Chapter Two

TEACHING AND LEARNING IN A UNIVERSITY ART MUSEUM: EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION AND COMMUNAL SPACES

KLARE SCARBOROUGH and MIRANDA CLARK-BINDER

> "The idea of strikingly different figures coming together to dance is fascinating. Quite frankly, the painting excites me, and makes me want to dance."[1]

JOHN DEWEY'S CONSTRUCTIVIST philosophy emphasized the value of democratic communication and shared experiences in the educational process. He argued that teaching and learning were interactive social endeavors, involving both active and passive elements.[2] For Dewey, the ideal educational experience was democratic as well as communal, encouraging experimentation as well as reflection, and allowing for the free flow of communication among all participants.

Museum educators have long acknowledged the role of informal learning environments in democratizing the educational experience.[3] This is particularly evident in university museums, which offer unique opportunities for teaching and learning with original objects. By holding class in a campus museum, professors can facilitate unique

1 John, student reaction paper for Prof. Jayne Yantz, ARTH 150. (All of the students' names have been changed for privacy purposes.)

2 John Dewey, *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education* (New York: McMillan, 1916), especially 176, 317.

3 Rika Burnham, "If You Don't Stop, You Don't See Anything," *Teachers College Record* 95, no. 4 (Summer 1994), 520–25.

Klare Scarborough served as director and chief curator of the La Salle University Art Museum in Philadelphia from 2011 to 2022. Her publications include scholarly articles on contemporary art and performance, and edited volumes *Barbara Bullock: Chasing After Spirits*; *Paul Keene: Postwar Explorations in Painting*; and *Elizabeth Catlett: Art for Social Justice*. Scarborough holds a PhD in History of Art from Bryn Mawr College.

Miranda Clark-Binder is an art and museum educator. She served as curator of education and public programs of the La Salle University Art Museum from 2006 to 2021. She has been recognized for her work by the Pennsylvania Art Education Association and the City of Philadelphia Department of Behavioral and Intellectual Services. Clark-Binder holds a master's degree in Museum Education from the University of the Arts in Philadelphia.

interactive experiences in which students construct meaning according to their own backgrounds and interests.[4]

At La Salle University Art Museum (LSUAM) in northwest Philadelphia, the galleries are in frequent use by faculty seeking to enhance or supplement their course material with out-of-classroom learning experiences. LSUAM supports La Salle University's practical approach to education and the Lasallian motto of "together and by association," which highlights the importance of community in the educational experience. Within the context of a Lasallian teaching museum, the artworks thus serve primarily as objects of communal inquiry, prompting social interactions and group discussions, as well as individual emotional responses. This essay examines the informal educational process within LSUAM's galleries, drawing from a recent faculty survey along with student reaction papers, providing readers with a visceral understanding of experiential education today.

La Salle University Art Museum

Advancing a mission of experiential education, LSUAM serves the needs of faculty and students as well as the general public, including over five thousand pre-K-12 school children annually from the surrounding area. With six permanent galleries of Western art from the Renaissance to the present, LSUAM provides a forum for displaying and interpreting historical and cultural artifacts, and also for encouraging the exchange of information and ideas among educational groups. Located in the lower level of an academic building, LSUAM is particularly focused on the La Salle community of faculty and students. In fiscal year 2019, there were 128 class visits by faculty in seventeen different disciplines.

The art museum's founder Brother Daniel Burke, originally an English professor, sought to create a museum environment that addressed the Lasallian emphasis on practical and experiential education. He opened the art museum galleries in fall 1975, but he began the collection a decade earlier, with an initial aim of providing authentic materials and teaching tools for the art history program.[5] Through gifts and targeted purchases, he gradually honed the "study collection" to become more encyclopedic, and to serve the needs of faculty and students from many different disciplines.

