum
projects as a teen participant in the Andy Warhol Museum’s Youth Invasion program,
which allows a group of teens to act as curators and artists for an exhibition, and to plan
an opening night with music performances and a fashion show.

Not every teen program allows participants to create something as concrete as an
exhibition, as happens at the Warhol Museum and as proposed here, but it’s not without
firm precedent. A recent example comes to us from Poland, where the exhibition 2016
*Anything Goes* at the National Museum in Warsaw was curated by 69 children and young
teenagers. Like in *Teening the Museum*, the young curators of *Anything Goes* had access
to object storage to explore undisplayed pieces, and had museum professionals from many departments to guide them and lend expertise (Blakemore, 2016).

**Benefits of Teen Programs in Museums**

There would likely be two main benefits from the *Teening the Museum* Program. Teens will benefit from the experience and exposure to creative professional work, and museums will benefit from a greater understanding of their community and a renewed relationship with young audiences.

Teens in museums have the opportunity to engage in work and thinking activities that benefit them. For example, teenagers are at an age where they can be taking small risks intellectually, and a museum project space, where they have both freedom and guidance, is a smart place to do that.

The museum program context also allows teen participants to react creatively and productively to bad things going on in their lives (Floresa, 2014, p. 288), and gives teens who are not engaged in more traditional extracurricular activities something concrete and interesting to focus on (Floresa, 2014, p. 286). Teens who participated in art museum programs were also seen to have “c[o]me out of their shells, connected with art and community, and discovered new pathways” (Linzer, 2014, p. 237).

In particular, teens value the relationships with adults that they build while doing extended museum programs. Participants are likely to find mentors (Floresa, 2014, p. 286) and value those relationships highly (Linzer, 2014, p. 245). One former teen program participant stated that, “for the first time in my life, people would listen to me
and were interested in my opinions” (Floresa, 2014, p. 287). The quote suggests that, not only were caring and engaged mentors available in the museum setting, but they were strongly desired by the teen and filled a space previously unoccupied role.

Perhaps because of the above perks, it seems that teen program participants are more likely to grow up to work in museums themselves (Floresa, 2014, p. 284-5), suggesting that the work they do in museums as teens has both inspired them and led them to careers with economic viability. The Whitney Museum’s recent publication “Room to Rise: the Lasting Impact of Intensive Teen Programs in Art Museums” shows powerfully how much of an effect art museum programming can have on a teen’s life.

The study found

Five significant areas of long-term influence: a growth in confidence and the emergence of personal identity and self-knowledge; deep, lifelong relationships to museums and culture; a self-assured, intellectually curious pursuit of expanded career horizons and life skills; a lasting worldview grounded in art; and a commitment to community engagement and influence. (2015, p. 24)

These findings, and a plethora of others found in this study, suggest that art museum teen programs are extremely beneficial for young people. I highly recommend this publication for educators who want to learn more about teen programming or who are looking to justify such a program in their own institutions.

The interests of teens and of cultural institutions overlap especially in one finding: Real Teens, Real Tours found that teens who become involved in museums are likely to remain involved in arts organizations (Kusuma, 2014, p. 282). “Room to Rise” specified
that more than half of the teen program alumni they surveyed had careers as artists are in arts-related occupations (Linzer & Munley, 2015, p. 33). For teens, this means lifelong enrichment and a chance to shape the future of cultural narratives. For museums, this means reliable visitorship and a group of invested guests. Noja Kai writes that “young people make excellent volunteers; they love to work, and they need structured activity. They are impressed when adults take time to talk to them. You can win a lot of loyalty from young people” (2002, p. 80), and advises, “children are future visitors...give them some responsibility” (2002, p. 81).

A key benefit for museums is that involving young members of the surrounding community in the creation of exhibitions will result in a better understanding of what the community is interested in, and thus how they can best be served and encouraged to visit the museum (Linzer, 2014, p. 240). Involving the community in programming is key for success and people really do respond to it (Kai, 2002, pp. 79-81). Kai notes that “the underpinning of your success is a strong contact with your community” (Kai, 2002, p. 81). In fact, “Room to Rise” states that “museum staff, leaders, and program alumni perceived that teen programs are effective in helping to make the institution a more welcoming place and cultivate broader audiences for contemporary art. In fact, these programs show museums how to do it” (Linzer & Munley, 2015, p. 63).

Specifically, relevant programming is key to participation and visitorship (Wyrick 2014, p. 231) and can be identified through working with actual members of the community with which you are attempting to engage (Chew, 2002, pp. 63-64). Lisa Roberts writes, “visitors’ interest and attention is determined not by an object’s inherent
appeal but by its relevant to their own framework of knowledge and experience” (1997, p. 150). If visitors are seeing their own experiences within the walls of your institution, they will identify with it and find it relevant (Chen, 1992, p. 292). This practice of using nearby community members to create content and museum identity results in a dialogic museum (Chen, 1992, p. 286). The “Room to Rise,” project spoken with museum leaders who had come into contact with teen groups, and found that “almost universally, the high-level staff interviewed for this study recognized that teens brought distinctive perspectives to the museum. By giving teens a platform and a voice within the institution, these programs take advantage of their energy, ideas, and creative spirit” (Linzer & Munley, 2015, 60).

