

MOVEMENT AND THEATER IN THE ART MUSEUM:  
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES FOR  
K-12 CLASSROOM TEACHERS

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APPROVED:\_\_\_\_\_

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## ABSTRACT

The aim of this capstone research paper is to investigate best practices in movement and theater techniques that can and are being used within the art museum. Further, this research discusses the need for K-12 educators and museums to become partners in teaching art within both the museum and classroom. Finally, this research argues the importance of providing museum professional development programs for K-12 classroom teachers, which incorporate movement and theater techniques.

## KEY TERMS

Professional development  
Movement and theater techniques  
Art museum  
Education

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Through the use of multiple learning techniques, I work to transform every-day art experiences by actively engaging audiences through the integration of Visual Thinking Strategies, movement and theater techniques, and hands-on learning within traditional programming.

## EDUCATION & HONORS

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<b>M.S., Arts Management</b> , University of Oregon Concentration: <i>Museum Studies</i> Graduate Fellowship	2012
<b>Graduate Certificate in Museum Studies</b> , University of Oregon	2012
<b>B.A., Art History</b> , University of Northern Iowa Significant studies in <i>Education</i>	2010
<b>A.A. with honors</b> , North Iowa Area Community College Concentration: <i>Elementary Education</i> Honors Program	2007

## SKILLS

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- Arts management
- Curriculum writing
- Program design & implementation
- Program evaluation
- Writing & editing for press/publication
- Adobe Creative Suite: Photoshop, Illustrator, InDesign, Dreamweaver
- Team management
- Budget writing
- Social Media management
- Web 2.0 management
- Mac & Windows Operating Systems
- MS Office
- iWork
- Past Perfect Database
- Artist in 2-dimensional & 3-dimensional mediums (pencil, watercolor, acrylic, oil, pastels, clay, photography)

## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

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**Museum of Natural & Cultural History**, Eugene OR Jan. 2011-Present  
**Graduate Fellowship**

**Children & Family programming • Teaching • Management of volunteers • Visitor service • Program implementation & management • Designing & dispersing social & print media**

Design, implement and evaluate *Family Days* programming for the museum, integrating art, culture and natural history into the event for young children and their families; Writing curricula, teaching and evaluating *Little Wonders, Stories & Activities for Preschoolers*; Promoting education programs through traditional press releases and social media; Collaborating with educational staff to design and develop additional programs and activities for K-12 classrooms, as well as for children and families within the museum.

**(sub)Urban Projections Festival, Eugene OR**

Fall 2011-Present

**Co-Creative Director & Co-Founder****Community outreach & engagement • Team management • Volunteer training and management • Social media management including Facebook and WordPress • Budget writing & management**

Co-founded a digital art festival in the back-alleys of downtown Eugene; Managed all aspects of this program from creating a goal and vision, meeting with community members during the pre-planning stages, creating a WordPress website and Facebook page, selecting works and managing the jury process, creating and implementing a marketing plan, recruiting and managing volunteers, and installing and running the event.

**Anchorage Museum, Anchorage AK**

June 2011-July 2011

**Education, Exhibits, & Collections Intern****Interdisciplinary curriculum writing • Collaboration with different departments • Detail oriented**

Worked with the education department to write curricula for K-12 educators to create a stronger, more meaningful learning experience through interdisciplinary curriculum, to be made available online; Researched & presented finding on several Alaskan History subjects to be used in curating upcoming exhibits; Edited the Collection's website, updating information, and streamlining the presentation.

**University of Northern Iowa Gallery of Art, Cedar Falls IA**

Aug. 2009-May 2010

**Art Curator, Internship for UNI Permanent Art Collection****Curation of an online exhibit • Collections Management • PastPerfect database • Art handling**

Researched and wrote biographies of artists; Curated an exhibition to be placed on the UNI Gallery website, <http://www.uni.edu/artdept/PermCollectionArt/Home.html>; Relocated the Permanent Collection to a new storage space; Worked with the PastPerfect database; Assisted in the gallery.

**Hearst Center for the Arts, Cedar Falls IA**

May 2008-May 2010

**Instructor****Managed Spring Break Camp • Managed & trained volunteers • Taught students 5-12 years of age**

Wrote and taught curriculum for Spring Break Camp, including the management of a budget, student registration and behavior management; In charge of supplies inventory for events & classes for elementary age students; Supervised volunteers during programs; Worked collaboratively with others to plan & execute an art project once a month for 150 children (3yrs-11yrs) and their parents.

**Fieldwork in community schools, Cedar Falls IA**

Aug. 2006-May 2010

**Educator****Taught children 6-18 years of age • Managed classroom organization & supplies**

Wrote curricula and taught students within a variety of schools within Northern Iowa; Taught grades K-6 lessons in reading, math, and art; Classroom management, evaluation, and integration of various teaching strategies and learning theories.

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# AN INTRODUCTION

## PROBLEM STATEMENT

Art programs are being cut in public schools at an alarming rate, as funding becomes scarce in today's world of "teaching to the test." As art museums step in to fill the void within schools, education of art needs to continually demonstrate relevance across school curriculum. Lack of funding also means many classrooms cannot afford museum led tours. Professional development programs offered by museums often provide educators with activities, strategies, and curriculum suggestions to aid teachers in instructing their students within the museum without the aid of museum educators or docents.

