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Portland Art Museum Residency Final Report

Lexa Walsh

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A Year in the Life at Portland Art Museum
Lexa Walsh

Summary

From April 2011 to June 2012 I was the Artist in Residence in the Education Department at the Portland Art Museum. Graduate Students from Portland State University's Art and Social Practice program were invited to submit proposals for a social practice residency at the Museum. The residency was intended to be of a collaborative nature, among the artist, the Education Department, and the larger Museum and staff. The residency was designed by the Education department to connect with the annual *Shine a Light** event.

I will recount my experience working as an artist in this institution. This includes being a creative resource in the department in general, as well as realizing projects, which include participation of both the behind-the-scenes staff and the public. There are also a few projects I was unable to realize, which are worth mentioning as they address problems I see existing at the institution. There were projects, which were either quickly rejected, unrealistic because of lack of infrastructure to support them, poorly devised because of assumptions on my part, or there simply was not enough time.

The residency was a laboratory for experimentation. Some projects live on, while others had a short life span. Some started as "art" but became functional programming. I see my role as fluid, balancing between art and administration, both problematizing and problem solving.

**This annual one-day event, a collaboration between Portland State Art & Social Practice students and faculty, and the Portland Art Museum's Education department. reshapes the Museum experience through installations, performances, and presentations throughout the campus. Innovative activities push the conventional boundaries of art.*

Museum's Objectives (from the original Call to Artists)

“The focus is on extending the experience of the PSU/PAM Social Practice collaboration and keeping the audience we have grown together deeply engaged throughout the year. The *Shine a Light* event and the *Social Practice Artist in Residence Project* connect to the museum's strategic planning goals. The Portland Art Museum is strategically working to serve as a laboratory for innovations and partnerships, enhance community partnerships through long term and project based collaborations, become a more welcoming community resource, serve as a gathering place, reach culturally diverse and younger audiences, and serve as a center for visual art, film and culture. Proposals should focus on engaging with an audience in one or more of the following areas that we as an organization have identified as key values to encourage and develop among visitors and staff:

conversation

slowness

come up with you own identified problem/subject, articulate it and explain how you would address it (be specific).

The purpose of this artistic residency is to impact the quality of the visitor experience. The artist in residence should strive toward a qualitative deepening of the visitor's experience of the museum in a broad sense, and the selection committee will be measuring proposals against this goal. Other goals of the residency project are to create educational, real world opportunities for graduate students working in the social practice discipline to learn and work; to gain national visibility for the artist, the Museum and for PSU's Art and Social Practice program; and to create a sustainable and collaborative program that will allow for deep engagement. In all of the ways laid out above, the residency project should extend the experience of the Shine a Light event throughout the year by engaging and sustaining an audience and/or group of participants.”

Context

I am an artist and songwriter, whose work engages the public in hospitable democracy. I work as a collaborator, experience maker, explorer, facilitator and participant. The essence of my work is situated in performance and direct engagement; I do interactive public art projects, which bring together members of the public to share in conversation, cheer, song, dance and food. Through these and other social interactions, observations and interpretations (sometimes misinterpretations), I make site-specific projects that investigate elevating everyday activities into tools for community and relationship building, place and space making.

Before entering the Art and Social Practice MFA program at Portland State University, I was active as an artist and musician, doing projects and residencies at home and abroad. My work was evolving towards social engagement, but I neither knew where this work stood in the art canon, nor how to talk about it. The program opened many doors for me, including access to the Portland Art Museum, originally through Shine a Light. This event allowed the museum to become a laboratory, a playground, a collection of stimulus.

My first Shine a Light project in October 2010 incorporated the Museum staff through songwriting. My interest in collective music-making goes far back, as I had been exploring different genres, such as Jingles, as a way for groups of people to celebrate their identities. Together with the staff of Education, Guest and Member Services, Operations, and the Office of the Director, we collaboratively made a hybrid form of Jingles/Work Songs/Songs About Work. Through these songs, I had found a remarkable resource: the Museum staff. Both the relationships built with the staff and group songwriting made their way into prominent interest points during the residency.



Work Songs from the Portland Art Museum, 2010

Residency Overview

Starting with a set of constraints (5 hours per week, stated goals of the museum), an open mind, and an interest in the staff, I began by creating an identity: Artist as Service Worker. I had gone to see a concert just weeks before the residency started. The band was outfitted in what seemed like nurse-meets-hotdog slinger ensembles. I heckled them about their costumes. They shouted back, “They’re not costumes, they are uniforms. Artists are service workers, so we should wear uniforms.” With the help of local designer Adam Arnold, and artist Sean Schumacher, we created an identity reminiscent of an airline hostess.

Equipped with my uniform and brand, I began meeting the staff and looking at works in the galleries. I researched the works I felt strongly towards, and developed performative responses to them and for the artists who made them, including cheers and songs, as well as a sketch for a performance reenacting the female gazes in the museum. The quote “don’t embarrass the art” haunted me. It had come from the collections manager Don Urquhart at a Shine A Light meeting the year before. I apologize, Don, but I may have embarrassed the art.

After noticing poor communication across departments, I began hosting monthly luncheons for the staff, called Meal Ticket. Trophies, another project, was a response to the monthly “high five” award facilitated by Human Resources. In a way, part of my role became an alternative HR representative, and I could be successful only because I was not beholden to the “boss.” Shine A Light 2011 was a significant challenge, as I presented six projects. Some were later developed into Museum Tour Remix, a series of public tours, and others developed into art-inspired food projects at the museum.

Additionally, I was inspired by daily office goings on, like the clipart inserted in emails about payroll, or the required sexual harassment training. Having never worked in a traditional office setting, these were fascinating discoveries. I decorated my cubicle and changed it into studio: a “Stubicle.”

Finally, I was implored to come to Education staff meetings. As a member of the Education team, I aided in the development and critique of projects and programs, and my services were utilized for special projects such as Family Day, the Rothko History Pub, and Object Stories.

PAM **ARTIST** **IN RESIDENCE**



<http://pamres.tumblr.com>

Personal Goals:

Make hierarchy and communication blocks transparent.

Upon entering the Museum, I learned about some awkward relationships. This was made apparent the year before working with Shine a Light, when many of the artists felt a lack of institutional support, but more so when I was introduced to the 150+ staff members and witnessed their interest or lack thereof. It was clear this was not personal, but institutional. It was also clear through the distribution of real estate at the Museum, and HR flow charts, that there was a hierarchy. Meal Ticket and the staff lounge proposal (discussed later) were two attempted solutions.

