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**Increasing Program Accessibility for Historically Marginalized Populations in a Mid-Sized
Art Museum: A Case Study**

Presented to the Faculty of
The Graduate Program of the Department of Art and Design at the University at Kearney

In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements
For the Degree of Master of Arts in Education

Major: Art Education
Under the Supervision of Dr. Ross Schlemmer

By
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Abstract

Accessibility has been a major theme in museums since the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990. This case study focuses on how Mobile Museum of Art can increase the accessibility to programming, curriculum, and collections for populations which have been historically marginalized, such as individuals with physical and intellectual disabilities, families experiencing homelessness, individuals with sight impairments, and immigrant communities. This research focuses on two outreach programs at Mobile Museum of Art, a mid-size art museum in Mobile, Alabama. The results will inform my own professional practice as the Curator of Art Education at Mobile Museum of Art.

Keywords: Accessibility; Art; Art Museum Education; Case Study; Disability Studies; Historically Marginalized; Museums; Outreach

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Increasing Program Accessibility for Historically Marginalized Populations in a Mid-Sized Art
Museum: A Case Study

Chapter 1: Introduction

The focus of this study is the accessibility of art museum programs, collections, and curriculum for historically marginalized groups reached by Mobile Museum of Art (MMofA) in Mobile, Alabama. I am not looking at accessibility in terms of physical needs such as ramps, automatic door opening buttons for wheelchairs, signage or other permanent fixtures in the art museum. I am more interested in looking at ways in which historically marginalized groups can be actively engaged in participation during education programs or viewing art at MMofA. The topic for my research comes from my professional experiences as an art museum educator over the last seventeen years.

My first professional exposure to a historically excluded group was working for a mental health company at a daytime workshop facility for adults with physical and intellectual disabilities in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. I had not spent much time around adults with physical or intellectual disabilities, and I initially experienced both trepidation and a little fear in this setting because the environment was so different from anywhere I had ever worked. I worried about not knowing how to interact with adults with disabilities, but after a few months I found that the more I let down my barriers and got to know people, the more I enjoyed working with this group. This population is often overlooked and seen as unworthy of being in the art museum. Very few museums offer programming specific to this audience or training for staff on how to work with this population. However, I have found that adults with intellectual disabilities tend to be curious, open, and interested in art, with a tendency to ask questions and make observations that non-disabled adults would not notice or verbalize.

Adults with disabilities are not the only historically marginalized group I have experience working with in a museum setting. In my nine years as Education Outreach Coordinator at the Lauren Rogers Museum of Art in Laurel, Mississippi, I began many outreach programs throughout south Mississippi. Through the same mental health facility that runs the workshop for adults with disabilities, I started another monthly outreach program for women with mental illness living in a group home setting. I have also worked with older adults in nursing homes, women in rehabilitation for drug and alcohol use, and visited a women's prison. All of these populations lack access to art museums and art making experiences at museums because of confinement or transportation issues, low income, and personal and societal constraints.

In my current position as Curator of Art Education at Mobile Museum of Art (MMofA) I no longer have as many opportunities to participate in direct art educational outreach to the community. However, I administer two outreach programs, and it is these that this study will focus on. The MMofA partnership with Salvation Army Family Haven began in 2016. Family Haven is a housing facility for families experiencing homelessness. It is designed to keep the whole family together and to assist adults in finding work and stable housing. The museum's outreach program at the Family Haven developed because this group was identified as a marginalized population that would benefit from art making opportunities. Aside from their current status as homeless, people who come to Family Haven are low income, often from racial minorities, and are frequently non-English speakers. The MMofA outreach art program is designed to engage the entire family in the art-making process. This is "designed to foster shared experiences" between family members, creating a special time when stress of the outside world can be set aside for communal activity (Clapot, 2022, p. 171). Classes occur every other week on Tuesday evenings for two hours throughout the school year. Three artist-educators are employed

to instruct and assist family members in the art making process. Since 2016, MMofA has served over 2,000 people through this program.

The other outreach program looked at in this study is one I began in 2023 with a group called First Light Community of Mobile (formerly L'Arche Mobile). First Light is a community of adults, including Core Members, adults with intellectual, and often physical, disabilities, and Team Members, full time staff, who live and work in a communal environment. As per their mission, First Light encourages all members to contribute according to their "unique value" and believes that everyone has "a gift to share" (First Light Community of Mobile, 2023). I identified this marginalized group as in need through a First Light Team Member who frequently took classes at the museum. In discussing my research interests with her, she informed me about First Light and thought they would benefit from visiting the museum and creating artwork. While the group did occasional crafts, they had no regular exposure to art and were very limited in places they could visit in the community due to lingering Covid concerns.

This outreach collaboration began as a one-time visit to the museum for the First Light Community and has evolved into a monthly program. Each month a group of fifteen people, consisting of both Core Members and Team Members, come to the museum for a personalized tour and art activity. The group looks at one or two pieces of artwork and engages in discussion about what they see. All members are encouraged to participate. As some members are not sighted, I often have objects for them to feel in the gallery. At the conclusion of the tour everyone participates in an art activity. Each month a different art project is created, with the subject and medium relating to the work seen in the gallery. As with the Family Haven program, all are encouraged to create art in order to foster a sense of oneness. In February 2024, the First

Light Community exhibited their work from this collaboration at Mobile Museum of Art in a show entitled *Shining Bright: Artwork from First Light*.

Both Family Haven and First Light include members that have limited access to art making opportunities and to museums due to limited income, lack of personal transportation, physical disabilities, and language barriers. I chose to study these two groups because both Family Haven and First Light serve marginalized populations that face significant challenges in attending and participating in MMofA programs. These groups can derive the most benefit from increased access. In studying these two groups I hope to learn how Mobile Museum of Art is providing access to its programs, collections, and curriculum to these historically marginalized audiences and reveal how these can be improved. I seek information about both barriers and supports experienced by participants in educational programming offered by MMofA in the hopes that this data will lead to concrete changes in future programming and access.

This research is significant because it will better serve the marginalized participants in the education outreach programs at Mobile Museum of Art. Addressing access issues for historically marginalized audiences will increase community connectivity and add to overall quality of life for those audiences. I hope to gain direct insight into participants' past experiences, which will directly influence my future goals for accessibility, not only for the participants of First Light Community and Family Haven, but for all educational programs at MMofA. This will reveal barriers experienced by participants and hopefully shed light on solutions for the future.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this research is to assess how well Mobile Museum of Art has provided accessibility to their educational programs, collections, and curriculum to historically

marginalized audiences with the goal of improving accessibility for these audiences in the future.