Through this capstone research paper, I examine professional development opportunities that use theater and movement to break down reservations K-12 educators may have about teaching art, as these techniques have the potential to provide educators with unthreatening, engaging and accessible avenues to teach the subject of art successfully.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

To conceptualize the focus of my research, I have included a concept schematic (Figure 1) of broad topics and themes. While I began my research targeting broad concepts, through an in depth literature review I have narrowed my topic of study to theater and movement techniques, in reference to art museum professional development programs that are being implemented in current art museum practices around the United States.

Professional development courses are one way in which museums and educators are working together to promote art education. Because budgets are tight, many K-12 classroom educators are looking for other ways to use the museums resources without spending a lot of

money. One way to do this is through guided and unguided tours. Theater and movement techniques taught in professional development courses within the museum can provide K-12 educators with the tools they need to create their own curriculum and lead tours themselves. These techniques do not require the K-12 classroom educator to be an expert on a painting, painter or artistic technique, but instead allows them to teach skills in critical thinking, emotions, movement, observation, and art appreciation, while making connections to both art within the museum and learning within the classroom.

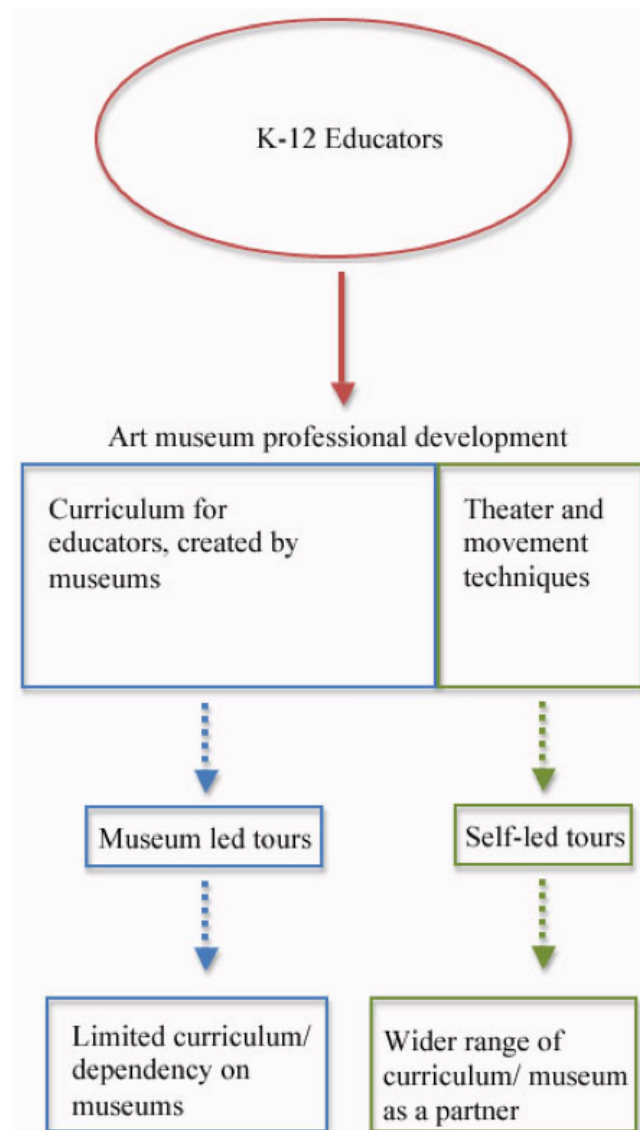


Figure 1, Concept Map

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research capstone is a comparative analysis of four different techniques from art museums within the United States conducted through an in-depth literature review and two graduate level courses from the University of Oregon. This paper also highlights a few museums nationally and internationally that are successfully incorporating different movement or theater techniques within their education programming, providing examples of possible best practice.

Relativist research specifically takes into account socio-economic and perceived barriers that visitors may experience within the typical art institution. Positivist research, on the other hand, is much more concerned with the actual physical barriers, and how this directly impacts statistical data. In this project, I studied both the perceived barriers K-12 classroom educators feel within the museum when teaching art, as well as how a museum's physical barriers affect their teaching abilities, and how movement and theater techniques break past these barriers.

*Youth Arts Curriculum* offered within the Arts Administration Departments was one of two courses I completed for this capstone requirement. The course focused on educating pre-service teachers to use art and the art museum within their own classrooms, and I approached this course as a type of professional development linking it directly to my research. The instructor, Lisa Abia-Smith (Director of Educational Outreach, Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art) taught the class through a series of class lectures and hands-on art making activities to provide pre-service teachers with the confidence to teach art and the resources to articulate why teaching art is important. My own work within the course focused directly on the use of theater and movement techniques within museum curriculum.

My second capstone requirement was an independent reading course that focused on deepening my understanding of professional development practices through informational

interviews, participating in a professional development workshop at the Seattle Art Museum in March 2012, and in furthering document analysis of theater and movement within the art museum.

## RESEARCH QUESTION

As museums and K-12 educators create stronger working relationships in the current economy, new techniques and tours are being created to meet the evolving needs of both public school systems and art museums. As commented on within the problem statement, funding is a major concern for many, and self-led school tours are becoming a necessity for schools. In order to provide teachers with the most effective tools possible, many museums are providing professional development training that focuses on how the K-12 educator can independently use the museum to teach classroom curriculum.

My research question, based on these trends, is: How are US art museums using theater and movement professional development programs to create effective teaching strategies for K-12 educators? Sub questions I have researched within this capstone are:

1. What types of movement and theater are being utilized/implemented into art museum professional development programs?
2. How do movement and theater practices in the art museum differ both internationally, and within the U.S. between types of museums?