For Brother Burke, the art museum also offered an intimate setting where individuals could interact with artistic and cultural objects. He wrote that LSUAM provided the "opportunity to widen the educational experiences of our students with the beautiful as well as the good and the true, those transcendent values that have their overflow-

4 Anna Hammond et al., "The Role of the University Art Museum and Gallery," *Art Journal* 65, no. 3 (Fall 2006): 20–39.

5 Daniel Burke, "Lasallian Values: The Transcendent Values of Art," *La Salle Magazine* 45, no. 4 (Winter 2001–2002): unpag.; John J. Keenan, "La Salle's Underground Miracle: The Art Museum Turns Silver," *La Salle Magazine* 45, no. 4 (Winter 2001–2002): 4. See also Victoria Donohoe, "'La Salle's Big Leap': College's Fine Collection Placed on Public View," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 23, 1975.

ing fullness in God."[6] He also recognized the "miraculism" of the viewer's experience of art, and he stated, "If you think of God as being all true, all good and all beautiful, then paintings are little hints of God that expand the soul."[7] He was interested in the viewer's aesthetic response to a work of art, a response that was potentially spiritual and transformative.

Aside from frequent use by faculty in teaching their classes, LSUAM also serves as a site for ritual and communal experiences, most of which are open to the general public. Various academic departments regularly schedule events in the galleries, including poetry readings, induction ceremonies, scholarly lectures, social gatherings, etc. Additionally, every couple of years, LSUAM hosts a group of Tibetan Buddhist monks from the Drepung Gomang monastery in India. Over the course of a week, they work in the Renaissance gallery, creating a sand mandala featuring a specific kind of Buddha. With Christian religious paintings on the walls, the setting lends an appropriate sense of spirituality and holiness to the viewers' experiences.

Since its founding, LSUAM has provided faculty with a safe space in which to experiment with innovative pedagogical approaches involving experiential education. Continuing the progressive innovations of the seventeenth-century founder of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, St. John Baptist de la Salle, who sought to educate poor children in relation to their social needs, faculty have naturally integrated the twentieth-century educational philosophies of John Dewey and others. Over the years, many professors have recognized the intrinsic value of taking their students out of the traditional classroom setting and into an informal learning environment.[8] LSUAM provides an important alternative, as a dedicated space for exhibiting and studying original artworks.

Teaching and learning experiences at LSUAM contribute to the building of authentic community, which is a crucial part of education. As Christian Brother Luke Salm wrote, "The value placed on association in brotherhood … [can] transform an impersonal education institution into an authentic community where persons meet persons, where mind speaks to mind and heart speaks to heart, where the learning experience is shared with persons who can call each other friends." He noted that, for the Lasallian Christian Brothers, "community is a sign of God's presence among us. Consequently, building genuine community is an important—some would say a defining—element of a La Salle education."[9]

---

6 Cited in Keenan, "La Salle's Underground Miracle," 4.

7 Cited in Tanya Barrientos, "The Brother's Work of Art is a Fine Little Art Museum," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 23, 1997; and on cover of *La Salle Magazine* 45, no. 4 (Winter 2001–2002).

8 For the intrinsic value of museum experiences, see John H. Falk and Lynn D. Dierking, *Learning from Museums: Visitor Experiences and the Making of Meaning* (Lanham: Altamira, 2000), especially 19–21.

9 Luke Salm, "Lasallian Values in Higher Education," *AXIS: Journal of Lasallian Higher Education* 6, no. 2 (2015), unpag. https://axis.smumn.edu/2018/01/02/lasallian-values-in-higher-education/.

Experiential Education—Teaching and Learning in the Galleries

In *Democracy and Education* and later in *Experience in Education*, Dewey promoted a democratic approach to education that did not rely on traditional methods of authoritative control, but which valued the importance of shared experiences in which individuals are "co-operative or interacting parts."[10] He cited the importance of experimental science and the laboratory model in demonstrating that genuine knowledge and understanding are the "offspring of doing."[11] Following Dewey's theories about the nature of experience, more recent theorists such as David Kolb have described experiential education as an active engagement of the student through "learning by doing" activities as well as reflective observation.[12]