The goals for this research will be informed by the following questions:

- How have the outreach programs at Mobile Museum of Art provided accessibility to programs, collections, and curriculum for historically marginalized audiences?
- What barriers to accessibility at Mobile Museum of Art are experienced by historically marginalized audiences in regard to programs, collections, and curriculum?
- What further steps need to be taken to increase accessibility to programs, collections, and curriculum for historically marginalized audiences of Mobile Museum of Art?

Chapter 2

Methodology

Overview

This case study assesses the accessibility of programs, collections, and curriculum for historically marginalized audiences at Mobile Museum of Art (MMofA) in Mobile, Alabama. These groups include adults with physical and intellectual disabilities, adults in families experiencing homelessness, individuals with sight impairments, and immigrants. The data collected from this research will be used to improve accessibility for these audiences. This study will focus on programs that occurred within 2023-2024, although the Salvation Army Family Haven outreach program has been ongoing since 2016.

Methodology

This research will be a case study. A case study is a qualitative inquiry into a specific situation and “can be useful to come to understandings about the specificities and complexities of a person, a group, a variable, an episode, or a series of episodes” (Davenport & O’Connor, 2014, p. 57). Case studies are meant to provide information about a specific case in depth, rather than a broader phenomenon. Case studies provide detailed descriptions about a particular case, which does not yield generalizable results, but often is relatable to other situations.

The first step in a case study is to define the purpose of the study. In this case the purpose is to gather information about barriers and supports experienced by historically marginalized groups participating in outreach programs at Mobile Museum of Art, specifically in regard to programs, collections, and curriculum. Next, data must be collected through multiple methods. For this case study the data collection methods will be observations and field notes of the

researcher and participant interviews. After data is collected it is analyzed. In this case study coding will be used to find recurring themes. Finally, the researcher comes to conclusions based on the data analysis and reports on any significant findings.

Why a Case Study?

A case study is the most appropriate method for this study because I am interested in qualitative data about a specific group of people, historically marginalized groups, and their experiences in a particular setting, MMofA outreach programs. Data yielded from this case study will allow me to assess the barriers and supports to access of programs, collections, and curriculum for these marginalized groups and to make improvements to future programming at MMofA. According to Davenport and O'Connor (2014), "Case studies allow insights into nuances of art education practice that might be missed by other types of research" (p. 57). Case studies are meant to produce a depth of research into one situation, rather than generalizable results, which allows for detecting subtleties in a particular case. As I am attempting to assess the needs of a specific audience and address those needs, it makes more sense to study those subjects in depth rather than looking at a broader population.

The data collected in this study will reflect personal experiences and reflections of participants in educational programs conducted by MMofA. Approaching this research as a case study will yield results that are applicable to the specific situation at MMofA, ensuring that educators can use the information to make programmatic changes as needed to better accommodate the audiences being served. Data in this case study will help me to see practical ways in which I can make individualized changes to increase access to programs, collections, and curriculum for Family Haven and First Light participants.

Boundaries of the Case

The case study will take place at Mobile Museum of Art in Mobile, Alabama. This is a mid-size art museum with a collection of over 6,000 works of art including American, European, and Asian art spanning two millennia. The collection consists of diverse media including painting, drawing, printmaking, sculpture, ceramics, textiles, and decorative arts. The city of Mobile, Alabama has about 190,000 residents with just over 400,000 in the greater Mobile area. Situated on Mobile Bay, this is a coastal city near the Gulf of Mexico.

The subjects in this case are adults over eighteen years of age and are participants in an outreach program through Mobile Museum of Art with either Salvation Army Family Haven or First Light Community. Residents at Salvation Army Family Haven currently identify as homeless and low-income and may belong to other marginalized groups including, but not limited to, racial minorities, cultural minorities, immigrants, LGBTQ+, and persons with physical and or intellectual disabilities. Participants with First Light Community include Core Members, adults with intellectual, and often physical, disabilities, and Team Members, full time staff. Both Core Members and Team Members may belong to other marginalized groups including, but not limited to, racial minorities, cultural minorities, immigrants, low-income, and LGBTQ+.

Data Collection Tools

Observations and Field Notes. The researcher's observations and field notes will be used for data collection. The researcher's observations are "critical to creating a description or portrayal of a specific case" (Davenport & O' Connor, 2014, p. 61). Field notes will help the researcher recall specific impressions and incidents later.

Interviews. Interviews with participants and staff at outreach facilities will be conducted as part of this research. Interviews allow “researcher insights that are not available from observations alone” and utilize the case study method to find “the uniqueness of human experiences and actions” (Davenport & O’ Connor, 2014, p. 61). It is important to understand individual experiences for this research to assess whether participants are truly benefiting from accessibility to the museum and what steps may be taken to increase accessibility measures in the future.

Data Analysis

Data will be analyzed to discover any trends or discrepancies between interview subjects, field notes, and observations. I am looking for indicators such as perceived barriers, perceived supports, and levels of repeat participation indicating overall satisfaction experienced by participants to programming and curriculum provided by MMofA . Data of particular interest would be specific suggestions of participants relating to wants and needs that would increase access to programs, collections, and curricula at MMofA. I will use coding to find trends among data sources that would allow for specific changes to be made in access to programming, such as suggestions for more effective gallery touring techniques, or ways in which to offer more inclusivity in art making techniques in the classroom, and insights into the types of media and art making techniques favored by the study participants. Subjects’ general attitudes about art are of less interest unless data shows correlation to attendance at MMofA programming.

Protection of Participants

This research will utilize interviews with adults over the age of 18 with their informed consent. All interviewees will be informed that their participation is optional, and they may

terminate their interview at any time. Pseudonyms will be used in place of subjects' names if they are directly referred to in research. No identifying characteristics will be used when referring to research subjects.

Limitations and Biases

There are several limitations to this study. One is the ability of the researcher to communicate verbally with some study participants, such as non-English speakers and non-verbal adults with intellectual disabilities. Another limitation is that participants in the outreach programs at Mobile Museum of Art are not the same for each session. A participant may come for a program one month and not participate again for several months. In the case of the Salvation Army Family Haven, participants are there for a limited amount of time, so it is not possible to interview all participants, particularly those who experienced the program in past years.

There are some biases that should be noted. I am first and foremost an art museum educator, so all data will be filtered through that perspective. Second, both the First Light Community art program and the Salvation Army Family Haven program are educational initiatives that I have been involved with from their inception and I am the primary administrator for these programs at Mobile Museum of Art. Consequently, this may lead to a tendency to view data in a more subjective manner than someone who has no attachment to the programs.