Museums Have a Responsibility to their Communities

In The Promise of Cultural Institutions, David Carr writes,

This is exactly why cultural institutions exist: to manage our cognitive challenges by creating good processes and educative structures, to recognize and celebrate good questions when they appear, and to engage with the personal narratives of human beings as they learn. (Carr, 2003, p. 38)

In the case of Teening the Museum, my goal is for young people to be supported through their own personal narratives as they relate to social justice. Museums have long been sites for social change and awareness and thus are a natural choice for inspiring positive change and conversations within a community. Indeed, museums and other cultural
institutions have a responsibility to address social justice issues, work to eradicate social inequality (Sandel, 2002, p. 3), and to empower local communities (Black, 2010, p. 283).

In art museums, visitors can learn cultural empathy through viewing objects from other cultures. As the Association of Art Museum Directors stated, “the experience of art fosters the appreciation and of beauty and human ingenuity, and promotes understanding among the diverse peoples and cultures of the world” (Association of Art Museum Directors, 2006, p. 250). Because they often create their own content and critical lenses, museums have the ability to represent silenced and oppressed groups of people (Black, 2010, p. 276), which is one way to fulfill their obligation to engage visitors in the big questions of the day (Black, 2010, p. 267). The organization Sites of Conscience is a prime example of a group of museums and directors who respond to hardship within communities and see their institutional mission as one of justice and activism to prevent the repetition of heinous slices of history (Abram, 2002).

Within museums, educators have a special responsibility to address issues of social justice and identity politics. Paulo Freire’s writings perfectly encapsulate the obligations of educators. He writes that teaching is a political act, and that teachers themselves must work from a place of their own politics while understanding the political and cultural situations of their students (2005, p. 72). Because educators are in the business of creating responsible citizens, they must not coddle their students but challenge them to find truth and justice (2005, p. 15). Fittingly, within museums the recent prioritization of educational goals had helped institutions to move towards visitor-centered, personal-connection approaches (Roberts, 1997, p. 153), in part because
educators are in a better position to understand what visitors are looking for and what types of learning they’ll be interested in (Roberts, 1997, p. 154).

It is my hope that the information shared in the literature review helps unsure parties conclude that *Teening the Museum* is a project worth taking on in their cultural institutions, and that it may also serve as a source of information should you need to convince anyone else within you institution. The document should be used as evidence that *Teening the Museum* falls established lineages for both teen programming in museums and exhibits challenging traditional museum language. Finally, *Teening the Museum* should become a boon to teens, institutions, and the confluence of the two.
VI. Session Schedule

Use this schedule as a structural, day-by-day guide to the program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit 1</th>
<th>Welcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Session 1: Onboarding and Welcome | • Introductions/ice breakers  
• Explanation of program goals and routines  
• logistics: get IDs, timesheets, etc.  
• Mini version of exhibition design project with sample works in small groups *see lesson plan #1  
• Homework: bring in a personal object for Session 2 |
| Session 2 | • Age-appropriate tour of an exhibit/collection with an educator using discovery techniques  
• Personal object study - description, crack open, present *see lesson plan #2  
• Alternate histories of personal objects  
• HW: Mining the Museum readings for Session 3 |
| Unit 2 | Looking into Mining the Museum |
| Session 3 | • Mining the Museum readings discussion - get on the same page  
• Group research - what can you find online about Mining the Museum, what impressions do you get? What other exhibitions have been like this? |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit 3</th>
<th>Looking at How Museums Present Materials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Session 4 | • Video of “Two Undiscovered Amerindians”  
• Review "Mining the Museum" and discuss “Two Undiscovered Amerindians” - how are they similar and different? Read Hyperallergic article on scanned Bust of Nefertiti together.  
• Gallery discussion contrasting radical exhibitions with our museum setting  
• HW: brainstorm questions for curator meeting on Session 5 |
| Session 5 | • talk with a curator about the job  
• break into groups with different information about an object and write, present, discuss  
• *see lesson plan #3  
• HW: look for important news stories for Session 6 |
| Unit 4 | Identifying social justice issues of interest |
| Session 6 | • Discussion - exploring what social issues are important to the participants. What’s important to us? How do we express those priorities?  
• Browse through some storage  
• Discuss what we found and what possibilities arise |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Unit 5</th>
<th>Scouring the collection and brainstorming</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Session 7 | • Decide on a social issue via discussion and debate  
            | • Brainstorm exhibition ideas             |                                          |
| Session 8 | • Brainstorm together: research/talk/take notes. What could work? What objects are available?  
            | • Talk to someone in collections/registrar about the work.  
            | • What is their role?                      |                                          |
| Session 9 | • Share notes and ideas in small groups and together. What are our best ideas for parts of the exhibition? How do they work together?  
            | • Brainstorming and workshopping organization/themes/text |                                          |
| Session 10| • Individual/small group research, writing, prototyping  
          | • Visit an extant exhibition to discuss writing wall text,  
          | • compare to Fred’s                         | • HW: draft written parts of exhibition or explanations of ideas for Session 11 |
| Session 11| • Preliminary organization and making choices  
<pre><code>        | • Review: Wilson’s humor and wit - how to have a voice in the show |                                          |
</code></pre>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>● start talking about presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Writing and Relating information to issues</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>● Solidify understanding of the possibilities of each object or collection of objects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>● Relate to social issue, finding news articles and evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>● Discuss <em>Framing America</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>● Work session: write, organize, minor prototyping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
<td><strong>Exhibition Design</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>● Talk to someone in the exhibitions department about roles and tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>● Explore an extant exhibition, discussing exhibition design choices and options</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>● Exhibition scale project, part 2 *see lesson plan #4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>● Work session: brainstorm/workshop design/organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>● Check in with contact in the exhibitions department about needs and possibilities, and/or look through exhibition storage for usable options</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
<td><strong>Synthesis, execution, and performance</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>● Review sections of thinking: content, writing, exhibition design, anything else that surfaces, opening/event planning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- Make groups to specialize, plus a small leadership to float (alternatively, no leadership, or one leader per team, or another options?)
- Group work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session 17</th>
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</thead>
</table>
|  ● Work session: whatever you need to do  
|  ● HW: finish writing/editing/etc so that the next session can be all polishing and putting together  
|  ● Work with museum professionals: check in with appropriate leaders |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session 18</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
|  ● Work session: whatever you need to do  
|  ● Focus on event planning |