## DEFINITIONS

**Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS):** An approach to teaching art, in which a group of individuals is invited to look at a work and comment on what they see. The facilitator then asks them to defend their answers before paraphrasing the comment and opening the question back up to the

whole group. In this way, talking about the art is done within a low-risk situation where validity is given to all answers (*What is VTS?*, 2012).

**Theater and Movement techniques:** Techniques used within the gallery to foster critical thinking and personal connections with artwork. These techniques may include imitating movement within the painting, acting out narratives, personifying subjects within the artwork, and “becoming” the work of art. These techniques range from small movement exercises done by the individual to large-scale scripted puppet or theater shows offered at specific times within the museum (Weisberg, 2006).

**Professional Development:** Professional training for K-12 educators, providing resources, curriculum, and justifications for integrating art within the teacher’s curriculum. In this particular paper, focus will be placed on professional development provided within the art museum.

## DELIMITATIONS

To complete my research, I identified several delimitations to impose upon my study. These are important, for they helped to focus my research, identify possible gaps, and acknowledge potential weaknesses of the research. Specifically, I limited my research to a capstone format relying on a literature review and analysis of theater and movement techniques documented by museum professionals within print and online sources.

## LIMITATIONS

Even with my imposed delimitations, there are limitations and weaknesses within the study. Formatted through a capstone, this research was conducted through a strict literature review of published documents, current program documentation, and web based resources. Because interviews were not used within the study, all examples of theater and movement within this paper are taken from secondary sources. The information provided is therefore limited through the scope of the original authors research lens and biases.

## BENEFITS OF THE STUDY

This study aims to become a resource for museum professionals who are looking to implement a similar technique into their own professional development practices. By cataloging a variety of institution's methods and evaluations, along with a credible literature review from contemporary scholars, the aim is to provide evidence of using theater and movement techniques as a best practice.

# LITERATURE REVIEW

## SHIFTS IN THE ART MUSEUM

An art museum values its objects many times based on aesthetic idealism, artistic merit, and historical significance. Criteria determining greatness or significance can therefore be lost occasionally on the casual museum visitor. Considering this, art museums today are expanding their educational programming to better engage with both their casual visitor and art patrons.

Weil (2002) quotes the 1968 *Belmont Report*, a once highly supported document focused on the increase of federal funding within the arts. Although, according to Weil, they understood

the value of education as a reason for additional funding, the writers supported a more traditional approach:

(Art museums) aim to provide the aesthetic and emotional pleasure which great works of art offer. This is a primary purpose of an art museum. It is assumed that a majority of the people who come regularly to museums come to be delighted, not to be taught, or preached at, or “improved” except by the works of art themselves. (p. 34)

While visitors still enter the art museum today to be “delighted” by artwork, many also come with a desire to learn.

Post World War II, museums began to shift their focus, or mission, due to an outburst of new museums and diminished governmental funding. Because museums and non-profits have needed to find money outside government support, corporate sponsorships and individual donations within the community prompted a shift from “object and collections” based missions, to those that focus on the improvement of society and social obligation within their community.

## EDUCATION WITHIN THE ART MUSEUM

Because museums are seen as one of the higher authorities of knowledge (largely based on their objects and past history), many figures in education and the local community have appreciated the shift to a more collaborative and inquisitive educational approach within exhibits and programming. Weil (2002) brings up the question of what makes a “good” museum? His list includes loyalty and generosity of its benefactors, excellence of staff, exhibitions and programming, or outside influence on the community (p. 38). Museums grapple with this question of “What makes a good museum?” in particular, for its answer drives a museum’s purpose, as well as who they hire, what programs will be offered, and how they will interact with their community.

To provide quality education within the museum for general visitors, K-12 educators, and students, the question “what is learning?” should be addressed. Several of my sources commented on the lack of a general definition. Ben-Haim (2006) went as far as to state that the term is misunderstood in museum settings (p. 6). Indeed several sources commented that many times art museums talk down to visitors, creating a passive learning style that most find difficult to understand or enjoy. Barrett (2009) comments, “If we educators want to impose on museum visitors the views of experts about works of art, we can use electronic means and let them hear the experts themselves” (p. 76). His article, “Interactive Touring in Art Museums: Constructing Meanings and Creating Communities of Understanding” looks at how to create a learning environment based on conversation and individual meanings, which can dictate a visitor’s interpretations of an exhibit. Barrett specifically speaks to unapproachable and high-handed vocabulary in labels, stating that in his case study understanding the contents of the labels would have restricted participants from constructing their own meanings and interpretations of the artwork. This language barrier does more than limit a person’s understanding of a piece of work. It can also potentially create a negative impact on a visitor’s museum experience, causing them to avoid museums in the future. Black (2005) speaks to this tendency:

Before someone visits a museum, he or she will already have a mental image of it. The image will define his or her attitude towards the museum and will have a major influence on any decision on whether or not to visit and on expectations of the visit (p. 79).

This is also true for K-12 educators who choose to (or choose not to) participate in professional development programs.