Chapter 3

Literature Review

Introduction

This literature review focuses on studies relating to access experiences of historically marginalized audiences in museums, specifically art museums and best practices in art museums in terms of accessibility. Search terms used include access, accessibility, art museum, disability, disabled, historically marginalized, museum education, and visitor experience. These terms were searched in multiple combinations, such as “art museum accessibility,” “museum education disabled,” and “museum access historically marginalized” to generate the greatest possible variety of results.

Defining Research Terms

The terminology used in this study must be defined as it is used in the context of this research. The Americans with Disabilities Act (2024) defines a person with a disability as someone who, “has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities...or is perceived by others as having such an impairment” (<https://www.ada.gov/topics/intro-to-ada/>). There are different interpretations of disability theory in art education, which will be discussed later in this review. There are members of First Light Community of Mobile and Salvation Army Family Haven participating in this study who identify as disabled.

Accessibility is “the design of products, services, or environments to make them usable by disabled people” (Eardley et. al., 2022, p. 151). For the purposes of this research, accessibility

will be used more in reference to services that are tailored for the use of a specific person or population. For example, the researcher is more interested in whether participants can attend a program, understand directions given by an instructor, or have art supplies best suited for their needs than in the physical design of the environment.

Accommodation is a change to the “environment, curriculum format, or equipment that allows an individual with a disability to gain access to content and/or complete assigned tasks” (University of Washington, 2022). Examples of accommodations are a sign language interpreter for someone who is deaf, extended time for a person with a physical or intellectual disability, and a large print book for a student with a visual impairment (University of Washington, 2022). Accommodations do not alter what is being taught or the final outcome, just the manner in which the student arrives at that outcome. An adaptation, also called a modification, is a change to the curriculum being taught based on the needs of an individual student (University of Washington, 2022). This could mean leaving out some curriculum or having less questions on a test for a student who struggles with an intellectual disability. In general, accommodations are preferable to adaptations because the same information is being taught, it is only the manner of delivery that is changed. When working with marginalized and disabled populations, it is important to attempt to find accommodations first before resorting to adaptations. These populations deserve the same instruction as any other and should be made to feel included.

According to the Emory University Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance, historically underrepresented groups are those “who have been [intentionally] denied access and/or suffered past institutional discrimination in the United States...according to the Census and other federal measuring tools” (Emory University, n.d.). Historically underrepresented, or

marginalized, groups in this study include, but are not limited to people with disabilities, both physical and intellectual; racial and ethnic minorities; immigrants; and low-income individuals.

A Brief History of Museums and Accessibility

From their inception, museums were collections created by and for the wealthy elite (Woodruff, 2023). Early museum visitors were well educated, middle to upper class, with plenty of leisure time (Treadon, 2022). As social and political reforms brought changes to other aspects of society, museums also began to change from an academic model to a more visitor-centered model. Zahava Doering, social scientist and longtime employee at the Smithsonian Institution, divides visitors from different museum eras into three categories: “strangers, guests, and clients” (1999, p. 74). Historically, museums housed objects for them to be preserved and studied, whether they were viewed by visitors or not, placing visitors in the role of “stranger” (Doering, 1999, p. 76). Museums did not cater to visitors at this earliest stage and survived with or without their patronage.

From the 1960s to the 1990s, the primary role of museums was seen as educational institutions. Some viewed museums as “sacred groves” which held precious objects for study by visitors (Eisner & Dobbs, 1988, p. 7). Most information presented was through labels or traditional tours in which a docent, or tour guide, would recite facts to their audience. Visitors could sometimes choose to take a more active role but were largely still expected to participate through reading text panels and observing more than interacting with exhibits (Doering, 1999). This is akin to the “guest” role in which visitors were welcomed to museums but seen as largely in need of the education provided by the experts on the museum staff (Doering, 1999). This can still be experienced in some museums today, though it is less common.

Outreach is an important part of the puzzle when it comes to art museum access for marginalized populations. The Works Progress Administration helped to establish many of the first true “outreach” sites (Woodbury, 2024). This was part of a larger scale effort by the WPA to boost the arts across America during the Great Depression. As early as the 1930s, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City had satellite locations with changing collections exhibitions (Woodbury, 2024). Community art centers, such as the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, Minnesota, were also established under the WPA to be more accessible to the community (Woodbury, 2024). Several of these, including the Walker Art Center, are still in existence today. Outreach efforts continued throughout the twentieth century, with a period of rapid growth and change during the 1960s and 1970s (Mülberger, 1985).

The field of art education continued to change rapidly for the next several decades. Richard Mülberger (1985), who served in numerous capacities in art museum education, including Chairman of the American Association of Museums Committee on Education, had this to say about the shift, “Of all the notions that have come to art museums from the museum education field at large, certainly the most influential and pervasive has been that the audience is as significant to museum educators as the art object” (p 98). Acknowledging that the audience is as important as the art object is a significant shift towards putting the visitor at the center of museum education. Outreach does just that by bringing the art to the audience instead of expecting the audience to come to the museum.

Since the 1990s, particularly with the implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act (1990), museums have become even more visitor-centered (<https://www.ada.gov/law-and-regs/ada/>). This is Doering’s (1999) “client” role in which visitors are cast as the consumer and museums are producers, attempting to fulfill the wants and needs of their audience (p. 79.) The

degree to which museums are successful at catering to different audiences is constantly being evaluated and reevaluated, particularly as technology advances and allows for more direct audience feedback via social media and the internet. Becoming more visitor-centric is a goal for many art museums, including MMofA.

This visitor-centered approach is precisely what this study is concerned with. The marginalized groups that make up the subjects of this study, adults with physical and intellectual disabilities, adults in families experiencing homelessness, individuals with sight impairments, and immigrants, have long been considered “outsiders” by the art world (Wexler & Derby, 2015, p. 128). Since the early 1900s, artists, museum curators, and art critics have taken an interest in art created by these “outsider” artists, while maintaining this label “because they are socially marginalized individuals; for example they may be hospitalized due to mental illness, incarcerated as criminals, homeless, or poor” (Risser, 2017, p. 79). Though these groups have a place in the art world, it has been a lesser place. This study seeks to understand how the art museum can better serve members of these marginalized groups.

Visitors with Blindness and Visual Impairments

Most available literature on museum accessibility deals with programming for visitors with blindness or other visual impairments (Bracco et al., 2020; Candlin, 2006; Chick, 2018; Greenberg et al., 2008;). Research on the subject provides numerous examples of museums around the world with tours for blind and visually impaired visitors, most of which fall into one of two categories: touch tours or audio descriptive tours (Bracco et al., 2020; Candlin, 2006; Chick, 2018; Greenberg et al., 2008;). This is logical considering that touch and hearing are the primary senses that those with sight impairments rely upon.