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VII. Explanation of Units and Sessions

Considerations before the program begins

After this program is approved in your museum and before the teenagers arrive, there are a number of steps to take care of to insure smooth sailing.

Edit the proposed schedule - The schedule included here may differ a little for your purposes. You may need to remove some activities or sessions to accommodate a time crunch, or you may want to restructure the schedule to fit a summer camp frame.

Enlist other museum professionals - If your schedule includes the suggested talks with other professionals in your museum or in others, contact them well in advance to reserve their time. In my experience, scheduling with these professionals can be one of the hardest aspects of pulling the calendar together. Also, think about the work that others in the institution will put into this, and speak to them about it. Will the design department be helping with and approving design? Will curators be checking text? Will an exhibits team be needed to do any building or sifting through current structures? Last-minute surprises about long approval processes can be avoided at this point.

Call for and process applications - Create an application form that teens will use to apply to the program. Make sure the application gives them space to write why they are interested and what museums mean to them. Google Forms is a cheap and efficient way to send and receive applications. If possible, hold group interviews to see how teens work collaboratively. To stay true to the heart of this program, I recommend that you aim for teens who represent a population not already fully served by museums. Your group will benefit from diversity (Linzer, 2014, p. 243). Do this by strategically reaching out to high
school guidance counselors, community centers and services, and by creating a social media presence where you can disseminate the application materials.

**Prepare materials** - Review the schedule you have made and the lessons planned, checking each for material needs. Order these in advance to avoid logistical or budgetary emergencies.

**Find a place in your galleries to put this show** - Brainstorm a few areas in the museum where your mini-exhibit could be. Perhaps this is in an education gallery or in a space currently unused. You may have to be creative with placement, but make sure to have this decision approved ahead of time.

**Unit 1: Welcome**

The first unit of the program is designed to get the participants comfortable and ready to work together. During these two sessions, participants don’t need to be absorbing a lot of material or creating anything serious, they should just be getting into patterns with each other and learning to collaborate. At this time, the leaders of the group should stress that the museum is a place where they can be themselves, and think in different ways than in school. Initially teens may seem disengaged. It’s hard for teenagers to look like they care, but even the most blasé participants can become invested (Kusama & Wyrick, 2014, p. 278).

**Session 1**: Onboarding and Welcome can be used in a few different ways to support the needs of your teens and institution. I recommend that part of the session be taken up with logistics to make the rest of the sessions smoother. This might mean
sharing the schedule, getting museum IDs, learning to fill out timesheets, learning to get around the museum, and explaining expectations for attendance, routines, and out-of-museum assignments. IDs and paychecks, when possible, will help participants feel that the work they are doing is valid and valued (Linzer, 2014, p. 246). Be sure to explain the goals and structure of the program and leave time for questions.

 Spend time getting to know each other. Teens may feel awkward doing introductions and icebreaker games, but that’s okay, these are important steps. As the program progresses, you may identify some leaders in your group who can organize ice breaker activities for later sessions. Consider physical activities like charades or guided stretching, or more structures activities like Taboo or Seven Up, if the group initially seems resistant to verbal sharing. Social bonds inside the group will allow teens to feel more comfortable meeting other museum professionals (Kusama & Wyrick, 2014, p. 279).

 To get the group into a museum mindset, this session also includes a simplified version of a hands-on exhibition design project, to be completed in small groups (a more specific and relevant version of the project appears later in the sessions). For instructions, see lesson plan #1. For next week, teens will bring in a personal object that is significant to them. It does not need to be valuable, it should just be a small thing that represents something important to them. They won’t share the object with anyone else in the group in advance.