Deeply engage with the collection and interpret it.

In an effort to embrace slowness, I spent more time than usual looking, interpreting and researching works and artists in the collection. Resulting from this, many projects arose, as did a deep and unexpected interest in the collections. While looking for images of flower arrangements, for instance, I discovered hairdos.

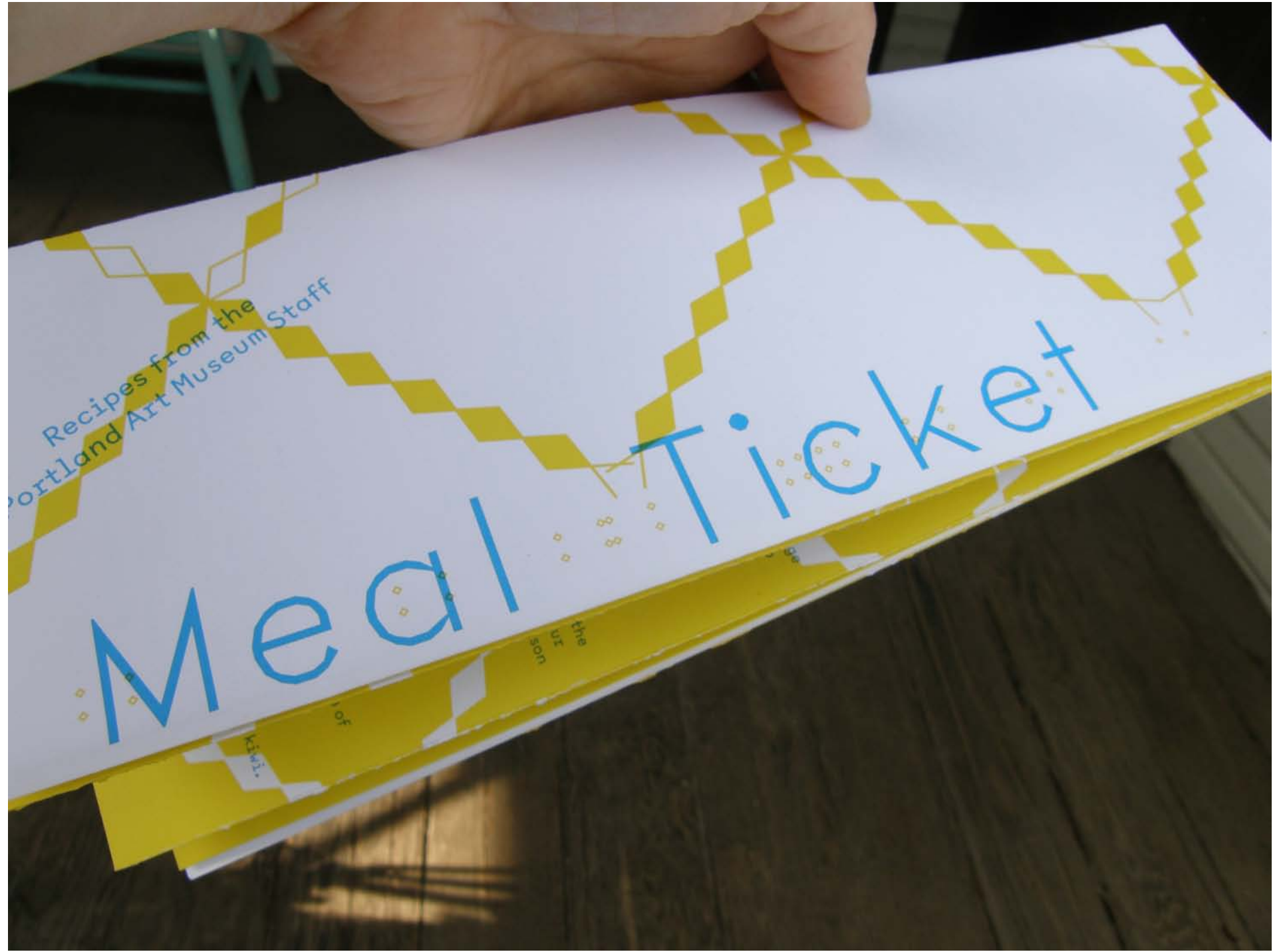
Bring a sense of fun and play into the museum. Open doors to new and jaded audiences, make it accessible and interesting to the public.

Offering public programming that went against the museum's everyday standards was important to me-bringing a taste of Shine A Light into the everyday. Though the museum did not find it possible to support this programming all year long, they did support a month of alternative public tours. Perusing the museum in uniform, practicing cheers during open hours, and ongoing food projects hinted at that spirit when the programs were not happening.

Be an active member of the education team, knowing no limitations, offering a new and valuable voice.

I came in with a "yes we can!"/"why can't we?" attitude, wishing to offer the staff a fresh voice and new resources for problem solving and developing programming.

Leave the museum having made an impact, asking questions of itself, open to new ways of thinking.



Recipes from the
Portland Art Museum Staff

Meal Ticket

Meal Ticket

of

son
in
the

see

Busting Silos with Meal Ticket

Meal Ticket was a monthly silo-busting luncheon with the staff of the Museum. The luncheon provided a level playing field for staff of every department, in a boardroom usually saved for Trustees and upper management, in an organization that normally has a strict hierarchy. Anyone was welcome to a home cooked meal, replete with seating charts and wine glasses. Guests were seated to encourage cross-departmental exchange, for example seating someone from security across from someone from accounting, someone from education across from someone from events. We employed a recipe exchange as a conversation starter. The meals resulted in not only temporary lunchtime utopias, but also access to personal stories that would otherwise have been unlikely to approach. The recipes are not only for food but also for experiences and they, too, are telling. The resulting cookbook is both a play on the tradition of community cookbooks and a gesture to generate relationships and conversation. As a collection, the recipes reveal our cultural references, upbringings, similarities, and differences. Recipes come with stories, about place, family, and culture. I hope to ignite curiosity and consideration for our Portland Art Museum community through the cookbook, available in the gift shop.