The Tate Modern, in London, is one museum that has notably created programming for visually impaired visitors. Candlin (2006) writes of a specific exhibition, *Raised Awareness*, in which the Tate Modern commissioned an artist to create two-dimensional drawings that were shown on the gallery walls but were also transformed into raised “tactile images” displayed flat in front of the drawings (p.146). The idea was that sighted visitors could look at the drawings while visitors with sight impairments could feel the same drawings, all shown in the same space and therefore given the same importance. Candlin also documents efforts by the British Museum to open their collection for “more direct, personal, and welcoming” engagement by allowing visitors to touch objects in the collection similar to those on view (2006, p. 148). However, she cautions that many museums mistake touch for “an easier way of engaging with [objects]” than sight or thought and even posits that using touch as an access point often positions touch as “a lesser form of vision,” risking that the effort to help an already marginalized audience will end up pushing them further away (Candlin, 2006, p. 149). Sometimes the most obvious solution is not the best when it is not well thought out. Educators must know why they are doing what they do and assess whether these programs work with actual visitors, not simply provide the most obvious solution and stop there.

In addition to touch, programs featuring audio descriptions or other auditory elements are increasingly popular for visitors with sight impairments. The Kreeger Museum developed a program called *Hear Art, See Music* (HASM) which was intended to appeal to different learning styles and provide an entry point to learning for all visitors, whether sighted or not (Greenberg et al., 2008). The program brought together elements of visual arts, music, and Universal Design. Students viewed paintings at the Kreeger while listening to music and then created original works in response to what they saw. They were encouraged to make marks by moving their body

to the music, activating kinesthetic, auditory, and visual learners at the same time (Greenberg et al., 2008). By appealing to multiple senses educators were able to provide accessibility to a broader portion of visitors.

Universal Design in Education (UDE) is “the creation of an educational experience in which all aspects are accessible to all individuals involved, with consideration given to issues related to gender, race, ethnicity, age, physical ability, and learning style” (Fountain, 2014, p. 179). This theory can be seen in the previously mentioned program which is accessible to all visitors, whether blind or sighted. UDE is an increasingly popular way for museums to ensure that all populations have the resources they need by beginning with a design for visitors who are disabled or have special needs. For example, by providing audio descriptions of art. museums are inclusive of visitors with sight impairments while still being usable by sighted visitors. Having closed-captioning on all video resources would help visitors with hearing impairments, but would not hinder any other visitors. These are the kinds of considerations present in Universal Design in Education.

The Chelsea Physic Garden (CPG) and Royal Holloway Picture Gallery (RHPG) in London both developed programs in which audio descriptions provided to visitors were not grounded solely in facts, but included sensory descriptive information as well as some personal reactions to artwork (Eardley et al., 2022). These descriptions were intended to be subjective so that, rather than positioning the descriptor as the authority, they would be seen as just another viewpoint from which to access the work.

The Museo Nacional de Artes Visuales in Uruguay has used innovative programming for visually impaired visitors. The first program, called “Museo Amigo” (Friendly Museum) involves the creation of stands near artwork that features a three-dimensional printed version of

the artwork on view as well as an audio description, combining both audio and touch for visitors to connect to artwork (Bracco et al., 2020). After finding that the technology for the audio portion was not fully accessible because it was difficult to use and visitors had to ask for it, the Museo created a new app. This app used a wi-fi indoor positioning system to signal visitors' phones when they approached an artwork, causing an audio description of the work to begin playing (Bracco et al., 2020). This app proved more effective because it allowed visitors access through the devices they already had and was more user friendly. Because visitors were using their own devices, museum staff noticed that both sight impaired and sighted visitors utilized the audio descriptions.

Though many museums are working towards accessible programs for visitors with blindness or other visual impairments, few have included people with blindness or partial blindness in the design or implementation of accessibility measures. One notable exception is the National Centre for Craft & Design (NCCD) in the UK, which created an entire exhibition co-designed by blind and partially blind participants. This exhibition featured touch as well as sound but went further by also considering the positioning of objects and even creating a yellow pathway for visitors to follow as a guide through the space (Chick, 2018). Though it was not a perfect exhibition, it proved to be more accessible than exhibitions created without consultation of visually impaired visitors because it offered greater access through multiple senses and better design of physical spaces.

Though there is a wealth of research about accessibility for people who are blind, partially blind, and sight impaired (Bracco et al., 2020; Candlin, 2008; Chick, 2018; Eardley et al., 2022; Greenberg et al., 2008), this represents a small portion of the population involved in educational programming at Mobile Museum of Art. However, programs such as the one at the

National Centre for Craft & Design are of particular interest in this research as they represent museums directly involving the intended audience in planning the museum experience. This study involves participants through interviews, seeking insight into their experiences at Mobile Museum of Art programs to improve them. By directly involving the intended audiences, I hope to create accessibility not attainable through other methods.

Disability Access and Museums

There is less information readily available about how museums are creating access for people with non-vision related disabilities. For example, much of the available literature does not distinguish between physical and intellectual disabilities, but instead groups all people with disabilities into one large, nebulous category. To begin to understand the literature on disability and museums, it is necessary to first understand different perspectives of disability studies. The medical model of disability is one in which disabilities are seen as defects to be “fixed, managed, or cured, a problem to be remedied rather than a beautiful and powerful part of human existence” (Kon & Zankowicz, 2022, p. 212). The charity model of disability similarly positions people with disabilities as needing saving and help to be able to experience the world as it “should” be (Kon & Zankowicz, 2022, p. 212). These models of disability put the responsibility to change into the hands of disabled people, expecting them to conform to the standards of society in ways that they most often cannot.

In opposition to these outdated models, the social model of disability recognizes the inherent worth of disabled persons and acknowledges the ways in which society has “constructed barriers and biases” (Kon & Zankowicz, 2022, p. 213). It is important to note that the change in responsibility for adapting the environment to the needs of the disabled has shifted from the

person with the disability to society itself in this model. The social model of disability is currently accepted as the most progressive and person-centric model of disability (Kon & Zankowicz, 2022). This model is the one that this research is most concerned with, as it places the responsibility for the experience of disabled visitors in the hands of the museum and not the visitor. This acknowledges that the museum must conform its standards to meet the needs of all its patrons, not just the able-bodied.

Modern access programs largely try to operate from a social model standpoint, though successes are mixed. It is the consensus of researchers that involving members of the intended audience, in this case people with disabilities, in any aspect of planning or research yields more effective results than not involving the intended audience (Chick, 2018; Kon & Zankowicz, 2022; McMillan, 2012; Woodruff, 2023). This lends a more authentic perspective, one that can only come from a person who has experienced disabilities, and often yields results that would not have occurred to those without disabilities.