 Session 2 is broken up into two parts: a curator tour and a group activity with the personal objects that the teens brought in. Enlist a curator at your institution to give a tour
of part of your collection or a special exhibition. The curator should feel free to discuss whatever topics or works she chooses, but urge her to choose depth over breadth when discussing objects. If necessary, you could have an adult educator or a tour guide give this tour, but having a museum curator there is preferable, as it makes teens feel like a valued part of the museum, and they should be getting an idea of the career options within a museum too. Take time to discuss what they saw with teens — what was their impression of the exhibit? What will exhibits like this say to the public? Keep in mind that Maria-Rosario Jackson wrote that community members invited into museum spaces to collaborate to serve community needs need to feel that the museum is “a serious, neutral, and accessible institution” rather than “elitist and exclusive” (Jackson, 2002, p. 6).

For the personal object study (see Lesson Plan #2 for more details on this procedure), split teens into groups of about three or four each, with each group sitting around a table space. Each will put their own object out onto a shared table, doing their best not to see who puts what down. Each takes another’s object and spend a few quiet minutes with it, examining it and taking notes about what they think it might mean, and what it tells about its owner. Each teen then presents to her table for 2 minutes about the found object. Staff leaders can move around the room and sit down with small groups for a few minutes at a time. Then, each object passes to another person at the table and the activity repeats with a few minutes of study and a few minutes of presentation. These second presentations must take a different understanding of the objects. Finally, take a few comments from the group about what they noticed. With luck, you’ll get comments
that can lead to a discussion about how objects can have different meanings in different contexts, which will be a big theme throughout the program. Also, taking the time for personal sharing will help teens feel comfortable as a group (Kusama & Wyrick, 2014, p. 280).

For the following week, teens will read the selected articles on *Mining the Museum* (see Readings and Resources section).

**Unit 2: Looking into *Mining the Museum***

Unit 2 consists only of Session 3, and of the independent reading that participants will do before and after it. The unit and session focus solely on Fred Wilson’s exhibit *Mining the Museum*. The program calls for a high level of understanding of this exhibit, so take care to structure the day for fruitful discussions. You’ll be coming back to the ideas and execution of the project throughout the program, so you don’t need to cover every detail, but you do need to build a solid foundation.

Have participants bring in the assigned articles which they read for this session in order to discuss them together. What did people notice? What were the important elements? Why was this exhibition so successful? Do we care about it today? Take care to tease out the importance of the ideas, but also make sure that all teens have a real understanding of what concretely happened. Try asking them to sum up different chunks of info/discussion to check for understanding.

In order to get participants reading more about the exhibition and researching for new information, give them time to research online alone or collaboratively. What else
can they find online about *Mining the Museum*? What impressions do they get? What other exhibitions have been like this? How have they been similar? Come together again after the research time to discuss the findings. Have each share briefly to get used to being accountable for the time they spend working and to make expectations for productivity clear. Then open up the discussion. What did they learn? What similar things did they find?

For next week, teens should read the chosen selections on *Two Undiscovered Amerindians*.

**Unit 3: Looking at How Museums Present Materials**

The two sessions in Unit 3 allow participants to explore the ways that museums present art and historical materials by contrasting traditional presentation methods with examples of radical presentations like *Mining the Museum* and *Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit*....

**Session 4** begins with a 30-minute documentary “The Couple in the Cage,” on the same exhibition as the previous reading. The reading is dense, so the video should help to highlight important parts and remind teens of the motivation for the exhibition. Have a short discussion about the similarities and differences between *Mining the Museum* and *Two Undiscovered Amerindians*. Introduce Hyperallergic’s article *Artists Covertly Scan Bust of Nefertiti and Release the Date for Free Online*. Read silently or take turns reading out loud, and add new information to discussion.

Then, take the group to a gallery space within the museum and give them some time to explore the space with their new critical lenses. Come back together as a group...
and have a discussion about what Fred Wilson and the *Two Undiscovered Amerindians* team might see in the this space. Give teens space to “build interpretations collaboratively” (Manekin & Williams, 2015, 284). Does the gallery space have any of the traditional trappings of a museum that erases chunks of history? If you have a group that has trouble getting started with discussions, or which is usually dominated by a few individuals, let teens know that they’ll each be showing one detail that they found interesting, and then spend a few minutes with the group at each place. For the next session, have teens brainstorm questions that they have for the curator talk.

Start **Session 5** with a discussion with a curator about his or her job. He or she could take the the group to an exhibition that she worked on to tell them about the work that went into it. Leave plenty of time for the teens’ questions, teens should come away with a basic understanding of what a curator’s job is like. In the second half of this session, break into groups to do a curating activity with objects. See Lesson Plan #3 for the full activity. For next week, have participants look through newspapers (in print or online, they should print out online articles) for stories about issues that matter to them.

