Art museum education: facilitating gallery experiences. By Olga Hubard

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reward. It describes how the education system is being increasingly fractured, how old forms of inequality are reproduced, and new divisions created. It also provides an insightful discussion on the redrawing of the academic-vocational divide, paying particular attention to apprenticeships. Here, Ainley critiques current government policy and compares and contrasts the English approach with other more coherent and robust systems of apprenticeship, perhaps most notably Germany. Apprenticeships are popular with young people from working-class backgrounds and their parents attracted by notions of craft and security traditionally associated with such programmes but quality is, as Ainley points out, highly variable and provision is, he reminds us, in short supply in occupations where demand is strongest.

Chapter 5 moves beyond a critique of existing relations to engage with a programme for the future. This, Ainley contends, needs to go much further than mere educational reform – although it is recognised that such matters are not important. Rather educational change, it is argued, needs to be part of a much more far-reaching programme of social and political change including not only job creation, a coherent industrial strategy and increased labour market regulation but also a broader re-evaluation of the way society is organised in terms of housing, the environment and way the economy more broadly is run. Without such a programme of radical reform, the prospects for many young people will, as Betraying a Generation argues, remain decidedly bleak.

Despite being relatively brief, Betraying a Generation is thorough and comprehensive and will help readers understand key debates about the changing nature of education and work, as well as associated questions about social class, inequality and the economy more generally. The book will be a valuable resource for teachers and academics working with students across the social sciences and humanities but it will also offer a welcome antidote to the now notoriously narrow, instrumental nature of teacher education, youth work and other vocational programmes aimed at those training to work with children and young people. Not only will it help readers understand and critique what is going on round them, it will also enable them to argue for more just and meaningful alternatives.

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In 2002, Mark O’Neill used the concept of the ‘good enough visitor’ in response to Glasgow Museum being attacked by art critics for daring to make artworks more accessible to a wider public. As O’Neill explained, these critics objected to the apparent ‘dumbing down’ of art by the use of text, objects and reconstructions to help visitors understand the historical context of artworks on display. The subtext was that visitors who needed these props were not ‘good enough’ to view the artworks. This attitude towards art as a pure art-form that needs no additional context or information persists. In perpetuating canonicity (judgements of quality based on subjective and culturally relative factors such as aesthetics, originality and influence), many art museums ‘implicitly also perpetuate social inequalities that create barriers to participation’ (Marstine, Dodd and Jones 2015, p. 85). For those who do not understand how to engage with art, or the technical language
that accompanies it, galleries can be daunting places that are ‘not for them.’ In contrast, *Art Museum Education* firmly puts audiences at the centre of art museums, advocating for gallery educators to use a range of approaches to facilitate visitor experiences and help them to ‘make sense’ of the artworks they encounter. The wider value of using art in this way, which Hubard makes clear towards the very end of the book, is that it can help us to understand ourselves and the wider world, to encourage visitors to ‘open up their minds and their senses, to become actively (yet critically) receptive to the human creations they encounter — and to embrace the feelings, questions, ideas, and experiences that these creations can bring about’ (156).

Divided into three distinct parts, the succinct chapters explore how educators can use dialogue, the five senses, emotion, and bodily sensations and movement to support rich, meaningful, rich and fulfilling encounters with artworks, making the most of the museum context. As the author stresses, ‘if visitors are fortunate enough to experience art by activating the different dimensions that together make them human – emotions, perceptions, intellect, imagination – the works they see will enter their lives in more significant and memorable ways’ (135). The premise of the book is that the interaction between gallery educators and their audiences is the best way to achieve this outcome, the mediation between trained gallery staff and visitors able to ‘influence in crucial ways the way people experience and make meaning of art’ (2). This book goes into detail about how to stimulate creative and productive conversations with visitors; crucial to this approach is having a keen understanding of audience needs, being able to adapt to individual and collective responses, and interweaving audience responses with the need to impart particular information and context about an artwork. Having seen at first hand the passion, skill and energy of gallery facilitators – such as one freelancer at the UK’s National Gallery who kept a class of children aged 7–8 spellbound as they explored paintings by Titian, Raphael and Canaletto (Hooper-Greenhill et al., 2007) – it is not an easy skill to master, but Hubard’s engaging text provides plenty of inspiration.

For a practical handbook, it is refreshing to see how closely theory and practice are interlinked in Hubard’s text. She is open about the values and assumptions that underpin her approach, which is firmly steeped in social constructivist learning theories (learning as a lifelong process and a fundamental part of human experience). To maximise the benefits of gallery facilitation, Hubard makes it clear that educators need to start with their audiences – what meanings they make from the artwork, what they can see, what emotions it engenders – with the educator’s role to tease out, build on and strengthen the connections made. Hubard’s work is located firmly in her own extensive experience of gallery facilitation, which grounds the book very clearly in reality, and Hubard makes extensive use of examples and case studies that bring the ideas contained in here to life.

The text is clearly written and has a logical flow within the chapters, with Hubard using bullet points to raise questions and point to additional issues that will help educators to think about their own practice. The author also considers the role of performance, embodied and sensory experiences in meaning-making, the place of emotion and bodily sensation to helping viewers understand artworks, and how different contexts (including the use of originals or reproductions) can also impact on an audience’s response to a painting. Above all, the book is successful at, as it explains in the introduction, positioning gallery education as a ‘sophisticated endeavour, rooted on sound understandings about the complexities of art interpretation and its mediation’ (3). Drawing on a range of artworks from sculpture (Isamu Noguchi) to patchwork quilts (Romare Bearden) as well as
paintings by Edvard Munch, Diego Rivera and Petrus Christus, ensures that the book tackles the issue of how to negotiate the diverse cultural and social contexts in which artworks sit.

For a book about gallery education, it is a shame that there are no colour reproductions of the artworks that Hubbard refers to in the text, and as a collection of previously published articles, it seems there was a missed opportunity to draw the narrative threads together in a forward-thinking conclusion. For example, the author does not consider how this particularly labour-intensive approach to gallery education might be sustained during a period of massive cuts to museum budgets. Hubbard could also look more at how issues of power, privilege and elitism influence art gallery education – the author touches on this at the end of Chapter 3 and this issue could have made an effective conclusion if extended, particularly as constructivist approaches to learning are not universally accepted across museum and gallery learning and may sometimes even be in conflict with the need for museum educators to ensure that audiences get the ‘right’ information.

To conclude, in the light of the barriers that continue to exist which exclude many audiences from art museums, starting from the perspective of audiences – their needs, expectations, prior knowledge and experiences – and using this to support them in understanding artworks, is what makes this work so vital and engaging. Audience-centred practice is embedded throughout, and the author speaks with a remarkable element of self-reflexiveness. Hubbard has clearly thought through many of the issues she addresses in her own practice, and is open about how approaches to engagement might work differently in practice. For museum educators who are starting out, and who want to develop their approaches to facilitation, this book is a valuable addition to their bookshelf, encouraging them to think differently about their own practice and to develop a style of communication that not only works for them but which rightly puts audiences at the heart of what they do.

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At heart, Active learning concerns the intersections of marginalisation experienced by young people, particularly those disenfranchised in the changing social and economic