Sandell (2002) believes that museums facilitate collective and personal development within their educational programming. Specifically, one area touched on in his book *Museum, Society, Inequality* states that museums “provide a forum for the discussion and debate of



emergent social issues,” while “affirming personal identity” (p. 47). Barrett confirms this, believing that through meaningful conversations about art objects with familiar and unfamiliar groups, a sense of community and understanding is built. Further, visitors begin to feel as though they are sharing curatorial authority, and this opportunity for learning offers unique roles for visitors while possibly changing the fundamental role of museum educators (p. 76).

In their book, *Listening in on Museum Conversations* (2004), Leinhardt and Knutson categorize evident learning of behavior (based on group interaction and conversation) into five groups: hearing learning, hearing rhythms of connection (deep thought vs. superficial listing), hearing lives (social experiences), hearing memories, and hearing misconceptions (p. 10-18). By analyzing the different categories of learning, museum educators can better understand what captures a visitor’s attention, what keeps them interested, and what they take away from the experience. Eastburn (2006) believes that museums should offer a wide variety of programming options within an exhibit context, to account for multiple personal interpretations and learning styles. In her thesis, *Hands-on, mindful, and heartfelt learning: A model for the art museum*, Ben-Haim (2006) comments that research shows that exploring object through touch increases “dwell-time” and attention to learning, and suggests that museums combine this hands-on technique with a “minds-on” learning approach (such as through puzzles, riddles and games) (p. 9).

## THEATER AND MOVEMENT STRATEGIES

Teaching theater and movement techniques within the art museum gallery is a growing practice used by museum educators across the country to engage K-12 educators and their students in a deeper level of learning about art, which can potentially impact a child’s ability to think critically and deeply about a multitude of subjects. Studies have proven that integrating the

arts into a school's curriculum boosts math scores, improves writing, and promotes inclusion and understanding of different cultures. However, if students do not know how to connect with art (both in the classroom and at the museum), improvements and connections with other leaning disciplines may not occur.

Techniques introduced to K-12 educators and students by museum educators help to bridge the gap between traditional art forms and current lifestyles. Theater and movement, along with *Visual Thinking Strategies* (VTS) are popular techniques used by museums, for they allow teachers and students to make their own meanings for artworks instead of prescribing "right" and "wrong" answers. According to Roberts (1997), museums cater "to a generation that [has] been reared in an age of mass-communications media" (p. 39). Ideas on education claim that first, "visitors must...attend to an object for learning to occur" and second, "[entertainment's] very nature – playful, enjoyable, and fun – evoked in people the optimum conditions for learning – openness, loss of self, and what Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi called 'flow'" (p. 40).

The introduction of "play" or "flow" within a museum tour (either self-led by a K-12 classroom educator, or museum-led by a trained docent) provides a safe environment for students to explore, interact with, and visually verbalize what they see, feel, and understand within the artwork. Wachowiak and Clements (2006) state, "Psychomotor exercises are used in many progressive children's programs at museums to arouse interest in artworks. They have children respond non-verbally to the artworks, using their bodies and creative movements" (p. 62). These techniques also promote sharing and teamwork, which allows for a dialog between students, educators, and museum staff.

Sternberg provides further arguments for the use of movement within the gallery, stating, "Active learning encourages children to become completely involved in a work of art. They look

at it, they focus on it and they respond to it...in this way the world of pretending and imagination opens doors to understanding” (1989, p. 159). Understanding promotes confidence in a child’s engagement with the art, and it carries over into a child’s learning. When they are confident they are more willing to think critically, offer up new ideas, and rework their beliefs and assumptions based on their communication with others. Using these techniques within a group also builds a strong sense of community and safety, where everyone’s thoughts and actions matter. As each child or young adult shares their personal connections to a work of art through movement and theater, they are learning to communicate on a variety of levels.

According to Yellis (2010), by treating the museum as a sort of theater (where narrative takes place) in which exhibits narrate complex or controversial ideas in “helpful, inspiring and stimulating, seductive and sometimes powerful” ways, children and teachers can become personally connected with what they are learning. In the younger grades, introducing narrative works through VTS and theater techniques promotes emotional exploration, and allows them to “relate to the arts as media for expression and communication at a time when their verbal skills are not fully developed,” according to Wachowiak and Clements (2006, p. 119). More specifically – introducing any age group to an artwork through VTS allows students to safely verbalize their ideas about a work of art. As students become more comfortable sharing their ideas, critical thinking and problem solving tend to emerge. During this phase, allowing students to act out what they see provides yet another dimension in their learning, through kinesthetic exploration. Sternberg (1989) suggests, “learning is a process which involves the activation of every individual’s cognitive, affective and psychomotor capabilities” (p.156). Talking about student movements, theatrical narratives, and cooperative activities can build upon revelations and conclusions first unpacked in VTS.

Movement and theater techniques also encourage open-ended responses, again removing fear of failure. When educating teachers to use theater and movement techniques, however, the fear of failure can be much greater. Museum educators must be aware of societal restraints towards acting silly in public spaces, and making noise or large movements within the art gallery. However, by providing a safe place (such as teacher development seminars) where K-12 teachers may experiment with and practice these techniques, confidence in themselves and their ability to teach art grows.

Weisberg's *Museum Movement Techniques* (2006) or MMT, studies how to best use movement within the gallery space, and provides five steps of looking at a painting. By introducing these steps to educators, classroom teachers can follow a structure that has been proven effective, moving from a very low risk activity to higher risk techniques, as both the teacher's confidence and the students' confidence in their understanding of an artwork grows. By incorporating spatial, expressive, and social-cooperative movements linking to educational objectives determined by national standards, educators can become confident in teaching art at a deeper and more meaningful level, even if they know very little about a specific piece of art. Active participation provides agency, and agency is crucial in a child's emotional involvement in learning any subject, including art.