Like many other museums, LSUAM functions as a kind of learning laboratory, particularly for the faculty and students at La Salle University. In 2019, we surveyed the faculty who regularly use the collection, along with some of their students, to explore the dynamics of experiential education within the galleries. While the survey was part of our ongoing program evaluation, we sought to capture details about how professors and their students actually interacted with each other, and also with the artworks on display. The responses highlighted the fact that the faculty used the collection to teach in different ways—often facilitating student engagement and group discussion, but also encouraging individual reflection. The responses revealed a range of pedagogical approaches and goals, including an interest in materiality, active learning, provocative discussions, and out-of-classroom educational experiences.[13]

Our survey began by asking faculty why they brought their students to LSUAM. What was the added value of teaching and learning with original artworks? Several professors remarked, first of all, about the educational impact of material objects as concrete evidence of the past. Students in a Chinese history course, for example, "get to see in tangible form the material culture of the people we are studying at a particular time."[14] Students in an American history class come to understand that "the primary sources they use … have a tangible material reality, not just a flat reproduced form."[15] Students in an art history course "observe artworks firsthand in order to fully experience the objects. Elements such as texture, scale, and colour cannot be adequately reproduced

10 John Dewey, *Experience and Education*, Kappa Delta Pi Lecture Series (New York: Collier, 1938/1976), 53.

11 Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 321–22.

12 David Kolb, *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1984); see also A. W. Bates, *Teaching in a Digital Age: Guidelines for Designing Teaching and Learning* (Vancouver: Tony Bates Associates, 2019), especially Chapter 3.6. https://opentextbc.ca/teachinginadigitalage/.

13 Klare Scarborough and Miranda Clark-Binder, "Experiential Education in the La Salle University Art Museum," (online survey for La Salle University faculty, September 19, 2019).

14 Charles Desnoyers, response to faculty survey, September 23, 2019.

15 Jonathan Wilson, response to faculty survey, September 21, 2019.

in the classroom. In our image-laden, twenty-first-century world, visual literacy is an important skill that our students must master."[16]

Several faculty pointed out the importance of teaching and learning with material objects within a society saturated with digital images. One history professor noted "by seeing the actual pieces of art up close, they [students] perceive more detail and nuances than by seeing it on a screen. The art museum experience permits students to make original discoveries and interpretations. One of my students last year relied upon his knowledge of construction materials to discover an element of a sketch that the rest of us had not perceived."[17] Another professor recently taught a course entitled "Art in the Age of the Copy" in which "students were given a digital image of a work in the LSUAM collection, asked to make some assumptions about it, and then told to go to the art museum and see if their assumptions held true."[18] In these examples, students brought their personal knowledge to bear in their interpretation of artworks.

Other faculty use the collections on display as a way of provoking discussion about historical as well as contemporary issues. A public health professor, who brings her classes to LSUAM to explore the intersection of art and public health, stated that "the students explore how artists communicate current issues, feelings, perceptions and life that depicts many of the issues we discuss and continue to face in public health. Our sessions at the museum afford them the opportunity to view original artwork in person and have discussions about what is displayed and how it connects to topics covered in class."[19] A professor in a doctoral psychology course wrote that "the art museum visit provides a method of evoking students' emotional reactions about culture, power, and privilege in a way that [classroom] discussion cannot. Also, art is a type of cultural expression that we can view and talk about."[20]

Teaching in the art museum offers many opportunities for enhancing the student's learning experience beyond the classroom. One English professor commented that "there is no better way to show students how culturally important the concept of fertility is in a Ghanaian play set in the nineteenth century than to have students touch the worn-down sections of a [unaccessioned] Ghanaian fertility idol—and no more entertaining moment than seeing their reactions when they realize, after the fact, what the fertility idol they just rubbed is meant to do!" For her students, "the physical presence of a work of art often enables them to see the past as something real and concrete rather than an abstract idea of how things used to be. In doing so, students are better able to make sense of the conceptual ideas we are examining in the literature we read."[21]