**Unit 4: Identifying social justice issues of interest**

Now that your teens have some grounding in how museums present information and how some artists have used the language of museums to make their points, they are ready to start thinking about what kind of point they want to make in their own exhibit. Discuss how societal stereotypes like race are learned through popular culture (Fusco, 1994), and how their exhibition can become a site of positive cultural learning. For
example, it’s becoming more common in the United States to see museum exhibits about slavery in America (Ruffins, 2016, 394). Unit 4 is made of two sessions that are structured to help decide on a topic for the exhibition.

In **Session 6**, start by talking about what social issues are important to your teens. You may want to start by saying which social justice issues are most important to you personally, so that they feel comfortable sharing. Use the news articles they brought as jumping-off points for the conversation. These articles can also provide statistics and specificity. Then, give teens some time to browse through some of the museum’s objects to see if any of them feel relevant to the issues discussed. Preferably you can show them a large number of objects in storage, but open galleries will do if necessary. Contemporary and living artists are often of particular interest to teens, so if you have such works consider highlighting them (Linzer, 2014, p. 246). At the end of the session, come back together to discuss findings. What choices were made about what to show and what to keep in storage? Consider that Fred Wilson thought about what was on view normally versus what was usually in storage (Maryland Historical Society, 2013) — what are the relationships between those sets of objects in your institution? Share the following quote from Judith Stein, or something similar:

> With his tongue only partly in his cheek, High Museum director Ned Rifkin once likened the historical role of museums in our culture to that of the word processor which offered the user two main options: ‘save’ and ‘display.’ Some social critics are interested in going beyond those two functions and fostering introspective examinations of the value judgments encoded in what and how museums preserve
and present. That task can be as daunting as trying to program computers to ‘reflect.’ (1993)

Teens can also discuss the relationships between objects, materials, and means of production, as Fred Wilson did (Ginsberg). Who and what were involved in the creation of objects? For the next session, teens should continue to think about what social issue they want the exhibition to deal with.

Session 7 is dedicated to deciding on a topic for the exhibition. You know your group best, so you’ll know how much structure they’ll need for this decision. Some groups will be able to lead a civilized conversation among all members, some may want to vote, and some may do best if they write down their opinions and reasoning first. This is a delicate and decisive moment for the team, so watch out for teens taking up a lot of airspace. Try to spend the first half of the session on this decision, and the second half brainstorming ideas for the exhibition once the decision has been made. Teens could made “wish lists” of what they’d like to find, research exhibits or other resources that have dealt with similar topics, or discuss design ideas.

Unit 5. Scouring the collection and brainstorming

Now that teens have chosen a topic of interest to them to act as the theme for the exhibition, it’s time for them to work on what will go into the show, how it will be organized and displayed, how it will relate to the theme, and what they will write about it. The four sessions in Unit 5 are meant to be spent largely on creative and analytic thinking. Ideally, teens will have long chunks of time to spend in discussion, research,
and brainstorming. They will need to have an idea of which objects they want to use, plus backup ideas, so that other departments in the museum can begin to approve the choices based on conservation notes. By the end of Unit 5, teens should have sketched out a general plan for the exhibition, to be polished in the coming units.

**Session 8** is for building on the preliminary brainstorming from Session 7. Teens may need more time to comb through the collection, in person or remotely using a collections database. They may want to jump in with research, or have ideas about how objects could be organized in sections. As these conversations emerge, make sure that teens are taking notes, and consider having a floor plan and/or elevation drawing of the space you will use so that they can print out small images of objects and move them around to plan. During this session, also hear a presentation from and have a talk with a registrar or someone in charge of organizing the collection. Teens should come away with a general understanding of that department, and should be able to use whatever search functions the museum has to look for works of art.

Depending on the school background of your group, you might decide to devote some structured time to discussing research methods. Find out how well these skills have been developed and meet them where they are. For example, you could talk about finding sources online or in a library, using a table of contents and index to find relevant information, and taking notes.

In **Session 9**, focus on small group work and sub-themes. Teens with complimentary ideas can start planning sections of the exhibition together, perhaps by wall, sub-theme, or case. During discussions, think about allowing the best ideas to float
to the top and be caught. Which ideas are we all gravitating towards? How do they work together in terms of organization and flow of an exhibition? For next week, teens should be researching the objects and sub-themes that they are most interested in.

During **Session 10**, allow teens to work individually or in small groups to make sure that they have done sufficient research. At this point, each teen should know on which objects and/or sub-themes she or he is focusing. They can begin to sketch out the writing that will be done for the exhibit, which may include an introductory panel, section heading panels, and labels for individual pieces or small groupings of objects. If other effects are going to play into the exhibition in a meaningful way (lights, sound, etc.), begin considering and perhaps prototyping them now. For next week, teens should flesh out their writing.

**Session 11** can serve as a review session for all the individual and small group work that has been going on. Come together as a full group to share progress, new ideas, and choices. Break out the floor plans and elevations again, and discuss each section of the exhibit as it relates to the whole. Where will elements be placed? How will their placement impact the conversations objects will be having near each other? Before writing becomes polished in the next sessions, review early conversations about Fred Wilson’s voice imbuing his exhibit with wit. Discuss what tone your exhibit will take, and talk about how the tone will be achieved through writing.