Wachowiak and Clements (2006) comment even further about integrating theater and movement into an art curriculum, stating:

Drama is sometimes considered the most integrated [kinesthetic art] form, using action and behaviors that employ aural, kinesthetic, tactile, verbal and visual ways of knowing...Finding relationships among these forms [i.e. drama, dance, music, art] of representation can facilitate learning, and children's early arts experiences will later coalesce into sophisticated reasoning and problem solving (p. 119).

Integrating VTS and movement and theater techniques within the museum provides K-12 educators and museum educators with a powerful tool to engage students through multiple modes of learning, without compromising the museum's curatorial voice, and while still connecting to state and national education standards while making connections across the educational curriculum.

## TYPES OF THEATER AND MOVEMENT TECHNIQUES WITHIN THE U.S. ART MUSEUM

“Children in preschool and primary school age groups live in a world of imagination. They want to touch, and they want to move“ (Rutowski, 1990, p. 5)

In answering the question, *How are US art museums using theater and movement professional development programs to create effective teaching strategies for K-12 educators*, I developed several sub-questions to define and limit the scope of this research. The first sub question, *What types of movement and theater are being utilized/implemented into art museum professional development programs?* is addressed within this section.

Through my research, I came across a number of different techniques that museums have used to integrate theater and movement into their programming (both in visitor services and in education). Oestreicher (1990) believes “...the qualities [of museum theater] that set it apart from other forms – such as living history, first-person interpretation, reenactment, storytelling, demonstrations, and even tours and lectures (at their best) – are often subtle, though they may also be profound“ (p. 4). Theater and movement strategies allow students to empathize with historical figures, painted narratives, and animals at a deeper level than they can through lectures and book learning. Museum theater also allows students to make personal connections with

objects that might not otherwise have any relevance within their own lives. As students search for and find relevancy, connections, and understanding, “A-Ha!” moments in learning become more profound.

In much of this research, these practices are developed and offered by education departments within the museums, but are not made specifically for K-12 educators and professional development seminars. Therefore, this research presents a few model techniques and programs already in use within museums, along with recommendations of how to integrate the techniques into professional development programming for K-12 educators. In section five, current professional development programs are examined and compared with this research.

The four techniques highlighted within this section are scripted theater, role-play, puppets, and movement activities. Each technique has its strengths and weaknesses, and is adaptable to any type of museum, and to any school curriculum.

## SCRIPTED THEATER

One theater technique that many museums choose is the traditional actor with a scripted performance. There are multiple ways in which museums have integrated the technique within their gallery spaces, ranging from elaborate staged productions that are presented once or twice as an event to the more intimate performance, performed at intervals during the week for an extended period of time.

Many living history museums already use this technique to demonstrate life of the past, such as in Colonial Jamestown. Their narratives are less scripted, with interpreters trained to interact with visitors through a persona that is historically accurate to the time period of the museum or preservation site. Within these performances, emphasis is placed on the buildings, artifacts, and stories of real people alive in the period depicted. Therefore, interpreters relay

information about people, time, and place as an alternative to label text on a wall. Costumes help to transport visitors back in time, and allow them to suspend reality in order to learn and engage with history. These types of interaction allow many to “play” and explore without fear of judgment by others.

Science and children’s museums have also integrated the technique of scripted theater into educational programming in order to teach abstract concepts in a more relatable way. The Please Touch Children’s Museum in Philadelphia, PA does a fantastic job of incorporating theater into their public programming to teach children about colors, foods, diet, and so on, as a way to explore an idea through sight, sound, and sometimes touch and taste. Their productions are more elaborate, incorporating lighting and sound into the staged performance.

## ROLE-PLAY

A more informal technique to engage students in learning about history, paintings, and science is through role-play. Role-play is an exploration of a topic through informal theater. This may involve costumes, suggested plots, or a list of vocabulary or facts to be used within the final product, but the actual performance is written and performed impromptu by students. Rutowski (1990) states, “Older elementary school students, aware of peer judgments, are unwilling to pantomime animals and unlikely to still be captivated by the wonder of puppetry. Yet they are often not only willing but eager to be dressed up as an animal in the classroom or on the auditorium stage” (p. 6).

To have K-12 educators continually encourage their students to push the boundaries of theater and communication, students can explore a time period, object, or concept in a way that stimulates deeper learning. Grenier and Sheckly (2008) explain,

Experience-based interaction begins with a learner's conscious attention to an event, a process initiated by a "change of body state." Physiological changes occur at a neuronal level that are preserved as durable and retrievable memory traces which are registries of the "content" the mind uses during thinking, reasoning, and problem solving (p. 84).

Role-play is one such experience-based interaction that allows students the flexibility to work out ideas both independently and within a group, in such a way as to engage their body as well as their mind in learning. In adding costumes and prompts, students are touching, and sometimes smelling, in addition to hearing and seeing what they are learning. The use of four senses promotes the "durable and retrievable memory traces," while giving students another tool or access point within their learning careers.

## PUPPETS

Puppets can be gender-ambiguous, timeless, and much more approachable than an actor – even if the actor is standing beside the puppet. Adults find it easier to suspend belief and engage with something so unreal as to have no part in their traditional reality. Actors, on the other hand may look like a sibling or friend, or threaten a visitor's balance with their posture, eye contact, or movements; Puppets, put simply, do not.

