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Educational Philosophy

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Since I first began to study art history, I knew I wanted to work in the museum. For a while, I was certain I would specialize and become a curator. However, as I learned more about the institutions I worked in, I realized that my calling was to work in museum education. Understanding that the art museum has functioned as a site of elitism, exclusion, propaganda, and imperialism, I also believe that it offers a difficult but important educational opportunity, particularly to counteract that same historical injustice. By positioning the museum as a forum for the people, rather than merely a temple to the arts, we can enable the institution to address these issues and better serve its communities (Cameron, 1972). I am drawn to museum education because I see the role of educators as imperative to this shift in museum culture.

As the child of two teachers, I have always understood the potential of education as a tool for social impact. Embarking on my own journey as a teacher, with experience in K-12, university, and museum settings, has affirmed this belief. Influenced by both constructivist and critical theory, I assert that educators have a responsibility to advocate for the deconstruction of cultural hierarchies, valuing the individual experiences people bring to the in the museum in the same way that expertise and objects have traditionally been valued (Hooper-Greenhill, 1999; El-Amin & Cohen, 2018). Working in this capacity, museum educators have the capacity to effect positive social change. As a democratic, actively inclusive force, educators can shape the museum into a space for cross-cultural communication, fostering awareness, understanding, and empathy between people of all backgrounds (Gurian, 2017). I have chosen to be an educator to be a part of this critical conversation.

In keeping with my belief that the role of the museum is to facilitate dialogue, I see dialogue as an essential pedagogical strategy for museum educators. Rather than simply didactic or object based teaching strategies, dialogue enables the weaving of personal background, distinct interpretations, multiple histories, visual analysis, and meaningful context into the same gallery experience (Burnham, 2011). However, I also continuously adapt to the needs of the communities I serve. Depending on the context they bring, I pull from a range of engagement tools, asking participants to observe, analyze, and reflect on works of art in ways that personalize the learning process (Falk & Dierking, 2000; Hubard, 2015). I practice responsive pedagogy in recognition of the need for institutional responsiveness as well, with the aim that the museum will similarly center community in mission and programming.

Given this larger goal, I also hope to apply my educational training to museum leadership, which will enable me to make an impact on a larger scale. With a background in International Studies, I am particularly interested in the ways that museums can connect people in an increasingly globalized landscape, informing my interest in post-critical museology (Kletchka, 2018). Conscious of the ways that our world is changing, I am studying to become a more effective educator and administrator, seeking opportunities to benefit my intersecting local and global communities. I believe that my academic and professional training, as well as my teaching experience, will help me to better lead and serve as a museum professional, positively influencing people, policy, and our planet in a capacity that stretches far beyond the walls of the galleries.

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