For photos and more recipes, visit <http://pammealticket.tumblr.com>





Meal Ticket: A Play in an Act of Email Correspondence

Dear J,
How do you do? I hope to reserve the Trustee on Thursday, January 24th for the next Meal Ticket, from 12:30—2:00.
Please let me know if it available.
Hvala!
Lexa

Dear Lexa,
It's reserved for you!
Kisses,
J

Dear Colleagues,
It's that time again! Meal Ticket # 7. You are welcome to a free home-cooked lunch, where you can get to know your colleagues, have good food and conversation, and participate in a staff community cookbook. It's first come, first serve, so please RSVP as soon as possible. Please let me know if you have any food restrictions, as well.
Thursday, January 24th. 12:30-1:30 in the Trustee Boardroom
I hope to see you soon!
Lexa

Count me in if there's room!
H

Lexa,
Please remove me from your list.
Regards,
A

Dear Lexa,
I'd love to come if there's space for me. I really enjoyed it last time!
E

Lexa,
Let's talk- I have some ideas for things we can do around here. By the way, I'll see you at meal ticket- I have the day off and will be setting up the staff art show. I eat meat only. And single malt scotch.
T

Dear A,
I'm sorry if this invitation was bothersome. I'd love to know why, if you have the interest.
Best,
Lexa

Lexa,
I am not interested in having "fun" in the middle of the workday. Work is for working. Nothing personal.
AE

Lexa,
I'd really like to come but we only have a half hour lunch. It sounds great.
Later,
M

Dear V,

How's it going? I hope this finds you well. I have a favor to ask. I've been in touch with many security personnel who wish they could come to Meal Ticket but they have only a half-hour lunch break. Is there a way you could offer the interested people a one-hour lunch break just once a month, so they can participate? By the way, when are you going to make it? You're always welcome, too!

Please let me know, and Thanks for your flexibility.

Lexa

Dear Lexa,

Our security personnel are scheduled well in advance and although I appreciate your wanting to include them, I cannot allow more than two per month to attend.

I will, however, offer those two an hour lunch upon the following regulations: give me the names of the personnel at least two weeks in advance, and know there may be an emergency situation where they may need to forfeit participation.

Good Luck with Meal Ticket,

V

Dear V,

Wonderful! Thanks so much for allowing them to enjoy a good lunch.

Best,

Lexa

Hi C!

I was wondering if you'd like to come to Meal Ticket? Just wondering!

Best,

Lexa

Hi R!

Just wanted to give you the heads up if you want to come to Meal Ticket, there are only a few left. Elizabeth told me you were interested.

See you soon,

Lexa

Lexa,

You can have all the fun you want as long as it doesn't cost me any money. I can't make it this month because I will be out of town.

R

Dear V,

The lucky winners in this month's Meal Ticket one-hour lunch are.... Ted Smith & Joe Maldonado. Thanks Victor!

Lexa

...



Let the Collection Speak

(looking and playing at Shine A Light)

One of Us

One of Us emerged from looking through the galleries. Actually, I was looking for flower arrangements, but found the hair styles far more compelling. A one-night project for Shine A Light, One of Us promoted a sense of adventure, fantasy, and play in the museum by offering hats, headpieces and wigs based on characters and subjects in artworks in the European and American portraits. Visitors were able to borrow these for the duration of their visit. The costumes encouraged a close inspection of and intimacy with the artworks and suggest the age old game tableau vivant, while also referencing an inside-out coat check. Over 200 visitors participated in the work. The project inspired the Hair Tour for Families, and the wigs were used later by docents giving tours to the partially sighted.

To see all photos, go to <http://oneofusatshinealight.shutterfly.com>

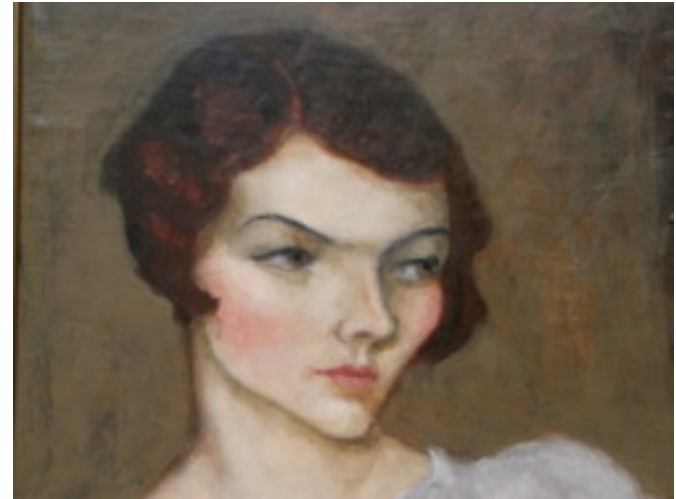
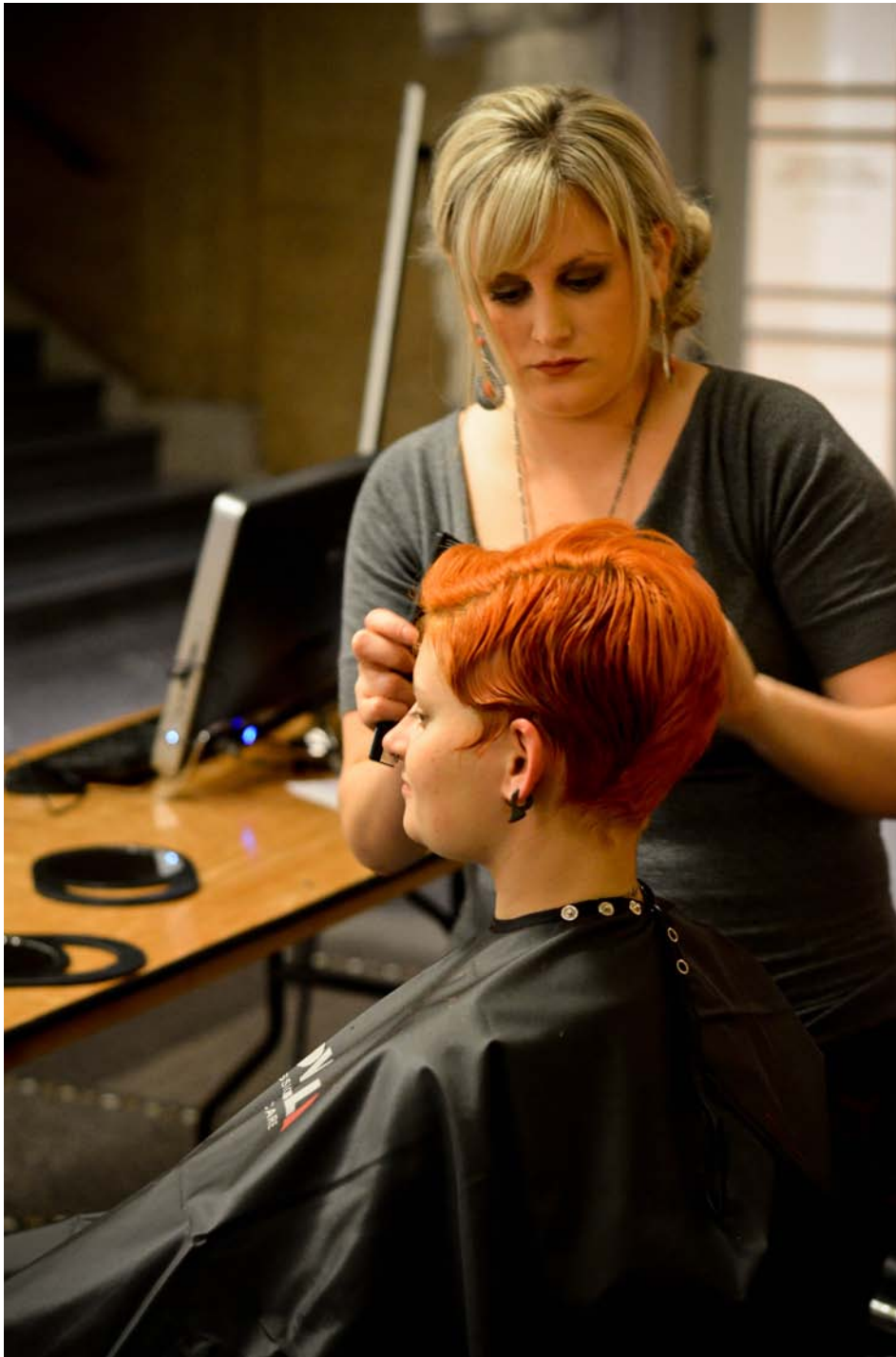