One study (Woodruff, 2023) was found that reflected the type of programming available to visitors with developmental disabilities experienced at Mobile Museum of Art. Woodruff (2023) studied the experiences of artists with developmental disabilities at the Yeiser Art Center (YAC) in Paducah, Kentucky (p. 364). Participants visited the YAC for a “docent-led tour, observations, and discussions with museum staff, and concluded in an artmaking session and artist discussions” (p. 364). This is similar to the format for the First Light program at MMofA which begins with a staff-led tour and ends with artmaking related to the artwork discussed on the tour. Data for Woodruff’s (2023) study was collected through observations, field notes, and interviews with the participants, parents or caregivers of participants, and museum staff. These are the same data collection methods used for this study.

Findings of the Woodruff (2023) study revealed that participants would like the museum to consider sensory preferences, like noise levels and adding interactive or touch elements in the galleries, as well as adding places for visitors to sit and rest. Communication with members of the disabled community was found to be a key component for a successful program (Woodruff, 2023). These findings reinforce the social model of disability, which asserts that the environment should be adapted to meet the needs of the audience. This model is the most constructive and conducive to increased audience access by acknowledging that the museum must meet the audience's needs. This study also involved the intended audience through interviews, creating an atmosphere of collaboration and trust.

Museum Programs for the Homeless

Homelessness and museums yielded the least amount of literature. The research done on this subject primarily revolves around museums showing temporary exhibitions about homelessness, but rarely involves people experiencing homelessness directly (Kinsley, 2011). This is not altogether surprising considering that this population is in many ways more difficult for museums to consistently maintain contact with than others.

Kinsley (2013) conducted a study involving homeless adults and the Frye Art Museum in Seattle, Washington. A focus group was created consisting of two adults who had previously experienced homelessness and two adults who had not experienced homelessness but worked with the homeless in a non-profit setting (Kinsley, 2013). There were four overall findings resulting from the study. First, museums needed to consider the homeless as individuals, which included treating them "like "real" people," not following them around the galleries too closely, and making the museum feel safe and welcoming (Kinsley, 2013, pp.80-81). In addition to

addressing the homeless population as individuals, it was also recommended that the museum be a community-building place so that homeless adults could meet and share their experiences in a relaxed environment (Kinsley, 2013). This reflects the MMofA outreach program at Family Haven, in which families gather together in the dining hall after dinner to share a communal experience. Although it does not take place at the museum, it is led by museum artist educators and is an intentional gathering. Residents of Family Haven visited Mobile Museum of Art in person in August 2023 for a tour and art activity which served as the “kick off” event for this year’s program. The museum provided transportation and there was no cost to participants.

The third outcome of Kinsley’s study, “relationship-building considerations,” was also reflected in the MMofA outreach program. Study participants asked for staff to be involved in activities so they could get to know people. Perhaps most importantly participants noted that the activities need to be scheduled when and where homeless adults can attend. The outcome of Kinsley’s (2013) study was that museums needed to consider logistics in terms of transportation to and from the venue, not having a cost barrier, and scheduling at times that would be convenient for the most participants. The MMofA Family Haven program meets these criteria in that repeat staff administer the art activities and participate along with residents, the activity is conducted in the residence, so it is accessible, there is no cost for residents, and it is on a day and time that residents indicated was good for their schedules, Tuesday evenings from 6:00-8:00 p.m.

Conclusion

A number of themes about access recur throughout the literature. Researchers came to a general consensus that involving members of the intended audience in any aspect of planning or research yields more effective results than not involving the intended audience (Chick, 2018;

Kon & Zankowicz, 2022; McMillan, 2012; Woodruff, 2023). Themes of communication, both with museum staff and with participants, recurred in most of the literature (Chick, 2018; Greenberg et al., 2008; Kon & Zankowicz, 2022; McMillan, 2012; Woodruff, 2023). Shared experiences and community building were strong themes interwoven throughout the literature as well (Clapot, 2013; Kinsley, 2013; Treadon, 2013; Wilson et al.). All of these increase access to audiences.

I looked for these recurring themes throughout the literature on museum accessibility and marginalized audiences when assessing data for this case study. Some of these recurring themes are: including the intended audience in planning for educational programming or exhibitions; themes of communication and community-building; and logistical considerations of visitors. Measures of success in the case study will include levels of repeat participation, participant feedback, and researcher observations.

Chapter 4

Discussion

Introduction

There are multiple findings reached through the data gathered from this study. Several themes emerged, some of which overlap with themes present in the literature. These themes are: needing extra time, fostering a supportive community environment, and exploration of media that work best for these populations. These themes lead me to conclusions about strengths and weaknesses of the educational outreach programs at Mobile Museum of Art.

Twelve subjects were interviewed, eleven from First Light Community and one from Salvation Army Family Haven. Of the First Light Community, eight interviewees were Core Members, adults with intellectual, and sometimes physical disabilities, and three were Team Members, adults who work full-time with Core Members in the group homes. The one subject from Family Haven was an adult woman with two children residing at the Haven. She was the only resident present at the time of interview who had participated in the art classes offered by Mobile Museum of Art and who spoke English. Two other families were present who had participated in the art activities, but both were Spanish speaking, and no translator was present. I attempted to secure a translator, a fellow art educator in the community who is originally from Ecuador but was unable to due to scheduling conflicts.

Interviewees were asked several open-ended questions regarding barriers, supports, and perceived impacts of the MMofA outreach programs. The interviews were recorded and transcribed, then coding was used to search for themes. An outside source also read the transcriptions, with names redacted, to look for emerging themes, checking against what I found

for added validity. Barriers emerging from data analysis will be discussed first, followed by supports, then significant themes from interviews, and themes from field notes and observations.

Barriers

When asked about barriers experienced during programs or on tours, participants failed to note any. This was surprising to me and somewhat frustrating as it yielded less concrete information with which to work. However, some of the resulting themes were themselves barriers, as will be discussed later in this chapter. I also noted that this reluctance to discuss barriers may be a weakness of the interview format itself. Speaking to me face-to-face may make some people hesitant to express dissatisfaction or remark on something that may seem negative.