**Unit 6: Writing and relating information to issues**

Spend the two sessions of Unit 6 reading, writing and making connections
between objects and ideas, as if teens were writing a research paper. Session 12 can be entirely devoted to research, particularly to exploring how objects relate to the chosen theme. Teens should keep organized notes and a list of sources.

During Session 13, take another look at how works of art are presented so help focus the tone and content of your writing. Contrast the questions from Fred Wilson’s label text and selections from Framing America to get discussion going.

The rest of the meeting is spent organizing thoughts and writing. This is good to do in a group setting, rather than at home, so that teens can use you as a resource, edit each other’s work, and really devote a chunk of time to writing. Exhibit ideas do not need to hinge mainly on writing, Wilson himself used few labels to make his points, relying on clever arrangements of objects (Maryland Historical Society, 2013).

**Unit 7: Exhibition Design**

Unit 7 is about the design aspects of the exhibition, including the cases, frames, lights, colors, and any other design elements that your exhibition calls for. The possibilities will vary widely depending on the institution, so be clear with teens about what kind of options they’re working with.

In Session 14, have teens hear from a professional who physically puts exhibitions together and creates the cases and other supports. After they learn about his or her tasks and responsibilities, explore an extant exhibition to analyze the design choices that were made. Discuss how your exhibition will be similar or different. If you have
teens who are very invested in the design, consider making them a special design team to support their interest and limit the number of cooks in the kitchen on design questions.

During Session 15, break teens into their sub-theme groups to discuss and make concrete decisions about design elements. Consult your exhibitions contact about the actual needs to your exhibition. Can he or she supply everything you need, or will any adjustments need to be made?

Unit 8: Synthesis, execution, and performance

Unit 8 is the longest unit in the program, with 6 sessions, because it includes the final stages of the exhibition planning: putting all the elements together, making them presentable, and finally presenting them. In Session 16, review sections of thinking — content, writing, exhibition design, anything else that surfaces — to make sure that everything fits together. Begin talking about event planning for the opening night.

Sessions 17 and 18 are work sessions, to finish tying up loose ends. During Session 17, make sure the writing and editing in finished, and has been approved by curators or whoever in your institution needs to approve it. Check in with other leaders in the museum whose approval you need to make sure everyone is on track. Also, have a discussion focusing on planning the opening of the exhibition is Session 18. How do teens want to present the work? Will there be gallery talks? Food and drinks? Music? Solidify the plan.

Sessions 19 and 20 are for the physical creation of the exhibition. If, in your institution, teens will not be involved in that process, you may decide not to meet on
those days. On the other hand, these are also great days to work preparing for the opening of the exhibition, so if there is still planning to do the meetings could be devoted to that.

Finally, Session 21 is your opening celebration! Teens should have as much responsibility as possible to make sure this goes smoothly, and should enjoy their hard-won success.
VIII. Lesson Plans

Lesson 1. Exhibition design project with sample works in small groups (Session 1)

Goals

● Explore curatorial choices, and thematic and visual organization

● work creatively with a group

Setting up the challenge

Using works from the institution’s collection, create a scaled-down exhibit

● Create a 2-D floor plan “sketch”

● Create a scale 3-D Model

Materials and set-up

● Before the group arrives, have the following materials set at the tables. Each group should have:

  ○ One piece of foam core

  ○ strips of thick paper (short measurement should equal the height of desired walls, to scale)

  ○ A few pieces of large scratch paper

  ○ masking tape

  ○ Elmer's glue

  ○ a cutting mat (use unwanted magazines or catalogues as cheaper substitutes)
● Once the groups are settled and you’ve given explanations, pass out the following materials:
  ○ one set of printed and cut-out paintings per group
    ■ pick whatever works of art in the collection that you want, preferably ones that relate to each other in multiple ways so that teens can make different groups and understand the relationships differently (see instructions at the end of this lesson plan to create scaled-down images of works in your collection)
  ○ x-acto knives and scissors
  ○ pencils

**Procedure** (each small grouping of students will do these steps separately)

1. Explore images of works of art in small groups
   ● Collaboratively review group of paintings
   ● Brainstorm themes → choose a theme
   ● Edit choices (remove paintings from grouping)

2. Create a floorplan
   ● Sketch a 2D version of your gallery
   ● add interior walls, doors, windows, etc., as appropriate
   ● Experiment with the placement of the works you have chosen based on their themes and visual groupings
   ● Consider sight lines and paths through your space
- Decide on placement of works and make notes on your floor plan to indicate placement

3. Design your space

- Consider the height of works on walls
- Edit painting choices if necessary
- Edit thematic and visual groups if necessary, consider how you will defend your choices

4. Build your space

- Measure paper for walls according to floor plan, cut out any openings in walls
- Construct paper walls on foam core floor, according to floor plan
- Add paintings to walls, considering height

Figure 3. Example of a built space
5. Present exhibition

- Explain why your group made the choices that you made: what works did you include? Where? Why?

**Preparation Note: Steps to convert from painting dimensions to print-out dimensions:**

Depending on the focus of your lesson, consider having students independently figure out how to make their images the correct size.