SHINE-A-LIGHT



One of Us Salon

One of Us Salon took things one step further, offering visitors free haircuts/hairstyles inspired by artworks in the museum. Stylists from Richard Herrera About Hair chose the artworks and performed the styling all evening long. The guests were photographed and continued their museum visits showing off their new hairstyles. This project allowed guests to have a longer-term intimate relationship with the artworks by using fashion, fun, and fantasy. It changed the expectations of what one might do in a museum, and what art can inspire while creating a relationship with our neighbors at RHAH, who truly took ownership of the project, creating their own lens for interpretation. I collaborated with the stylists again on the Hair Tour for Families. Thanks to Jillian Punska for the inspiration.

To see more images, please visit
<http://oneofusatshinealight.shutterfly.com>



Museum Cookbook

with Crystal Baxley & Jillian Punska

Artist Crystal Baxley, educator Jillian Punska and I worked with local chefs to publish a collection of recipes inspired by works in the museum's collection. Each recipe was printed on a card that sat near the work that inspired it during Shine A Light. The cookbook takes the museum's collection out of its centralized physical location and gives the audience a way to incorporate it into their everyday lives. It also created relationships with local chefs and food carts, offering them a chance to interpret the collection. There is a tradition of cookbook writing right here at the Portland Art Museum- please visit the museum library to see.

The Museum Cookbook includes recipes from chefs, bartenders and brewers including: Thomas Boyce of Bluehour, Scott Dolich of Park Kitchen, Jenn Louis of Lincoln, Alex Diestra from Saucebox, Jake Martin and Daniel Osborne from Central, Greg Higgins of Higgins, as well as food cart chefs Jeremy Davidson from The Portland Soup Company, Mark Doxader from Tastebud, Dylan Goldsmith from Captured by Porches, and Ashley Ragsdale and Jessica Woods from Pie Spot.

Hundreds of visitors collected the recipes. Pie Spot now regularly makes art-inspired pies for the Museum Grounds café.

FIVE WORDS IN ORANGE NEON

FIVE WORDS IN ORANGE NEON,
THE COCKTAIL

BY DANIEL OSBORNE OF CENTRAL

FIVE WORDS IN ORANGE NEON,
JOSEPH KOSUTH, 1965

1 oz. Wray & Nephew overproof white rum	1/4 oz. fresh squeezed lime juice
1 oz. fresh squeezed orange juice	1/4 oz. Trader Tiki's orgeat (almond syrup)

Combine 1 oz. of Wray & Nephew overproof white rum, 1 oz. fresh squeezed orange juice, 1/4 oz. fresh squeezed lime juice, and 1/2 oz. Trader Tiki's orgeat (almond syrup), into a cocktail shaker with ice. Shake, and "double strain" over fresh ice in a rocks glass using a Hawthorne strainer and tea strainer. The double straining method insures that unwanted citrus pulp, and or "tired ice" will not make it's way into your drink, causing faster dilution. Next top the drink with 3-4 dashes of Peychaud's bitters for a bright red float on top, garnish with an orange zest and serve.

MELON SALAD
BY JENN LOUIS OF LINCOLN
FOUND, FRIEDEL DZUBAS, 1972

1 galia melon, or
small melon
 $\frac{1}{2}$ pint blackberries
1 shallot, sliced thinly
4 oz. sheep's milk
feta cheese
 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon chili flake
1 tablespoon chives,
cut finely

$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon preserved
lemon, minced
 $\frac{1}{4}$ lemon, zest and juice
reserved separately
2 tablespoons olive oil
Kosher salt, to taste
Freshly ground black
pepper, to taste

Skin, seed and quarter the melon. Slice thinly on
mandolin. Toss gently with blackberries, preserved
lemon, shallot, feta, chili flake, chives, lemon juice,
zest and olive oil. Season with salt and pepper.
Yield: 6 servings

Museum Tour Remix

(rethinking what a museum tour can be)

Museum Tour Remix was a series of 5 different public tours, 11 in total, every weekend throughout the month of January. This was my main form of general public engagement during the residency, beyond Shine a Light. The tours were held instead of regularly scheduled docent tours, and advertised in the member's magazine and temporarily placed on the museum's online calendar. The timing of these events, placed in between major exhibitions, allowed a space for, yet revealed, the museum's general mistrust for such activities. There was also a life-size cutout of me in uniform--identifying that "something special" was going on (it was whisked away during the week). Tours included a Singing Tour, Cheers for Art tour, Hair Tour for Families, a Conversational Companion tour, and Ted's Talk Tour.