Puppets are also excellent tools to use with young children when teaching abstract concepts of empathy or feelings, or to introduce students to animals that are too dangerous to handle. There are some drawbacks to puppets that museums must be aware of when creating programming. In bringing an animal to life using puppets, many times educators choose to create "humanized" characters. Students should be aware that while puppets may act human, the actual animals they depict do not. For example, the Monterey Bay Aquarium provided a puppet program, "Sea Stars on Vacation," with the message that sea animals should be left at the beach. Evaluation of the program demonstrated the primary message was successfully delivered,



however, audience confusion in other areas did arise. For example, one little girl was distressed over the fact that her live starfish would not talk (Rutowski, 1990, p.7).

Puppets are excellent tools that children and adults are able to connect and engage with. Whether it is a full body puppet that brings a baby triceratops to life within a scheduled museum performance, or a student made puppet of a historical figure, the puppet inherently provides a narrative to any set of facts that is easier to absorb, understand, and connect with on a personal level.

## MOVEMENT ACTIVITIES

Dance is one way in which to engage the body through critical movement. Johannes Birringer (2005) comments, “We can think movement before we move, and we also experience movement in our bodies as we watch” (p. 16). This awareness that many students have with movement within their own bodies, and that of their peers, opens the door to a multitude of possible exercises.

*Museum Movement Techniques* (MMT), created by Weisberg, S.K. (2006), explores how movement can be used within the exhibit to connect with art on a personal level, especially when used with children. In using this particular set of movement exercises, participants become involved more intellectually, emotionally, and physically with the objects they interact with. According to Weisberg’s book, the experience stimulates the sharing of ideas and diminishes the inhibitions and reservations between the object and the viewer.

MMT incorporates spatial, expressive, and social-cooperative movements, and links to educational objectives determined by national standards (Weisberg, 2006, p. 8). There are five stages to MMT, and the author suggests teaching them in a hierarchical manner for greatest affect. The first technique, *mirror*, requires visitors to assume the position of a realistic (human)

figure. Because the human figure is relatable to the visitor, the movement is less intimidating and builds confidence, while creating an emotional bond to the object. The second technique, *alive*, uses the same movements of the *mirror* technique and applies them to an abstract form, for example an animal. As students freeze in a pose, the educator then asks them to then “activate” the form into movements the object might make, stimulating a narrative.

The *map* technique focuses on a free-flowing abstract form, inviting children to trace the form, for example with their hand or foot. By using specific body parts, MMT is again building confidence within the participant. *Express* technique begins with *mirroring* an abstract form. It then activates each part of the form in a movement, and then as a whole object. This allows participants to “stimulate expressiveness through a movement narrative, which in turn sparks the language skills of descriptive verbal communication” (Weisberg, 2006, p. 16). Finally, the *composition* technique moves the participant one step further in *express*, by encouraging teamwork to create the whole object through its different parts. While specifically created for children within a guided tour, this technique can (and *should*) also be used for adult tours and teacher guided tours. All of these movements are highly adaptable and have been used in a variety of situations that help visitors uncover the mysteries of an object within the museum, especially those that may not readily lend themselves to narrative.

Introducing theater and movement, through performance, role-play, puppets, or movement exercises, is critical in engaging students on a more dynamic learning platform.

Belliveau (2007) quotes:

“Needlans (1990) suggests that “the fictional situation and characters become more and more recognizable to the creators of the drama and the relationships begin to form between what is happening in the drama and what happens in the outside world” (p. 69)” (p. 49).

This connection to the outside world is becoming ever more important as today's children spend more and more of their time in virtual, high-tech environment. Giving them a chance to touch and see "the real thing," put on clothes from the era they are learning about, and create narratives that connect lives of individuals in the past with their own life, students can better find the relevance between history and today's culture. Drama allows students to experiment without negative consequences, such as bad grades or peer criticism, and allows kids to "just be kids."

## A BRIEF GLIMPSE OF NATIONAL VS. INTERNATIONAL PRACTICES WITHIN A VARIETY OF MUSEUMS

### INTERNATIONAL THEATER/MOVEMENT PROGRAMS

Hawkey's (2003) article, "All the (Natural) World's a Stage: Museum Theater as an Educational Tool," provides several prime examples of using theater as an untraditional medium to promote the museum, and to engage the audience. According to Hawkey, the London (UK) Museum of Natural History has used adult puppet theater both within their exhibit halls and during museum events. *Over the Edge* was an adult puppet performance that tackled an extremely large period of history, narrating the tradition of natural history collecting through the lens of Hans Sloane, Joseph Banks, Charles Darwin and the present day crew of the Challenger. The performance also highlighted several sensitive subjects, including the poor treatment of Indigenous and enslaved peoples.

Through the use of puppet theater, these and other sensitive issues were more easily received than when presented through a live performer, perhaps because psychologically puppets are less threatening than an actor. The puppet format also allowed the idea of time and historical place to be juxtaposed, creating a set of dialogue and characters from historic and present day to

perform and interact side by side. *Over the Edge* was produced on a stage, requiring a number of props, actors, and a large monetary commitment. Even so, “the very lack of a theatrical tradition allowed the museum to take chances, resulting in a work ‘both disturbing and brave, [which] heralds a breakdown of traditional prejudices’” (Hawkey, 2003).