In my own observations, I have noticed barriers, more so for the participants at the Family Haven. One barrier is that people at the Family Haven do not have direct access to the museum because of their marginalized status as currently homeless. Since this study is looking at access to programs, collections, and curriculum, that means that this group does not have access to an entire category, collections. As marginalized adults who are currently experiencing homelessness, they do not have the financial means to visit the museum on their own and most do not have their own transportation. In the leisure time they do have, this population needs access to no cost or low cost activities. For these reasons, the Family Haven program is conducted as a true outreach program, on site at Family Haven, so barriers to participation in art making are minimized. As such, this group misses out on direct interaction with the museum's collections. Bringing one or even a few reproductions does not simulate the museum environment in which visitors are surrounded by art and have the freedom to explore and view art that interests them. In not being able to visit the museum in person, this further alienates the

homeless population from the museum and enforces the unfortunate idea that they do not belong there (Kinsley, 2013). It makes them less likely to take the initiative to visit when they leave Family Haven. If they were able to visit the museum while residing there, the connection they forge would make them more likely to visit again.

Another barrier I have observed is that of language. As noted above, some participants are non-English speakers and we are not always able to provide staff who can communicate with them. This situation more commonly occurs at the Family Haven. The most common language for non-English speaking participants in the MMofA outreach programs is Spanish. Immigrant families from Mexico, Latin America, and South America frequently reside at Family Haven. These families are marginalized in several ways, through financial, racial, cultural, and linguistic means. Sometimes one or more family members speak English, but oftentimes they do not. Commonly, the children will speak some English because they are enrolled in the local schools, and they will translate for the parents. In the absence of this, staff members do their best to communicate using Google Translate as well as demonstrating the art making activities physically.

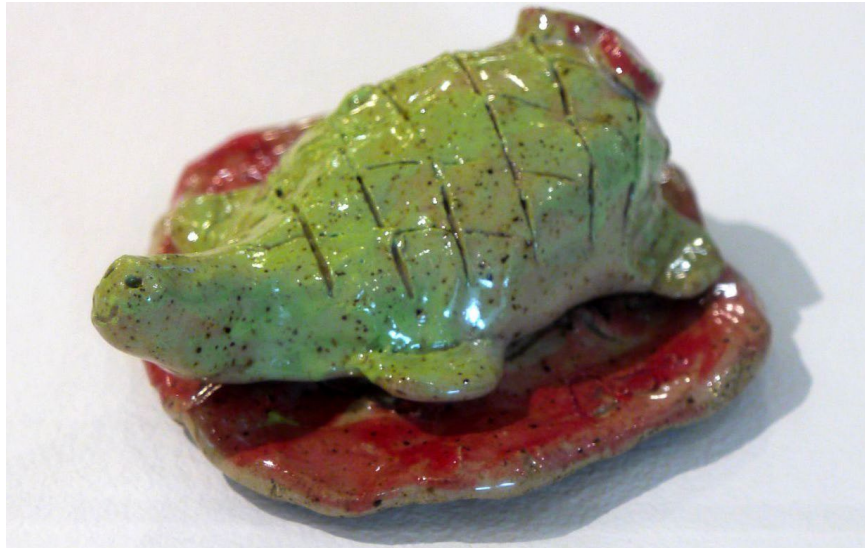
However, sometimes the language barrier is not that of a different language but misunderstanding due to intellectual or physical disability. There are some First Light Core Member participants that are non-verbal due to their particular disabilities so I am unable to interview them. In another case, I had difficulty understanding one of the interview participants from First Light, a young man with Down Syndrome, whose speech is sometimes hard to decipher due to his disability. For parts of his interview transcription I simply wrote “Indistinguishable.” I asked a colleague of mine to listen to the interview and she was able to make out a few sentences that I had trouble with, but even with her help there were portions of

the interview that I struggled to understand. This participant is someone whom I have worked with enough times to know that at times he is simply difficult for me to understand. During the interview process there were times when one of the Team Members who was there was unable to understand him as well, simply shrugging her shoulders when I looked to her for help in translating. Although there were indistinguishable portions, this person was someone I thought it worthwhile to interview because he has participated several times and seems very engaged during museum visits. He also volunteered to be interviewed and seemed to want his views to be heard.

Another barrier I have observed is that MMofA does not have solutions in place for visitors with sight impairments. This occurs most often in the First Light group. There are a couple of participants who have blindness or partial blindness who come frequently. I have used objects that can be touched during gallery tours, but these are not available for every tour or for every kind of media that the museum owns. There are no audio descriptive tours as described in the literature section. There are also no Braille guides to the galleries. In terms of participatory art activities during the studio portion of outreach visits, there are more accommodations for sight impairments than there are in the galleries but there are not many resources available for either. The most successful art activities for blind or sight impaired visitors in my experience have been clay activities because they are tactile. There is one Core Member participant from First Light, an older woman who is blind, who attends often. Her most successful artwork was a clay turtle which she was able to complete with only a little help from a Team Member (Figure 4.1). I consider this to be successful because it was the most she has engaged with any art material. She showed more interest in this activity because she could feel it and create without much help.

Figure 4.1

Clay Turtle, by First Light Participant

**Supports**

When asked about supports that helped them in accessing the programs, collections, and curriculum the most frequent answer from interviewees was help from education staff. This was true for both First Light and Family Haven. The idea that staff attitudes and training are especially important can be seen in literature on museums working with marginalized communities (Kinsley, 2013; McMillen, 2012; Poria, Reichel, & Brandt, 2009). It is the human component of these programs that is crucial to success. It is staff that provides the welcoming atmosphere, creates accommodations for special needs, and implements the program, without which it could not occur.

One support relating to staff help that was mentioned by eight out of twelve people interviewed was how well the instructor explains information on the museum tour and in demonstrating art projects. When asked to comment on what helps them to access the work in

the galleries or the art activities, one participant said, “I think you explain it very well. You don’t typically rush us through looking and I think you do a good job and try to engage us with questions and conversation.” This is especially important when working with visitors who have intellectual disabilities because they may need extra time and guidance from staff. Another said, “It’s explained really well as we go along and look at the art.” The clarity of instruction by staff was generally seen as a positive aspect of both outreach programs. This is especially important as the education staff is vital in providing a welcoming atmosphere. When working with marginalized communities it is particularly important for staff members to be educated on these populations and be prepared to accommodate different needs regardless of age, education, or ability level.

Themes Emerging from Interviews

The theme of having extra time was one that came up more than twenty times within the twelve interviews. First Light participants indicated that they want to spend more time overall in the educational programs with MMofA. This is understandable given that adults with intellectual and physical disabilities may need more time to complete their artwork and should not feel rushed or pressured when working. Several remarked that they felt more time was needed in the art creating portion of the program. Participants made statements such as “You can’t rush art” and “I have to take my time. I don’t want to rush through it.” Suggestions were made that the art activity should last longer or might extend over more than one session. Creating multi-session activities could help to eliminate some of the unpredictability in these visits because I would know who was coming for the next session. This would allow me to tailor the activities to specific First Light participants’ needs and change elements for the next session if I observe

something that is not working the first month. This is notable in the context of working with visitors who identify as disabled because it is important to understand their needs.