It’s likely that you’ll know the dimensions of your paintings in inches. In order to use a 1 foot = 1 inch scale factor, you’ll need to have the dimensions of your painting in feet, so divide the dimensions in inches by 12:

height = 45.5 in / 12 = 3.8 ft.

width = 37.8 in / 12 = 3.15 ft.

Now, you’ll convert from feet to inches using the scale factor 1 ft=1 in.:

height = 3.8 ft. = 3.8 in.

width = 3.15 ft. = 3.15 in.

If you’re working with Photoshop, you can transform the size of your image using these dimensions. Open your image in Photoshop, go to image → image size (not...
“canvas size”) and select inches as your units. Change the inch measurement of either the height or width of the image. Make sure that “keep aspect ratio” or “constrain proportions” is checked, that way you only need to enter one dimension and the other will follow. Now you’re ready to save the image and print.

If you are using a different photo editing program (a good free one is Pixl Editor, link it to your Google drive), you may need to convert your inches to pixels in order to correctly change the size of your image. You can use a website like Auction Repair to make this calculation for you.

Once you have the pixel count, open your photo editing program, go to image → image size (not “canvas size”) and change the pixel count accordingly. Make sure that “keep aspect ratio” or “constrain proportions” is checked, that way you only need to enter one dimension and the other will follow.

Note: A fast way to perform these calculations is to make a spreadsheet and use formulas. This also helps to keep the numbers organized.
Lesson 2. Personal object study (Session 2)

Goals

- Teens see that objects can be interpreted differently, see the personal "truth" of an object taken away
- Teens get to know each other by sharing their personal histories

Materials

- Personal objects, one per participant
- Writing materials
- Large bag

Procedure

1. At the session before this one, set up this activity by assigning teens to bring in one small personal object each, without sharing it with each other. The object should be something important to them, that they identify with, but it doesn't need to be valuable nor does it need to tell their whole story.

2. When teens arrive for this session, have them put their object in the bag without showing it to anyone else.

3. When you're ready to begin the activity, pass the bag around and have each teen pull out one object at random (not their own!). Teens should spend about ten minutes with their chosen object, studying it and exploring it, and creating a backstory and understanding of it. Ask them to make a few notes on paper so that they can be ready to present their object and its story. Then, each student will have about two minutes to
present their object as they would if it were in a museum exhibit. What is the story of the object? What does it say about its time and owners? What are its formal qualities?

4. After each presentation, the object's owner has a chance to speak briefly about the object and her connection to it. What did the presenter get right or wrong about it? What parts of the story of the object and the owner could the presenter have known to get closer to the truth? What is the owner's perspective own the object?

5. After all the presenting and responding is over, check in with a short discussion. What did teens notice about differences and similarities between the presentations and the owners' stories? What can that tell us about the work of presenting objects in museums?

Your goal with this discussion is to make sure that teens understand that there is always more than one way to see an object, and that a museum’s interpretation of something might be based on fact and observation, but can still be very different from the owner or creator’s understanding of an object. Explore with them why this matters.

Note: If you have a bigger group and are pressed for time, consider doing this activity in small groups of three or four, so that the total time spent sharing will be less. In this case, have the tables and chairs set up for small groups, with one bag on each table to make sure that teens are in the same group as their object.
Lesson 3. Break into groups with different information about an object and write, present, discuss (Session 5)

Goals

- Understand how museums can present the same objects in different lights
- Understand that a museum provides about an object will impact a visitor’s perception of it, sometimes in ways that relate to social justice issues

Materials

- Objects in the collection, or images of the objects if gallery space is not available (one object per group)
- A few different paragraphs on the object, each paragraph coming from a different angle (one paragraph per small group)
- Writing materials

Procedure

1. Give each group of students information about the object from one point of view (i.e., formal analysis, art historical context, function and use, provenance, etc.). Add other relevant materials as you like. Give time to read and discuss the materials in relation to the object.
2. Have each group briefly present the object to the rest of the team using what they learned in their reading.
3. Come together as a group to discuss the results. How did the different information inform what groups presented? How did the object come off differently? What impact would different angles have on visitors? Why does that matter?
Lesson 4. Exhibition design project with chosen works in small groups (Session 14)

This lesson follows essentially the same format as the first lesson plan, but the work will be more specific because instead of a selection of objects from the collection, you’ll be working specifically with the pieces the group selected for your exhibit. Teens work in small groups with scaled-down images of the chosen pieces and arrange them two-dimensionally in a floor plan. The whole group will then look at the options and make decisions together based on discussion before creating one three-dimensional model with the final decisions. During discussion, focus on why groups made the choices they made.

Goals

- Explore options for organization of elements
- Refine and justify curatorial choices

Materials and set-up: See Lesson Plan #1, replacing original scaled-down printed images with scaled-down printed images of the chosen works.

Procedure: See lesson Plan #1
IX. Readings and Resources

Use this list to find all of the readings and resources mentioned in the program.