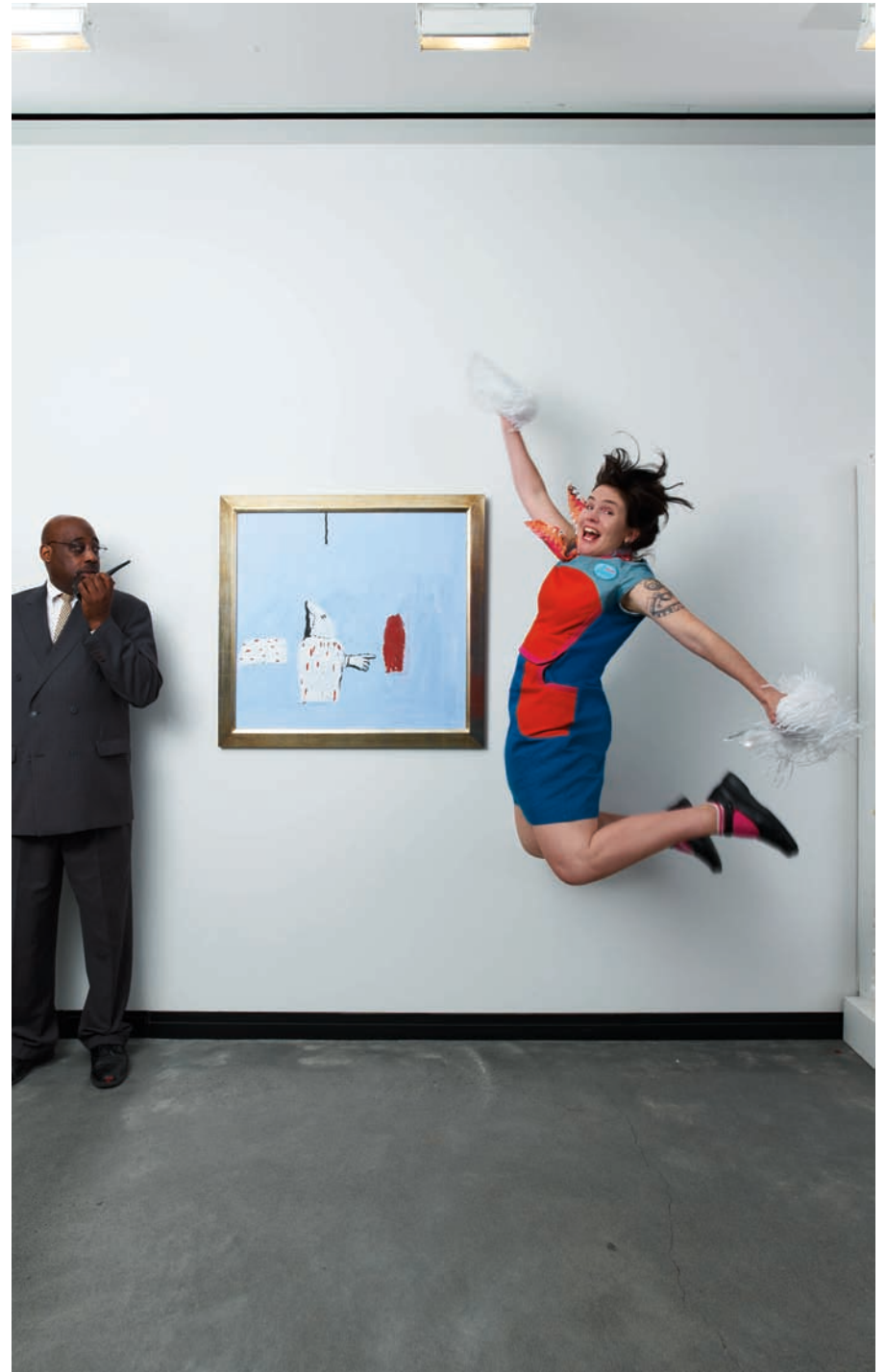


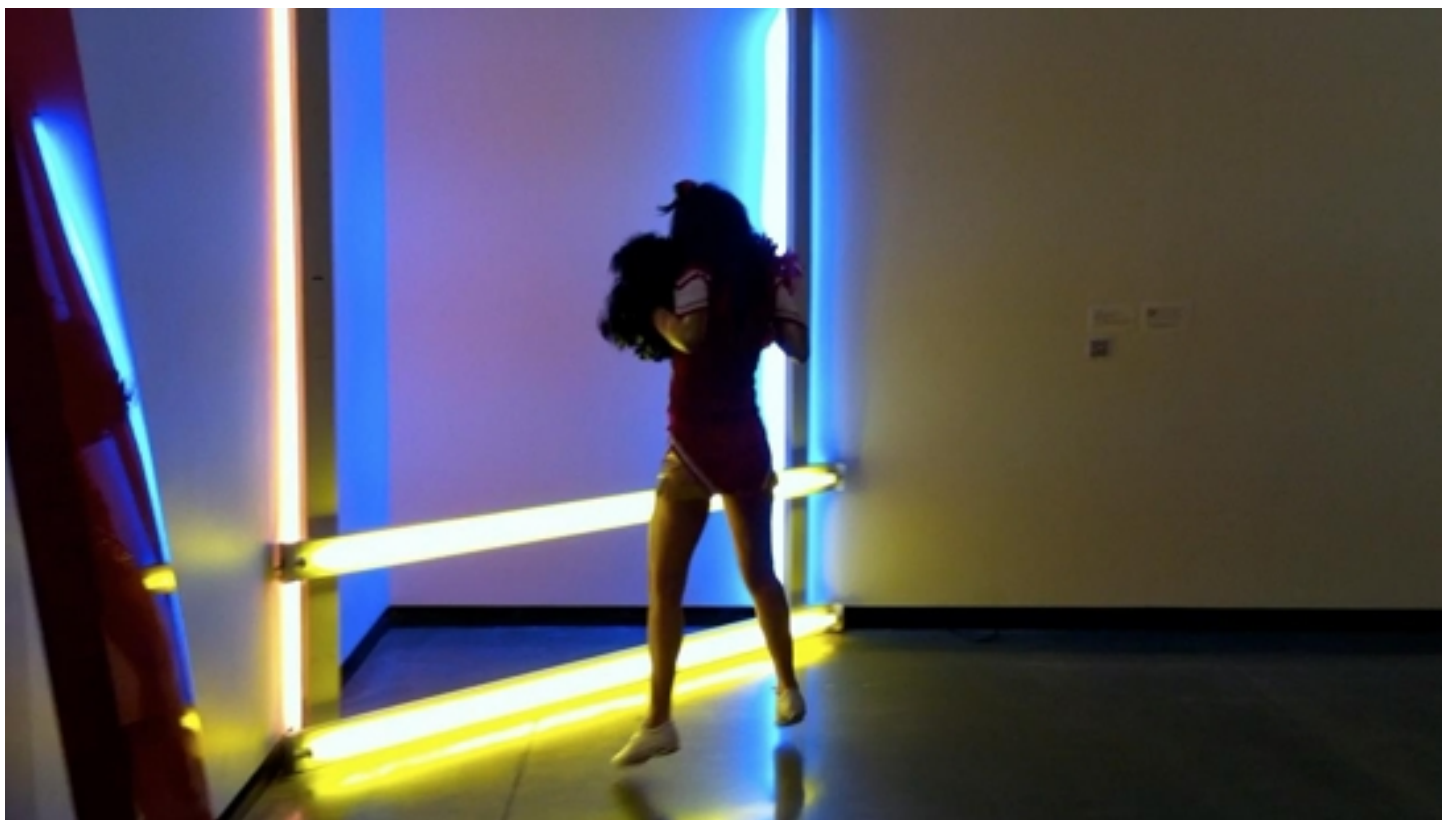


The Hair Tour brought families through the European and American galleries. Pointing to hairdos as a fun point of access, we discussed wigs, hair and dress styles in regards to class, status and history. We also studied the do's and don'ts of hair styles based on the preferences of professional contemporary stylists. We identified hair as an abstract form, and did an art making activity in response. Thanks to the stylists at Richard Herrera About Hair, and Museum Docents Jennifer Hanson and Christine Nelson. The tour averaged 15-20 participants weekly.

Cheers for Art! Tour

Cheers for Art! was performed in collaboration with professional cheerleader Stephanie Drachman and museum guard Ted Smith, for both Shine A Light and Museum Tour Remix. Goals of project were to intersect populist cheerleading with “high” art, to