One woman, a member of First Light who has Down Syndrome, expressed the desire to come more often, something which she is not able to do because she lives in a group home and does not have her own transportation. This woman created a painting during one session in Fall 2023 (Figure 4.2). During this session, participants viewed several landscape paintings in the galleries and painted their own landscapes in acrylic for the art activity. Most participants chose to copy a photograph of an existing landscape, but this woman created her own from her imagination. She had a narrative about her landscape, a farmhouse with an attached pumpkin field, which she expressed to me while painting. Time, however, ran out for her to finish her painting as she would have liked. Despite this, the painting was featured as her contribution in the exhibition *Shining Bright: Artwork by First Light*. If she had been given more time to finish her artwork as she intended, who knows what she could have achieved.

Figure 4.2

Halloween Patch, by First Light Participant



Time is one aspect of educational programming that can be perceived as a barrier but is only somewhat under the control of the researcher and participants. It is virtually impossible to find a perfect time for all participants. The museum and its staff, of course, must also be considered, as unlimited time and space cannot be devoted to a single program. Allowing more time for artmaking is, however, within the control of the researcher and is a concrete change that can be made going forward with this program.

In interviews, First Light Team Members expressed that one thing the museum could do to improve the program overall would be to provide more aides in the classroom to help Core Members who needed more assistance so that Team Members would be able to enjoy the art activities as well. Team Members work very closely with Core Members at all times and certain Core Members have disabilities that require almost constant attention. By having aides during the tour and in the classroom to help Core Members, Team Members are given the freedom to create their own art. By taking the burden of care from the Team Members and allowing them to create, both Core and Team Members are able to fully enjoy the experience. This reflects Clapot's (2020) theory that creating together is, in itself, an act of healing that enhances interpersonal relationships. Going forward the museum will plan to have more educators available to assist with First Light visits.

Social connection and relationship building have been proven results of making art together (Cregg & Kletchka, 2024; Treadon, 2022; Wilson et al., 2015). At Family Haven, creating art in a communal space builds community both among adults experiencing homelessness who can bond in this situation, and within each family unit as they make together. The woman interviewed at Family Haven said, "I really enjoy doing it with my kids." Throughout the interview she used "we" many times in answering about her experiences,

indicating that she was speaking for her whole family. This showed that she intrinsically thought of the artmaking experience with MMofA as a family activity and not an individual one. Even the fact that the activity takes place in the dining room, itself a communal area, underscores the fact that everyone is welcome and there is room for all. Figures 4.3 and 4.4 show the dining room at Family Haven during a typical MMofA art class.

Figure 4.3

A Family Creating at Family Haven



Figure 4.4

The Dining Room at Family Haven During Class



A theme that emerged from interviews was that participants prefer certain art media over others. Having participants choose what activities or subjects the group will engage with on a visit ties into the idea of involving the intended audience in the planning process, an idea that figured prominently in the literature review. This is especially important with marginalized audiences so they feel included and involved in the decision making process. This will lead to a more engaged audience that is more invested in program outcomes.

Four out of eleven interviewees from First Light expressed interest in painting more often and one was interested in drawing. The audience must be considered when choosing the media for art activities when working with marginalized audiences because some media or techniques may work better than others. This can be a bit difficult in an outreach situation as I never know

in advance exactly who will come for each session. For example, one day I planned an abstract painting activity with a certain Core Member in mind, one who normally does not actively participate in the art activity, and I was very excited to see if this would engage his interest. Unfortunately, that month he did not attend. The other members enjoyed themselves, but I was a bit disappointed not to have the opportunity to try the activity with that specific person. The First Light Core Member who is blind is another example of someone who needs extra accommodations that I try to prepare for, but I never know if she will be there or not.

When working with adults who have physical disabilities, the media and tools need to be appropriate for their disability or something that can be accommodated to their disability. For example, having different kinds of paint brushes available for participants who have difficulty holding small objects. Another example would be using clay for the medium when there is a participant with a sight impairment so that touch is being used more than sight. If printmaking is the activity, using styrofoam instead of wood or linoleum would be better for participants with disabilities because it is softer and easier to use.

Similarly, media selection is important for the Salvation Army Family Haven program because of the many variables one must account for when teaching this group. Because this group does represent a number of marginalized communities, homeless, low-income, racial minorities, and sometimes physical and mental disabilities, the instructors must be prepared and take into account the audience they are teaching. There is no childcare available, so any adult who participates must bring all their children, from infants to teens. All art projects must be adaptable for different ages from the very young to older adults. Any media used must be easily cleaned because the classes take place in the dining area. Media should also be safe and non-toxic as there are often toddlers and young children who attend. The projects must also be

adaptable for different ability levels as some Family Haven residents may have physical or intellectual disabilities.

Interviewees expressed numerous times how much fun they had and how much they enjoyed their visits to the MMofA outreach programs. Words like “fun” or “enjoy” were mentioned over twenty times throughout the interview transcripts. This is one way to measure satisfaction with the overall program, especially when compared to how often these people participate. In the literature, one important point that was repeated by researchers was that marginalized audiences, particularly those with disabilities and those experiencing homelessness, should be made to feel welcome and comfortable in the program setting (Kinsley, 2013; Woodruff, 2023). This cannot be discounted as an important theme when dealing with marginalized audiences. The participants from First Light, as members of the disabled community, are not always welcome or able to join in leisure activities that typical community members enjoy. It is important that this group feels welcome at the museum and enjoys their visits, wanting to spend more time there. Not only are adults with physical and intellectual disabilities often unwelcome in communal places, they are very rarely celebrated for their achievements. When the participants from First Light were able to see their artwork on view at the museum in the exhibition *Shining Bright: Artwork by First Light* the positive energy and pride during the exhibition opening was apparent in all who attended.

The participant from the Salvation Army Family Haven expressed that she enjoyed doing the recent art activities with her kids so much that they decorated the door to their room with their artwork. This participant also expressed the positive effect the art classes have on her and her family, saying they are “an outlet for us” and “something to take our minds off our situations right now.” She was so excited about what her family made that she asked to show me their

projects on the door at the conclusion of the interview (Figure 4.5). While this may seem inconsequential, in context it is very important. This is a minority adult woman experiencing homelessness, a single mother of two children, one of whom has an intellectual disability. With all her responsibilities and worries, she takes time to come to the MMofA art program each time it is offered because it is a respite for her. She proudly displays her family's creations because they bring her joy and by putting them outside of her door she is sharing them with everyone else in the Family Haven. She spoke of taking these art projects with them and framing them when they do find a home, showing the deep meaning they have for her and her children.