The museum also placed puppets within the exhibit hall, portraying such characters as Charles Darwin, a timeless cabin boy, and Circadian Sam (a unisex character used to explore the exhibit through the eyes and logic of a 7 year old). These puppets provided insights into the exhibit through a character or historical person’s point of view, while answering visitor’s questions and posing questions to the visitor. The puppets provided a less intimidating interaction, while promoting a fun, open atmosphere within the exhibit hall.

Another example of how to incorporate theater and dance into an education program can be found in Cockington Court’s (Torquay, UK) November 2011 Cockington Complex guided tour. Cockington Court is a historic manor, craft house, and park that provides a workshop space for local craftsmen and a historic escape for families in the local community. While educational programs are not offered on a regular basis, Cockington Court does provide a few events each year to highlight and celebrate its history. On November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2011 they offered the Cockington Complex guided tour free to the public. Presented in the form of a pilgrimage and targeted towards families - songs, dances, and stories were enacted by musicians and performers of the *Geotrio*. One visitor stated, “Cockinton court would have been very boring for me if it wasn't for the walk and music! It was amazing” (Kimmren, 2011). Through theater, music and dance, Cockington Court was able to enliven the history of its walls and grounds, appealing to a more diverse audience.

## NATIONAL THEATER/MOVEMENT PROGRAMS

There are many museums within the United States that provide theater programs through their educational programming. Many open-air museums on the east coast, including Historic Jamestown and Gettysburg offer dramatic interpretations of their historical preservation sites. Interpreters within these settings dress up in historically accurate costumes and interact with visitors as if they were from that time period. Techniques and strategies of interpretation differ, but two popular options are (1) to relive or enact an actual historic person, through the interpretation of primary and secondary documents that highlight their beliefs and actions during their lifetime; and (2), to create a fictional character that offers an amalgamated perspective of a place in history based on primary and secondary documents of many people during that time period. In both cases, interpreters are offering their own personal *interpretation* of the past, and museums, staff, and visitors must all be aware of personal biases that are present within the performances.

The SPARK Museum of Electrical Invention in Bellingham, Washington has teamed up with the Allied Arts of Whatcom County and the Mount Baker School District since 2008 to provide dance and movement programs to 6<sup>th</sup> graders in electricity and magnetism. This partnership creates unique experiences in science, allowing children to become the atoms, currents, and circuits they are learning about in the classroom. By using their bodies to explore these and other concepts, children are able to incorporate kinesthetic learning and communication to a subject that might not otherwise encourage such techniques (<http://www.sparkmuseum.org/>).

## THEATER/MOVEMENT PROGRAMS WITHIN THE ART MUSEUM

The San Francisco Asian Art Museum has offered a yoga program within their museum for the since 2007. The yoga instructor, Lorna Reed, has developed a routine over the years that incorporate poses found within sculptures within the museum's exhibits and collections. The museum, on occasion, has even provided yoga within the galleries themselves, allowing participants to directly mirror the sculpture they observe. These rare programs have been a part of larger events museum wide, and provided the public with an unusual, effective way to connect personally with the works from another culture's history and religion. When yoga classes are not offered in the gallery, the museum provides museum visitors with a yoga guide (Fig. 2, 3) that they can take into the gallery after their workout. The associated printed handout prompts visitors to find certain statues and poses within the gallery and provides facts about yoga traditions.

The Newark Museum also provides theater narratives for specific artworks. In one instance, the narrative was based on Winslow Homer's 1866 painting "Near Andersonville," which was videotaped and uploaded on YouTube, ([http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_joP0S21hSg&feature=BFa&list=FLVbuo-Y5nk4s&index=3](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_joP0S21hSg&feature=BFa&list=FLVbuo-Y5nk4s&index=3)). The script was written and preformed by actress Tia James, who dressed in the costume represented in the painting. In addition to the video, James also performed the work in the gallery alongside the painting on several occasions. This theater performance provides visitors with the opportunity to emotionally connect with the woman reflected within the artwork.

**Lotus Pose**  
**पद्मासन**  
 padmasana  
 padma = lotus

This guide provides a basic introduction to practices and philosophies of yoga. Several artworks in the galleries show figures in yoga poses. Try the poses yourself and see how you feel.

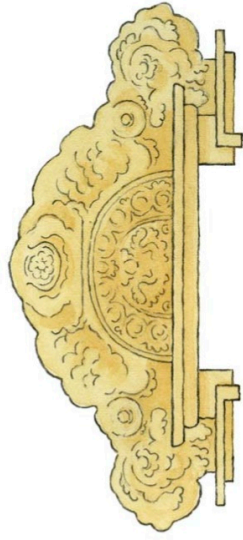
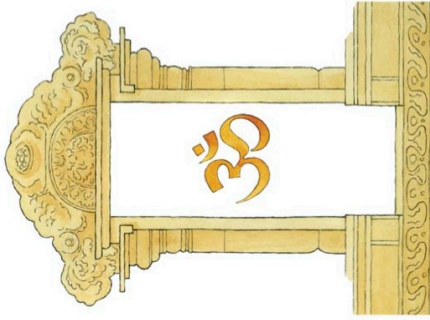


Lotus is the most recognizable yoga pose, but it's no ordinary cross-legged pose. How many sculptures can you find where people are sitting like this? What do you notice about their feet? Can you try sitting like this? One principal of yoga is not to harm yourself or others—so move out of the pose if you're uncomfortable.



