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READER GUIDE

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Embracing Individualism and Encouraging Personal Style in Gallery Teaching

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Museum educators use a variety of pedagogical practices to train and develop the gallery teachers on their team. The literature available on this topic reflects this including the wealth of content on the subject in this issue of the *Journal of Museum Education*. In "Embracing Individualism and Encouraging Personal Style in Gallery Teaching," Amy Briggs Kemeza adds to this literature by specifically exploring the power of individuality in teaching and learning and the role personalization can play in creating "more authentic teaching, more confident gallery educators, and enhanced social learning experiences for all involved." (p. 147).

Inspired by her own experience with "individual teachers and their distinct teaching styles," (p. 147) along with Todd Rose's research on the power of individuality in learning and **Universal Design for Learning** (UDL), Kemeza shares how she aims to empower her gallery teachers to create authentic, personalized tours. She considers how her training and her teaching make her gallery educators feel as learners. By viewing her team members as individual learners and educators who operate within an environment of shared learning and shared authority (p. 150), she increases social as well as academic learning.

Throughout both her educator trainings and the tours that occur within her institution, Kemeza stresses the importance of UDL; there are multiple means of engagement, representation, action and expression. Trainings combine didactic sections with small group work, are available in multiple modes, contain text, audio, images, videos and links, and are flexibly paced for learners (pp. 149-50).

Kemeza offers readers an example of putting these concepts into practice with her gallery educators with an activity she created called 'What happens during a museum tour?' It illustrates how she applies UDL to her work as the Tour Programs Manager at the Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston.

This Reader Guide invites us to do this activity together and then reflect on concepts like Universal Design for Learning, individualism, and bias, and ultimately, discuss how we all can empower each other and our colleagues to authentically connect with visitors.

(continued)

What Happens During a Museum Tour?

Grab two colors of sticky notes and willing colleagues for this activity that will explore what learning in museums looks like to learners and teachers. Before beginning the activity, take a moment and have all participants reflect on 'museum tours'.

1. On one color of sticky notes, ask each participant to write and/or draw what happens during a museum tour from the perspective of the gallery educators. Answers can be based on experiences, assumptions or aspirations.
2. On the other color sticky note, each participant should describe or illustrate what happens for visitors during a tour. Answers can again be based on experiences, assumptions or aspirations.
3. After two minutes of self-reflection and filling out sticky notes, have small groups form and together, groups should arrange the sticky notes in order of importance, while still keeping the colors separate. Remember, one color sticky note was viewing the museum tour from the perspective of the educator and the other from the perspective of the visitor. 'Arrange' and 'importance' can be defined by each small group.
4. After several minutes, come back together and ask each group to share their responses and arrangements. Allow dialogue and conversation as peer-to-peer learning exchanges occur. Reflective questions for the group are provided below to help stimulate conversation.

As Kemeza writes, citing Mary Bronson Hartt, "people are so deliciously different" (p. 147). In what ways did individual responses differ from others? Did anyone's individual answers drastically differ from someone else's in their group?

Compare the two arrangements—museum tours from the educator's perspective and from the visitor's perspective. Consider how the differences in these arrangements, and the differing priorities between perspectives, might affect the success of engagement in the museum.

Kemeza writes her article from the perspective of an educator at an art museum. How would applying individualization be different in your institution? What about a science museum? A history museum? What about a culturally-specific museum?

Ask participants to take a moment to reflect on what personal experiences, or even bias, motivated them in their individual responses. Shared responses after this personal reflection are welcome.

By encouraging individualization in museum educators, we also can unknowingly encourage bias. Consider, personally or as a group, how bias affects all of us in our work. What biases might you have that could affect your role at the museum? How could bias affect museum visitors, either current or potential?

In what ways could you more authentically engage visitors within your role at the museum?