---

16 Mey-Yen Moriuchi, response to faculty survey, October 1, 2019.

17 Barbara Allen, response to faculty survey, October 1, 2019.

18 Susan Dixon, response to faculty survey, September 29, 2019.

19 Candace Robertson-James, response to faculty survey, September 23, 2019.

20 Kelly McClure, response to faculty survey, October 1, 2019.

21 Claire Busse, response to faculty survey, October 3, 2019.

Faculty and Student Interaction—Choice and Control

Dewey's educational theories stressed the social and communal role of education, which he described as the "reconstruction or reorganization of experience which adds to the meaning of experience."[22] In Dewey's ideal classroom, the teacher facilitates activities that give students some control over their learning experience, allowing them to make their own discoveries and create their own meaning. As museum educators have noted, the notion of choice and control is a major aspect of the informal learning experience in museums.[23] When faculty take their students out of the classroom and into the galleries of LSUAM, the students often engage in group discussion and in self-directed activities, contributing to more personal relationships among the participants.

Several faculty remarked in the survey on the impact of moving their students out of the classroom and into the museum environment. As one history professor noted,

> students are liberated from the bare block walls of Olney/Hayman's classrooms and suddenly are surrounded by an entire spectrum of visual stimuli. Even students who have visited the museum before seem to gaze anew in wonder at what surrounds them. Since I usually ask them to gather in close when viewing the details of a painting, they are in a much different spatial situation which, in my view, stimulates interaction and discussion. The variety and subject matter often strike them as curious or unsettling and stimulates questions and discussions. Many students remain in the museum to have a further look around after the class is over.[24]

Faculty who engage in one-on-one conversations and group discussions in LSUAM reported that their students are generally more open and forthcoming than in the classroom. One art history professor observed that "students are definitely more talkative, curious, and energized in the museum. Many times they're curious about a detail that seems funny to them. If we can share a laugh about how sour a widow looks, or about a guardsman urinating in a corner of a Dutch genre painting, that humor lowers their defenses and makes it easier to cement our teacher-student bonds on a more personal level."[25] A psychology professor commented, "students are more reflective in the art museum. The student-teacher relationship is also expanded because we get to interact peer-to-peer as learners in the museum."[26] Another art history professor remarked, "there is something easy and perhaps more laid-back to the LSUAM compared to the classroom. Having class in the LSUAM takes me, the professor, out of the standard 'in front of the class' position as we all move through the museum together. I also get to

---

22 Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 89; see also Dewey, *Experience and Education*, 51–56.

23 Falk and Dierking, *Learning from Museums*, especially 85–87, 185–87; Rika Burnham and Elliott Kai-Kee, "Gallery Teaching as Guided Interpretation: Museum Education Practice and Hermeneutic Theory," in *From Periphery to Center: Art Museum Education in the 21st Century*, ed. Pat Villeneuve (Reston: National Art Education Association, 2007), 152–57; and Susan Longhenry, "Reconsidering Learning: The Art Museum Experience," in *From Periphery to Center: Art Museum Education in the 21st Century*, ed. Pat Villeneuve (Reston: National Art Education Association, 2007), 180–87.

24 Desnoyers, response to faculty survey.

25 Catherine Holochwost, response to faculty survey, September 30, 2019.

26 McClure, response to faculty survey.

interact with them one-on-one and in small groups. Students are less intimidated asking questions in this scenario."[27]

Some faculty employed pedagogical approaches which clearly emphasized the element of choice. As one history professor explained, "when I bring students to the art museum, I try to arrange for a variety of activities—individual and group. I think it's important for students to look and notice things on their own and to respond to questions individually. As students observe the same objects, they often have informal conversations with each other. It also gives me the opportunity to check in with students as they wander the galleries. I learn more about the students' thought processes and individual interests this way."[28]

However, other faculty preferred to have a museum educator guide the students through the galleries. One public health professor commented, "I am not knowledgeable about the various artwork and would not feel comfortable leading or facilitating such a conversation. I am better able to chime in or call attention to a particular course concept as the sessions are led by other art museum staff."[29] A philosophy professor who has often invited LSUAM staff to speak to her classes remarked "we have had great exchanges and discussions as a result."[30] With this kind of learning experience, the lesson is guided from beginning to end, offering students an authoritative lecture about art history, with opportunities for questions, but with much less choice.