As you wander the galleries, look closely at the sculptures. How many can you find that remind you of the yoga poses you learned about today? What else do you notice about the sculptures you see?

Yoga practice is thought to guide us to self-awareness and a release from suffering. It is a challenging practice that takes time and effort. To learn more about this ancient practice:  
<http://www.asianart.org/family.htm#yogi>



The Asian Art Museum Presents

## A Modern Yogi's Guide to Yoga

Yoga originated in India a long, long time ago. It is a form of exercise and meditation that has evolved over centuries.

Yoga is a Hindu philosophy that is woven into the stories and mythology of the culture. Like some dance, yoga is meant to connect you to a higher purpose. Some people believe that if you are mindful in your commitment to yoga, it can help lead you to a spiritual awakening.



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Text by Allison Myerhoff - Illustrations by Lark Pien, 2010

Figure 2, Yoga gallery guide (side a), SF Asian Art Museum





Figure 3, Yoga gallery guide (side b), SF Asian Art Museum



# CONCLUSION

If we do not put our faith and our energy into teachers, than nothing we do in education – no initiative, no standard, no assessment – will ever take a real difference in the lives of students. To put this more positively, teachers are our best resource and our best hope to rethink and reshape education for the next century. (Smith in Kelly, 1999, p. 432)

## SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS STUDY

So, why is it important for teachers and museums to work together to incorporate theater and movement within core curriculum and teaching strategies? Brian Way (1967) calls for educators and students to “discard the limitations of theatrical conventions and consider drama as a quite different activity, calling upon different skills, different standards of judgment and entirely different results. The aim is constant: to develop people, not drama” (p. 6). By introducing this concept into professional development courses within the museum, K-12 educators may find more value in the techniques, as well as direct connections to other disciplines and teaching methods they already employ within their classrooms.

Catherine Hughes, in her book *Museum Theater* (1998) explores the field of “Drama-in-education” (DIE) in which a K-12 educator uses movement techniques within the classroom to teach any subject or concept. The theater created is not to be preformed in front of an audience, but instead is used as a tool to comprehend an idea or issue (p. 78). She states, “The practice relies on intuition and imagination, which are also skills to be developed through its practice. It is the process of *doing* that is important” (pg. 78). This technique is significant for it provides connections to history and uses for an object displayed out of context, such as a painting within an art museum.

Sternberg (1989) states, “Active learning encourages children to become completely involved in a work of art. They look at it, they focus on it and they respond to it...in this way the world of pretending and imagination opens doors to understanding” (p. 159). However, Kelly

(1999) warns, "...theory is viewed as unrelated to practice; content knowledge is seen as disconnected from teaching methods, and instructional methods are beheld as detached from learning and development" (p. 427). Museum programming for K-12 teachers can help to minimize this disconnect, while promoting art within classroom curriculum, and the importance of the museum/K-12 educator partnership. Further, museum theater techniques, especially taught by K-12 educators, teaches the skills necessary to problem solve at an abstract level:

Research exploring the development of mental models from museum experiences supports findings that, through the abstraction of concepts to practice, learners develop flexible cognitive representations of the abstraction and weave this knowledge into webs of inter-related knowledge that can be readily assembled and reassembled to fit specific situations (Grenier & Sheckley, 2008, pg. 84).

Students, as early as kindergarten and first grade and up through high school and college, can use similar techniques to work out abstract science, mathematics, and social problems through their own theater and movement work, personal interactions, and group theatrics in the art museum. For example, VTS, a teaching strategy developed by an art museum educator and a psychologist to teach students problem solving, is now used in higher education settings, including medical schools. Training students to look for details and describe their observations orally with clear concise language, while always defending their opinions, provides children and adults of all ages with a skill set applicable to *life*, not just art.

D'Amico (1996) states, "The teacher motivates the children by stimulating their interests, probing for individual thinking and solutions...He stretches the imagination and adds both knowledge and skill" (p. 29). The teacher *must* be emotionally and psychologically engaged with the theater and teaching strategies they use or students will not see the value in what is being taught. Children of all ages are extraordinarily perceptive to their adult role models and teachers, and can many times sense disinterest or disbelief within an educator's teachings. Therefore,

museums have the difficult task of providing K-12 educators with evidence of the success and need for theater/movement techniques within both the art museum and the classroom.

Oestreicher (1990) speaks towards the difficulties of proving the importance of and the necessity for these teaching methods when commenting:

...the theater's deepest roots are in the stuff of spirit and imagination, in myth, story, and ritual, in celebration and fantasy. In other words, theater operates in a realm that our culture patronizingly calls "fiction," an odd term to apply to those things that make us most truly human, but a term that must be respected nonetheless (p. 4).

## CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Through museum theater professional development programs, museum educators have the opportunity to validate both the advantages and concerns of integrating theater and movement within the museum and classroom contexts. Scripted theater, role-playing, puppets, and movement exercises can all be adapted within the classroom context to connect art with other disciplines. Even more, through professional development workshops, museum and K-12 educators can work together to create dynamic programming that engages students in learning, while promoting a life-long love of art.

The techniques and programs highlighted within this research capstone have been documented by museum professionals as effective strategies in teaching students within the art museum. As stated above, professional development courses provide invaluable resources and insight that K-12 classroom educators can use to validate and enhance their own methods and curriculum. In combining movement and theater techniques with professional development courses, art museums not only continue to highlight the importance and relevance of art with education, but also strengthen partnerships between the museum, schools, students, and local community.

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