Assign Session 2 for Session 3

- Lisa Corrin’s “Mining the Museum”
- Elizabeth Ginsberg’s “Case Study: Mining the Museum”

Session 3: additions students can find online

- Judith E. Stein’s “Sins of Omission [Fred Wilson’s Mining the Museum]”
- Maryland Historical Society Library Department’s “Return of the Whipping Post: Mining the Museum”

Assign Session 3 for Session 4

- Coco Fusco’s “The Other History of Intercultural Performance,” p. 143-148, 154-166

Session 4

- Heredia, Paula’s “The Couple in the Cage”
- Claire Voon’s “Artists Covertly Scan Bust of Nefertiti and Release the Data for Free Online”

Session 13

- Pohl’s *Framing America: A Social History of American Art*
  - Pages 73-74, 185-186, 239-242
  - Any other sections relevant to your topic
- Fred Wilson’s *Mining the Museum* label questions, found in Klaasmeyer’s *Someone’s Grandmother*
X. Methods of Evaluation

An evaluation of *Teening the Museum* will allow you to make improving changes where you see fit, define your successes this year and your goals for next year, and report back successful outcomes to potential funders and in grant proposals. Evaluations can take many forms, both formal and informal. If you don’t already do a lot of program evaluation, you may need to review a few options to figure out what is right for you and your institution. I can recommend *Understanding Narrative Inquiry* (Kim), and *Practical Evaluation Guide: Tools for Museums and Other Informal Settings* (Diamond et al) to guide your evaluations if you want to do more reading and research.

In order to conceive of whether or not you have met your goals, you will need to be able to track changes in your teen participants. This means that you’ll need a baseline (before the program) evaluation, and a post-program evaluation. Before the program begins, write a set of questions that address the goals for teens to answer before and after the program and make a plan to have teens answer them via oral interview or written survey. Administer written surveys in person with paper, or online via email or Google Forms. The following questions can act as a guide, tailor them for your institution:

- How much time have you spent in museums in the past year?
- Would you bring your friends or family to a museum in your free time?
- What do you like best about being in the museum?
- What’s the worst part of being in a museum?
- What are your favorite works of art in this museum?
- What do you think is the point of museums?
● Who do you think the museum is working for?

● What careers are you considering?

At the end of the program, you’ll ask the same set of questions, but you may also want to add a few more questions, like these:

● What did you learn about the museum during this program?

● What did you learn about the way you work during this program?

● What was your favorite part of the program? Least favorite part?

● How could we improve this program?

In addition to these structured methods of evaluation, consider anecdotal evidence when presenting your findings in a grant or within your institution. For example, if you find one of your teen participants coming back with her friends on the weekends and stopping by your office to say hello, you could use that as evidence that she feels a sense of comfort and ownership in the space. If a participant asks you about your career path towards museum work, you can see that as him taking an interest in the same work.

Once you have assembled the baseline and post-program survey answers, compare the two to investigate how your participants’ conceptions of museums and themselves within the museums have changed. Do any see themselves working in museums? Have they gotten more comfortable in your space? Did they develop relationships with any works in your museum? Do they have an idea of how and why the museum functions?

Use the answers to these questions and others to judge what worked or didn’t work about the program and to make improvements. Take participants’ suggestions
seriously, their wide experiences in school and other programs outside of school gives
them a unique and invaluable perspective. Incorporate answers and ideas into changes for
the next round of the program.
XI. Reflection

I was lucky to be thinking through this project while I was working with a few groups of teenagers at the Brooklyn Museum on projects that were not dissimilar. The process of working on concrete projects while designing one in the abstract was rewarding. My Brooklyn Museum programs benefited from the decision-making that I was putting into this project, an element often lacking from real-time programming. For example, because I was thinking academically about how to talk to teens about the social issues they care about, I was more able to facilitate similar conversations with Brooklyn Museum teens with intentionality.

At the same time, *Teening the Museum* benefited because I was troubleshooting real problems at the Brooklyn Museum and was able to fold in considerations about the day-to-day challenges of museum programming. I learned that the many moving parts of a museum program can be controlled well, but only with careful advanced planning. For example, I saw in my programs at the Brooklyn Museum how difficult it can be to organize museum professionals to talk with teens, or to figure out what types of oversight different departments in a museum will want to have over teens’ final visible products, so I incorporated advice on how to figure out these elements early on in *Teening the Museum*.

After writing *Teening the Museum* and working on teen programs at the Brooklyn Museum, the best counsel I can give about pulling off a successful program is for leaders to continuously return to the mission of the program and consider how they can best serve their teens. When decisions seems murky, think about why you are doing the
program and make a choice that keeps you on that path. When you’re problem-solving, remember that you made a commitment to your teens and think about what will help you keep up your commitment.

There are so many possibilities for this program. It will adapt for art or history collections large and small. It could be in classrooms with fantasy collections, or online as a digital exhibition or blog. Teenagers will focus on a myriad of issues that interest them as their different communities with inform their perspectives. No matter the space or format, I know that the young people involved will grow intellectually, professionally, and socially.
XII. References


Manekin, Elizabeth & Williams, Elizabeth (2015). Teaching students to teach. *Journal of*


http://judithestein.com/sins-omission-fred-wilson%E2%80%99s-mining-museum