The Nature of Experience—Active and Passive Elements

Dewey noted that the nature of experience included both active and passive elements "peculiarly combined," such that "We do something to the thing and then it does something to us in return."[31] With experiential learning, he argued, "The senses—especially the eye and ear—have to be employed to take in what the book, the map, the blackboard, and the teacher say … The senses are then regarded as a kind of mysterious conduit through which information is conducted from the external world into the mind; they are spoken of as gateways and avenues of knowledge."[32] Dewey's educational theories about the nature of experience carried over into his aesthetic theories, which posited that for the artist, expression was interwoven with reception. He wrote "The artist embodies in himself the attitude of the perceiver while he works."[33] Informal learning experiences in art museums highlight the interplay of active and passive elements by encouraging

---

27 Siobhan Conaty, response to faculty survey, September 30, 2019.

28 Moriuchi, response to faculty survey.

29 Robertson-James, response to faculty survey.

30 Cornelia Tsakiridou, response to faculty survey, September 27, 2019.

31 Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 163.

32 Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 166.

33 John Dewey, *Art As Experience* (New York: Capricorn, 1934), 48; see also Philip M. Zeltner, *John Dewey's Aesthetic Philosophy* (Amsterdam: Grüner, 1975), 58–77.

viewers to engage their senses, to move around objects and spaces, and to be receptive to their environment.[34]

Several faculty noted in the surveys that bringing students to LSUAM lends itself to active looking as well as active learning, offering potentially transformative educational experiences. One art history professor observed that teaching and learning in galleries involves a more active engagement with her students than in the classroom.

> In the classroom, students are often (although certainly not always) passive receivers of information in front of one big brilliant image projection. In the art museum, they are quieter, at least initially, as they focus on the works of art. But then they begin to start conversations with those standing next to them, other students who are attracted to the same image for some reason and whom they might not be talking to in the classroom. For me, I think it is a much more focused and impactful experience, where I can really talk to them one on one, in front of the work of art, and get at why they like something, what they think it is communicating to them. I can often find out a lot about students in the Art Museum."[35]

She continued, "I usually assign a worksheet with tasks to complete (look at this, find that), but in contrast to the classroom, the students often come away from these experiences energized and intrigued by what they have seen."[36]

Several faculty also commented about their students' aesthetic and emotional responses to artworks, referencing Brother Daniel Burke's idea of the "miraculism" of the viewer's experience, and the idea of original paintings as hints of the divine, expressing transcendent values. One faculty member remarked, "I can't tell you how many times students come to me and show me their favorite painting, or one that disturbs them, or one that makes them think about social issues from a new perspective. One of the best results I find in taking my students to the art museum involves watching them find joy and revelation in looking at beautiful and powerful works of art."[37] Another faculty member observed that "there is sometimes a kind of awed response to some of the more dramatic religious works that might qualify as Brother's idea of 'miraculism'; at the same time it often seems that students have a kind of 'eureka' experience when they see the humanity reflected in works hundreds of years old." A third noted that "Some students are mesmerized by works of art, photograph them and discover a love for art in themselves that they had not seen before."[38]

A public health professor concluded that the experience of teaching and learning in LSUAM can having a lasting positive impact, expanding and even deepening the students' engagement with the subject matter taught in the classroom. She notes that "our discussions [in the galleries] are definitely rooted in the connection of the art and course concepts. After our visit, students identify artwork to write about as they discuss the

---

34 Elliott Kai-Kee, Lissa Latina, and Lilit Sadoyan, *Activity-Based Teaching in the Art Museum: Movement, Embodiment, Emotion* (Los Angeles: J. P. Getty Trust, 2020).

