ART WORKS AT WORK: IMPACTS OF A STUDENT ART COLLECTION & EXHIBITION PROGRAM

Dr. Christina Smiraglia
Project Zero,
Harvard Graduate School of Education

NEMA Conference 2014
ADVANCED ORGANIZER

- Background
- Objectives
- Methods
- Results
- Implications

Self Portrait Monoprint
Kayde Lawn
The Workplace Environment & Adult Learning

Workplace Learning & Context

• Previous research has examined elements like spatial setting

• Thousands of organizations across a variety of sectors display art in their offices

• Little research exists on art in the workplace
  – Some existing studies focus on hospital workers
  – One involved a simulated office environment

Self-Directed Learning Theory

• Personal motivation/initiative
SITE & PARTNERS

Independent Schools Victoria (ISV)
• Michelle Green
• Anne Smith

Project Zero
• Dr. Shari Tishman
• Sarah Zuckerman

Self Portrait with Keyboard
Marianne Haines
RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

• Understand the impact of the collection/exhibition program on ISV affiliates

• Explore what elements of the collection/exhibition were most salient for ISV affiliates
 PARTICIPANTS & METHODS

- 19 participants total: 16 employees & 3 board members
- Individual semi-structured interviews
- Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim
- Data were coded using thematic analysis
Interview Results: Impact

Impact of the collection on viewers:
- Conversation/Socialization
- Enhancement of the workplace environment
- Emotional response
- Personal connection-making
- Viewer learning
INTERVIEW RESULTS: IMPACT

Conversation & Socialization (100%, prompted)

• “Provides a space for conversation that did not exist before.”

• “Everyone can talk about the art; informal responses from colleagues can bring everyone together.”

• “Discussed the collection with a wide range of colleagues from across the organization and visitors.”
Enhancement of the workplace environment (95%)

- “Brings colour and creativity into our work space.”
- “The collection gives the building life.”
- “I think it’s really one of the most fantastic features in our office. To be honest, I think it makes the office.”
INTERVIEW RESULTS: IMPACT

Emotional response (74%)

- “Art can create a smile in the mind.”
- “The artworks make you feel good.”
Interview Results: Impact

Personal connection-making (53%)

- “I think conversations for me have really revolved around my daughter doing studio art.”

- “Always inspired and amazed by the student collection, especially when it comes from a school that I have had direct contact with.”
INTERVIEW RESULTS: IMPACT

Viewer learning
• Learning about art
• Learning about students
• Other cognitive responses
Learning about art (95%, prompted)

• “[My] understanding of art forms has broadened.”

• “I remember going around behind the desk and was commenting on how it was made.”
Interview Results: Impact - Learning

Learning about students (95%, prompted)

• “[The art] reminds me of just how differently sometimes kids can look at things.”

• “It has deepened my understanding of students and how they express themselves as we consider, what is the real personal context of the work?”
Interview Results: Impact - Learning

Other cognitive responses (63%)

- “It draws you in and it creates more interest, it makes you stop and think.”

- “Out of comfort zone on an intellectual level”

- “Looking at artworks can start … inner dialogue.”
INTERVIEW RESULTS: SALIENT FEATURES

Salient features of the collection

- Connection to organizational mission
- Diversity
- Quality
- Creativity
- Changing nature
INTERVIEW RESULTS: SALIENT FEATURES

Connection to organizational mission (95%)

• “It reminds us of what we are here for: it's supposed to be about the kids.”

• “It shows a commitment by the organization that student achievement is valued and celebrated.”
Interview Results: Salient Features

Diversity (95%)

• “It keeps reminding me about how many students, how diverse they are, the diversity of ages.”

• “Adds a voice directly from the students that speaks with incredible variety.”
INTERVIEW RESULTS: SALIENT FEATURES

Quality (84%)

• “I say, my god, these were done by kids! It just never ceases to amaze me the talent of young people.”

• “I often can’t believe the quality of the work being produced by the students.”
Interview Results:

Salient Features

Creativity (68%)

- “Great to see the creative experiences … being included in our work space.”

- “Some of the memorable features are people who have done … something so different that you didn’t even think about.”
INTERVIEW RESULTS:
SALIENT FEATURES

Changing nature / Rotation (63%)

• “I like they that change. You never know what’s going to be there.”

• “I am always aware of the work, and when it changes, it has an immediate impact on the visual space.”
RESULTS: IMPACT SUMMARY

Participants felt exposure to the collection allowed them to:

• Converse with colleagues and visitors
• Make personal connections
• Learn about art
• Learn about students
• Engage in cognitive activities
• Feel an emotional response
• Have an enhanced work environment
RESULTS: FEATURES SUMMARY

Participants identified salient features of the collection as its:

• Connection to the organization’s mission
• Changing nature
• Creativity
• Diversity
• Quality
**Implications for Museum Practice**

- Exhibit art/objects in office areas
- Consider staff as an additional target audience for collections
- Offer staff activities beyond content professional development
- Museums may want to:
  - Build office and exhibition works into staff activities
  - Offer more structured ways to explore objects in conversation, such as questions on the labels.
- Consider rotating objects that are displayed in staff areas
REFERENCES


d. International Art Alliance (2005), *International Directory of Corporate Art Collections*, International Art Alliance, Largo, FL.


Thank You

Lion Family
Eley Christopolous