Figure 4.5

Artwork on Salvation Army Family Haven Participant's Door



Themes Emerging from Field Notes and Observations

The same themes were observable from the researcher's field notes and observations, along with additional discoveries. The dynamic of the First Light Community was something that it took time to understand. At the beginning of the First Light partnership, I assumed that the primary audience for the visit to the museum was the Core Members because of their disabilities and that the Team Members accompanied the Core Members as their caretakers only. After working with First Light for about a year, I have observed that the Team Members are as engaged in the tours and art activities as the Core Members and seem disappointed if there is not time for them to create art as well. On museum programs that provide accessibility for both disabled and non-disabled visitors, Clapot said, "A care partner, professional, or a parent should not expect to be there for their relatives, but rather to participate with them" (2022, p. 171). This was driven home to me in the interviews when Team Members noted that they would like additional help in the classroom for Core Members who require more assistance so they can enjoy the art activities themselves. This also reflects the Universal Design for Education (UDE) principles seen in some of the examples in the literature in which spaces and resources designed for a disabled audience are used and enjoyed by all audiences.

In my field notes I recalled an instance where I spent additional time with one Core Member, a younger man who comes frequently and is non-verbal. He is able to grab paintbrushes, pencils, and other art making implements, but most of the time does not have the attention span to create his own work. On this particular occasion he was not accompanied by the Team Member who usually comes with him. The woman who was with him that day was a new Team Member, visiting the museum for the first time. I saw that he was very alert that day and wanted to engage him in the art activity as much as possible. This Core Member likes to spin

objects, so I placed a larger canvas board flat on the table and grabbed several round objects including a pie tin, a small plastic bowl, and a medium sized plastic bowl. I rolled the edges of the small bowl in different colored paint and then handed it to him. He instantly started to spin the bowl, just as I expected he would. Every few minutes I alternated between the different bowls, edges coated with paint, and let him spin them. As long as he had something to spin he was very happy and engaged. That was the first time he directly created a work of art on a museum visit (Figure 4.6). In working with adults with physical and intellectual disabilities I have learned the importance of individualized accommodations. One person's capabilities and interests may be completely different from someone else's and taking time to make accommodations, even small ones, can make a great deal of difference. While he was capable of holding a paintbrush, that did not interest him as much as the round objects did and that small change engaged his attention enough to participate in the activity.

Figure 4.6

First Light Core Member Painting



A notable instance showing the enjoyment of participants in the First Light program came from the researcher's field notes in November when a Team Member noted that, when asked which group homes would like to participate in that month's visit to the museum, all answered affirmatively. Unfortunately, the museum does not have the capacity to serve all First Light members at one time, only about fifteen people attend monthly, but it was noteworthy to the researcher that everyone wanted to participate.

Access to the museum's collection is an important part of the First Light Community's visits to MMofA. Giving this marginalized group time in the galleries reinforces the idea that they belong in that space. Members of the First Light group have expressed at different times how meaningful the experience of going into the gallery to view the artwork is and how much they enjoy visiting the museum early in the morning and having the quiet galleries to themselves. The gallery visit is just as integral to the program each month as creating their own art.

In my field notes I recall a visit by the First Light group to the MMofA galleries in which we looked at the work of Mississippi abstract expressionist painter Dusti Bongé. When asked what they saw in one of the paintings (Figure 4.7), participants in the group responded with answers like "It looks like windows," "It looks like stained glass," and "It looks like there's light coming through." Their responses indicated that they were fully engaged with the artwork. Both Core Members and Team Members actively participated in the discussion, adding their impressions and feelings. The group discussed the colors in the painting as well as overall composition and how the artist used her paint to create texture in the work. At the end of the discussion, I revealed to the group the title of the painting, *Windows*. Such active discussions are typical of this group's monthly visits to the museum. Because First Light serves adults with intellectual and physical disabilities, tours with this group are different from other groups

because we focus on one gallery, allowing extra time for participants to look and experience the art. On a typical group tour, I would go through several galleries, or even the whole museum, giving an overview of all the art on view.

Figure 4.7

Dusti Bongé, *Windows*, 1952, Oil on Masonite, 73" x 49"



Observing the immigrants at Family Haven offers some interesting insights into the community. Families coming from Spanish speaking countries participate quite often, despite the language barrier they face. My field notes include observations from November 2023 about one family, a mother and three children, who resided at the Haven. The oldest boy, estimated to be around twelve, acted as the translator for the rest of the family. He was fluent in both Spanish

and English and brought everything to his mother, explaining to her what the art teacher said.

The mother was quite engaged with the artwork and did interact with the researcher and other art instructors, despite not speaking English. Hand gestures and translations from her son sufficed to get the point across. When asked about how the art instructors have been as far as making the instructions clear and helping participants, the woman interviewed at Family Haven said, “[They’re] very nice ladies. And even one of them, we have a Mexican family here who don’t speak English, and she tries to speak a little Spanish and tells us what it means also.” Although she does not need a translator, she notices the effort that the instructors take in order to make everyone feel welcome and to foster a feeling of community, allowing access to the curriculum for everyone.

Chapter 5

Conclusions

Changes that will be made in the outreach programs based on this case study research include offering more time for art making, increasing staff help to allow First Light Members to engage in art activities, and brainstorming new methods to engage members of the community with sight impairments. Further efforts will be made to reach participants with disabilities that require additional accommodations, such as the young man who likes to spin objects to make art. Universal Design for Education is one principle I will use to increase access for all people to programs and spaces at MMofA.

This study will add to the body of literature on art museums working with historically marginalized audiences in several ways. There was very little research on adults experiencing homelessness who participate in museum programming. The MMofA Salvation Army Family Haven outreach program is unique in that it delivers art programming and curriculum directly to adults experiencing homelessness on a regular basis. In addition to experiencing homelessness, the population at Family Haven involves other historically marginalized communities such as racial minorities, immigrants, and people with disabilities.

The MMofA First Light Community outreach program is unlike most museum programming for people with disabilities in that it repeats on a regular basis, offers direct contact with the museum's art collection, and is conducted by the same staff, contributing to an increase in community building. This case study will add to the body of knowledge on art museums working with historically marginalized audiences because both situations seem to be unique after review of available literature.

Reflecting on her experiences as a self-identified person with disabilities who is curating art exhibitions about disability issues, Amanda Cachia writes, “I also challenge the museum to think about how access can move beyond a mere practical conundrum, often added as an afterthought once an exhibition has been installed, to use as a dynamic, critical and creative tool in art-making and curating” (2013, p. 259). This viewpoint of positioning access as a primary goal and not an afterthought is something I hope this body of research will help to achieve at Mobile Museum of Art.

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