consider the collection and art world from feminine and feminist perspectives, to play with the form of Cheer, and to add spectacle to the museum experience, making guests stop, look and rethink their expectations. The artworks chosen and language used in the cheers was very similar to the Singing Tour, yet the results were dramatically different.



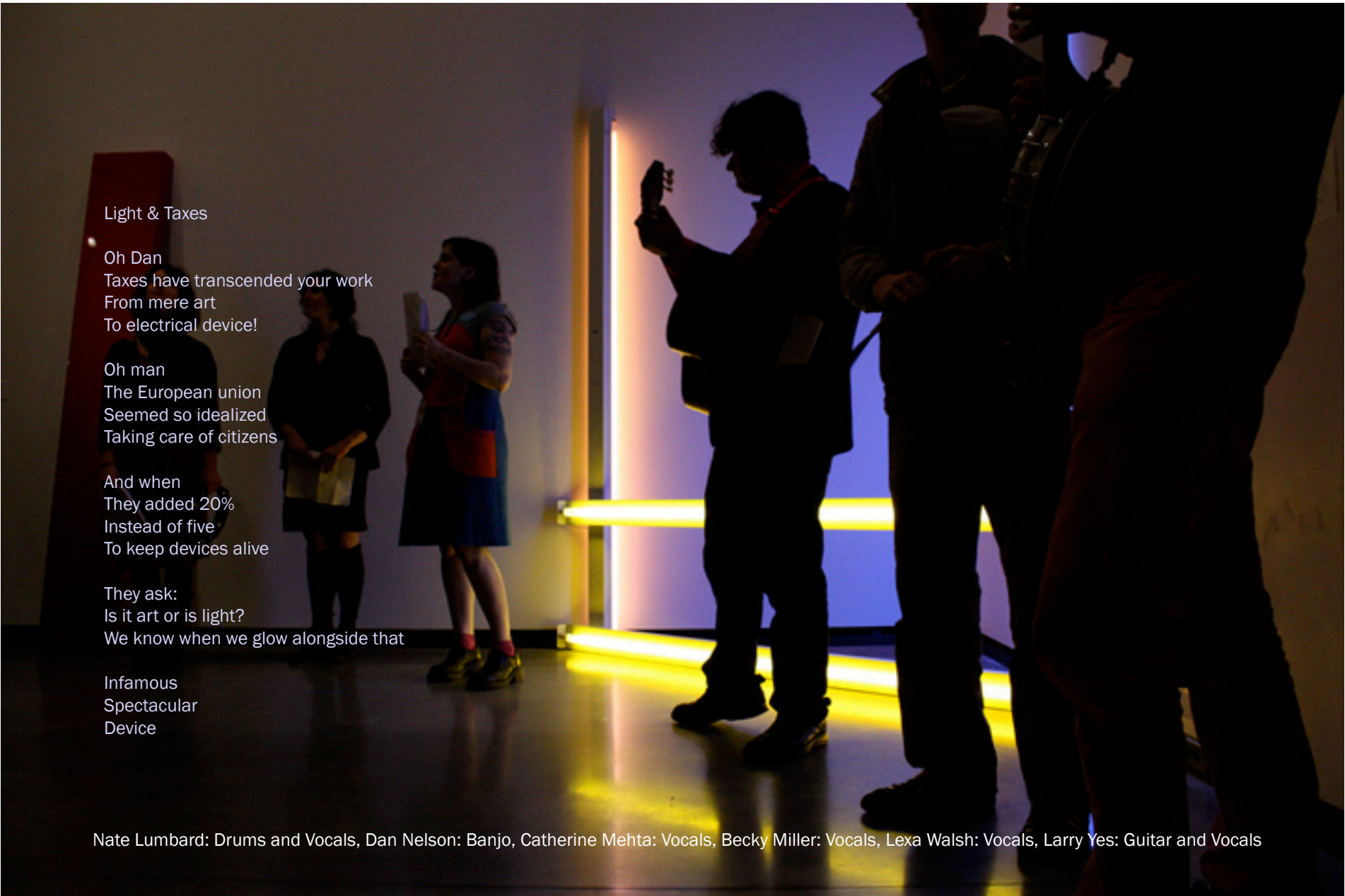


Singing Tour

Through collaborations with local musicians, museum staff and volunteers, I co-wrote and performed songs about and inspired by artworks and artists in the museum collection. These songs, an accessible, popular and memorable form of interpretation (think School House Rock), live on as a playlist on the museum's iPods. Subjects range from Philip Guston's 1970 Marlborough show, to paying homage to the women artists stuck in a small hallway, to the state of contemporary ceramics. There are eight songs in all.

