

What a wonderful opportunity it was to meet docents from all over. They are such a wonderful, engaging and interesting group. All ready for conversation. One can only imagine the din in the reception areas and lobbies where we congregated.

Another great experience was to see all the museums in Cincinnati work together for the Symposium. The Cincinnati Art Museum, the Taft Museum of Art, the Cincinnati Museum Center at Union Station, the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, the Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Garden, the Contemporary Art Center - 6 museums working in concert. I can't imagine the behind the scenes work load to pull it off. An idea crept into my head that we should try something with the Bishop or Iolani Palace? Maybe have their head docent speak at a meeting?

I will start with the best idea I heard and that was from an independent gallery, The Weston Art Gallery. They have a program for children called - wait for it - Docentitos Academy. It is a summer 2 week ambassadorial training program for 9-12 year olds. Students meet with the artists and go behind the scenes of an exhibition to learn the inspiration and installation work that goes into creating a show. Upon graduation, students lead tours of the gallery's summer exhibitions. (Cost is \$5,000 raised from donations) What an amazing summer camp experience and one that kids apply for year after year until they are too old. They are preparing for a reunion - can't remember what year - but enough to have a good survey from the children as adults and how the program influenced their lives. Will be interesting to follow.

The guest speakers all had a pretty common theme in their approaches of engaging the public. Below are just snippets of ideas I thought resonated:

"I know a story of art. They (the public) know another"

Teach with art by honoring the people that come in as a bridge for the art dialogue. We exchange information. We are interactive. We offer Selfie Spots - we urge for the authentic.

We shape how the IT (technology) works and make it work for us.

Teaching creativity: teach to the 'what if...?' Adapt through creativity.

We need to offer clear transferrable skills offering empathy - know what it means to get into someone else's skin. Sensitize! Make communities compassionate.

Example of Art after Dark - Compare a museum with rooms and pictures on the wall vs a stadium with chairs - nothing really happens without the public being engaged. We don't need to just entertain - we need to engage - museums need to be a place to turn on.

STEAM PROGRAM: High Museum of Atlanta

-stresses the physical process of critical learning from mistakes. Employers are hiring artists to drive innovation. (Having just seen The Martian and looking at the credits of the movie - over 1500 artists and problem solvers were employed in the making of this film - critically acclaimed as one of the most accurate science fiction films ever.)

- They offer in the tour a design challenge. They offered 6 different challenges (related to Atlanta) picked out of a jar. You are part of the design team at your table (4-6 people). There are supplies provided and you have 18 min to solve the challenge. It should be both functional and aesthetically pleasing. For example:

Challenge 1: Georgia implemented a new law allowing louder and larger fireworks to be shot off. Many dogs are afraid of loud booming noises and often run away. Local shelters were overrun on the 4th of July with 3x as many animals as it was designed to hold. (shelter has space for 150 and had 465 cats and dogs to house.) Your job is to create a shelter that can house a single animal to be used the the event of future overcrowding. The structure needs to be sturdy enough to withstand various types of weather, should

include a safe locking mechanism that animals can't open or close, and should be collapsible for easy storage.

Collaborative team work --- like all the museums working together to engage the public.

My favorite presentation was the storyteller Diane Macklin from the Smithsonian's National Museum of African Art. She emphasized trying to connect the person to your story. Waiting for that inner person to come out.

Leading questions: Have you ever had.....? We need more *we* not us. This is for **YOU**. What do you see that you recognize? Do **you all** see that?

Find your story in every picture. (Dietra just did that at book club with Matisse) We recognize a lot. Have each tell a story of what they see - speaking and listening. Validate their story. Help prompt with beginning, middle and endings. Assign characters to the painting and have them tell the story from the point of view of the character. What do you care about?

Pull them in and make them feel safe and respected.

Share a story of someone who has brought you through something.

Innovation requires failure

and to end with my favorite:

"A story is a journey and if I tell you the end - we will have missed the journey."

So ladies: if you can make sense of these rambles lets try and organize the presentation around maybe:

Docent Impressions of the Symposium

Docent to Docent new ideas

Docent Education new ideas - act out a picture - or a group activity that Susan and Lynne had at their breakout?

Discussion of fund raising for future Symposiums - Montreal will not be cheap either.

We should pass our brochure out.

Raffle our goodies.

transferrable ideas?

Book Club for kids

Docentitos

Encouraging design teams from the local schools and Universities to show works - bring in the older youth to share.

Open a dialogue with other local museums in exchanging what they are offering that is wonderful.