Listen at www.lexawalsh.bandcamp.com





Light & Taxes

Oh Dan
Taxes have transcended your work
From mere art
To electrical device!

Oh man
The European union
Seemed so idealized
Taking care of citizens

And when
They added 20%
Instead of five
To keep devices alive

They ask:
Is it art or is light?
We know when we glow alongside that

Infamous
Spectacular
Device

Nate Lumbar: Drums and Vocals, Dan Nelson: Banjo, Catherine Mehta: Vocals, Becky Miller: Vocals, Lexa Walsh: Vocals, Larry Yes: Guitar and Vocals

Ted's Talk Tour

As security guards are the eyes and ears of the museum, and an under-mined source of information, Ted Smith proposed this tour, and felt I could help him realize it. A long-time Portland Art Museum security guard and witty conversationalist, Ted led a “people’s” tour of the collection that drew on his many years of engaging all kinds of museum-goers, with both interpretation and anecdotes. It is notable that he was allowed to touch the art.



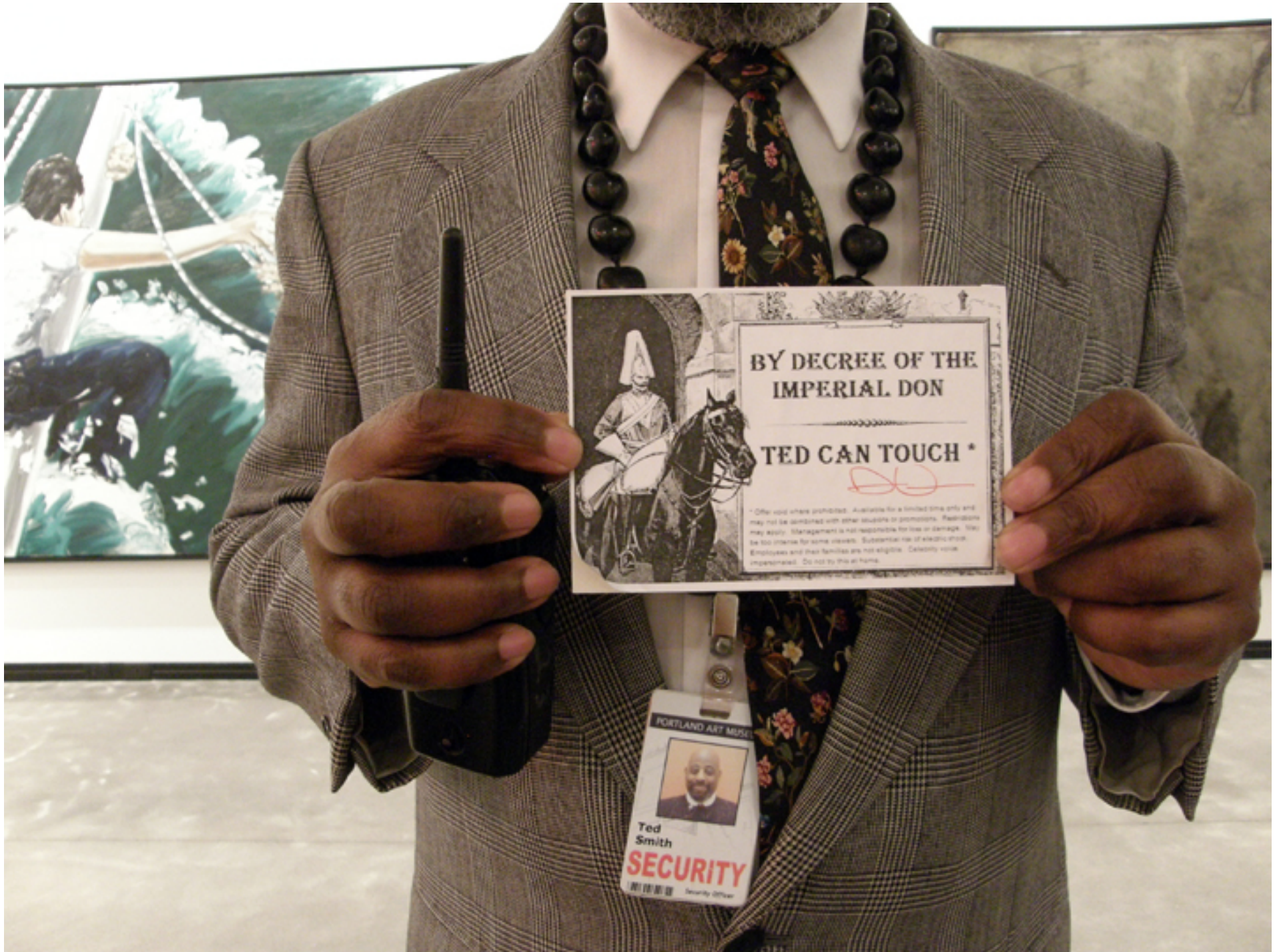
Here's a letter we received the next day (I agree wholeheartedly):

Dear Sirs,

Last night my husband, son and I attended the free evening at the Art Museum. My husband loves museum and my son needed to visit one to earn an Art Merit Badge for Boy Scouts. I myself do not have a fondness for museums of any kind really, I usually just bare then because my husband loves them. It has been forever and a day since we have been to the art museum. I have to tell you I very much enjoyed myself last night. At first I thought well maybe I am getting older and I am enjoying museums more. Then I thought it's really not the painting that I am enjoying the most but the other exhibits, but I have been to a few others museums with similar exhibit so that wasn't it either. I realize then it was Ted Smith. Ted Smith is a diamond, a piece of art himself. He was informative, down to earth, personable and funny. I could very much tell he loves the museum. If you were smart you would bottle him up and figure out how to clone him so you could have Ted Smith tours daily. I can't believe I am saying this about a museum because frankly two hours in a museum has always been enough for me, but frankly I was sorry the tour had to end tonight.

Sincerely,

(name withheld)



BY DECREE OF THE
IMPERIAL DON

TED CAN TOUCH *

DD

* Offer void where prohibited. Available for a limited time only and may not be combined with other coupons or promotions. Restrictions may apply. Management is not responsible for loss or damage. Not to be used where prohibited. Subject to the terms and conditions of the offer. Employees and their families are not eligible. Certain voice impairment. Do not use at home.

PORTLAND ART MUSEUM



Ted
Smith
SECURITY
Security Officer

Conversational Companion- The museum meets the library. Guests could stop in to “check out” yours truly for a 30-minute stroll through the collection. Less an “expert” and more of an equal, this tour sought to comingle my insights as artist in residence with the thoughts and impressions of visitors as we spent time together looking, discovering and talking. I handed the guests a camera to shoot as they pleased. Reservations were made for individuals and small groups.



Tour Numbers

6-Jan

Singing Tour: 35

7-Jan

Singing Tour: 50

8-Jan

Family Tour (Hair): 15

13-Jan

Conversational Companion: 5

14-Jan

Conversational Companion: 5

20-Jan

Cheers for Art: 10

21-Jan

Cheers for Art: 20

22-Jan

Family Tour (Hair): 15

27-Jan

Ted's Talk: 50

28-Jan

Ted's Talk: 35

29-Jan

Family Tour (Hair): 20

Problem Solving

FOOD cART MUSEUM SPECIAL
THREE BOATS QUESADILLA BY KOI FUSION

INSPIRED BY
THREE GHOST SHIPS
Chris Burden, 1991

2-FOR-1 ENTRY to the Museum if you buy the Museum Special or spend \$8. Please show your receipt.

FREE DRINK with purchase if you show your Museum ticket stub.



Food cART by Artist in Residence Lisa Walsh
Local Portland food (and beer) carts are designing menu items, both savory and sweet, to serve on Saturdays and Free Fourth Fridays. All specials will be inspired by works in the Museum's collection. The project facilitates interpretation of artworks through food and creates a social space at the museum to share ideas over a meal. Launched at Shine A Light 2011, this project references artist Eric Steen's popular Art and Beer at the previous Shine A Light events. January features Koi Fusion.

Every Saturday beginning January 7, 11-1pm
Every Free Fourth Friday starting January 27, 5-8pm

Learn more about this photograph and discover other artworks in the Portland Art Museum at portlandartmuseum.org. You can also follow our collections-related Twitter feed @PDXCollections for news and daily highlights.



Problem: Nowhere for staff or guests to eat lunch

Solution: provide a food cart

Extra credit: creative response by chef, special 2-1 entry for museum visitors who purchased the special

FOOD cART was launched at Shine A Light and continues today, with food, beer and ice cream vendors, providing the possibility that the Museum is also a social space.

Problem: mediocre pastries served in the cafe

Solution: yummy, art inspired pastries

Portland's Pie Spot continues to serve art-inspired pies, which are best sellers in the Museum Grounds café. This relationship benefits the café, the small businesswomen of Pie Spot, and the Museum's online collections, which are advertised in signage.





The inspiration for this was SF MoMA's fabulous Mondrian Cake



Problem: need to create a space for overflow without distracting from the event (Shine A Light)

Solution: **The Community Building Square Dance** transformed the museum experience into a fun and festive one with an interactive, paired dance which takes an unexpected twist when the music stops and the caller facilitates a business card exchange and discussion topics about artworks, artists, community, and resource sharing. The music and dancing start up again and so does the fun. Each dance lasts around 15 minutes, with a number of rotations and discussions in each. Participants were encouraged to bring business cards to share, however blank business cards & pencils were offered. Music and calling was by Caroline Oakley & The Old-Time Highway.

Problem:

HR's High Five award left staff feeling it was a weak symbolic gesture



Solution:

Trophies

I offered to make personalized trophies for High Five awardees, an HR initiative to give public recognition to a colleague who went the extra mile. After a few months of trying, only 2 staff members took me up on the offer. One issue may have been HR's unwillingness to help me with the project, as perhaps they felt their toes were being stepped on. Perhaps the trophies, too seemed symbolic?

Unrealized Projects



Staff Lounge- an email was sent out by HR to see if staff members would use the current basement lounge if it were fixed up. No one who uses the lounge has a desk with email access, so those impacted did not actually have input. Everyone who did get the email has an office that's nicer. Needless to say it did not get improved, except for the addition of a soda machine.



I proposed to make the staff lounge in an under-utilized Director Brian Ferriso's office, where there is lots of extra space and natural light. This proposal got a good laugh...

More un/der-realized projects:

Touch Brian

Inspired by Mieirle Laderman-Ukeles' piece "Touch Sanitation", I proposed director Brian Ferriso would shake hands with every employee and say what Ukeles did to every New York Sanitation worker: "Thank you for making the museum work." He agreed but we couldn't find time in his schedule, and after getting to know him, I realized he was quite approachable.

"Touch Bruce" perhaps should have been the proposed project, referring to a less-than-approachable curator.

Discovery Center as Utopian Space

Education has one valuable resource: a naturally-lit space in the museum endowed for education. Understaffed, the space sits underutilized and somewhat dead. I proposed to turn it into an active Utopian space, where many things could happen: tea drinking, an artist resource center, a social practice laboratory, performance space, etc. This was deemed overwhelming as any changes would require extra staffing that the museum was unable to offer.

Female Gaze Tour

Taking notice of the images of women the collections, their gazes often glared at me: so many of them seemingly disempowered, a few confident, some a little crazy. I reenacted these gazes as a performance sketch, and would like to bring it back into the Museum with the help of a feminist scholar and an acting coach, creating a user handbook to reenacting gazes. I have contacted the Guerrilla Girls to assist, but they are too busy. Sigh. This project may be realized for a future Shine A Light event.

Conclusion and Acknowledgements

In conclusion, I believe I was generally successful in reaching the museum's goals of creating conversation, slowness, and identifying problems, addressing them, and making the larger museum community aware of them in hopes of longer term solutions. Whether or not the museum is committed to these issues remains to be seen. Limited resources of the museum conflict with stated strategic goals. I also reached my personal goals: making the hierarchy transparent, deeply engaging with and interpreting the collection, bringing a sense of play into the museum, opening doors to audiences, and being an active member of the education team. I do wish I could have explored and realized more projects. The question remains: could there be projects that universally benefitted the entire museum community? Time will tell whether I have made a lasting impact, but I am sure the continuation of projects such as Shine a Light, and a continued relationship with the PSU Art and Social Practice MFA program and other community partners will encourage the museum to reexamine and reinvigorate itself regularly.

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