35 Dixon, response to faculty survey.

36 Holochwost, response to faculty survey.

37 Conaty, response to faculty survey.

38 Tsakiridou, response to faculty survey.

artwork's connection to a specific public health issue. They then propose a policy connected to a theme displayed in the artwork." She adds "these experiences have definitely altered students' learning experiences. I have had students express their interest in the intersection of art and public health as a result of this experience. For instance, I have a student who now works with an agency that uses art as a mechanism of voice and expression with individuals with dementia and their caretakers."[39]

Student Reaction Papers

This section highlights a few of the reaction papers that students have written as part of their class visits to the art museum. Several faculty have experimented with their assignments, asking students to select a painting and provide a written response, in some cases prompting them with questions and requiring a sketch of the artwork. These assignments were by nature solitary activities, encouraging students to assess feelings, memories, and associations in front of a work of art. However, the experience itself was communal, as students gathered together before some of the same artworks, holding their clipboards, writing reaction papers, and sharing observations.

When an "Introduction to Art" class visited in fall 2019, the professor handed her students an assignment for a short hand-written reaction paper. She asked her students to "wander through the galleries until you find something that captures your imagination and interest." In her instructions, she provided a bullet list of questions prompting the students to write about their experiences, including "What attracted you to the work you selected? How does the work make you feel? Does the work bring up any memories or relate to you personally? What elements of style have influenced the way you feel about this object?" Afterwards, the students were asked to make a quick sketch of the artwork, then note if they had learned anything through their drawing.

After receiving their assignment, the students separated and wandered off into the galleries. Some of them walked with classmates, while others eagerly explored on their own. Throughout the class, the instructor roamed through the galleries, occasionally checking in with her students, but mostly encouraged them to examine their responses to the artworks around them.

Four of the students ended up in the twentieth-century gallery, in front of a large abstract painting titled *The Yellow Guy,* by Irving Kriesberg. This artwork features a large white bird encircled by six diversely coloured figures who appear to be dancing. The students who selected this painting gathered in front of the canvas holding their clipboards, making occasional remarks to each other, then standing mostly silent as they focused on their writing assignment. A few excerpts from their reaction papers follow.

> The idea of strikingly different figures coming together to dance is fascinating. Quite frankly, the painting excites me, and makes me want to dance … Even though all of the elements clash, the depiction of pure bliss can be made out.[40]

---

39 Robertson-James, response to faculty survey.

40 John, student reaction paper for Yantz, ARTH 150, October 18, 2019.

> This work makes me feel happy and kind of scared at the same time. The colours that the artist used are very fun, but at the same time, the animals are somewhat scary to look at … It seems as though the artist is making these animals have humanistic features … He is also making them look as though they are dancing, which personifies them. It is a mix of happy and evil at the same time.[41]
>
> It reminds me of my childhood drawings of characters from a [television] show or simple drawings in general. This artwork makes me feel intimidated because of the huge bird that is larger than the other creatures around it.[42]
>
> This painting makes me feel happiness with a little bit of fear because it looks like all the figures are having a good time, but the white bird looks like it is going to hunt one of them. The bright colours of this painting really caught my attention and attracted me to it. Also, the shapes of the figures appear to be stretched out and make it appear as [if] the figures are dancing … After drawing this artwork, I noticed even more details than before.[43]

In the nineteenth-century gallery, two students stood in front of Henry Ossawa Tanner's large painting *Mary* (see Fig. 2.1). In their reaction papers, they both responded to the artwork's somber tone and theme.

> This painting of Mary drew my attention immediately when I entered the room because of the sadness … The gathered blankets on the floor next to her with the 'halo' formation over it make me think about motherhood, the agony at the thought of losing a child. Here Mary almost seems to know that she will lose her son Jesus.[44]

> Although it is somber because of the lighting in the room and the expression on Mary's face, there is still an element of joy because Jesus has been born … After drawing this, I realized how open the room is, but all I saw at first was Mary and Jesus. The lighting also conveys where the artist wants us to look and creates a contrast from light to dark.[45]

Nearby in the same gallery, one student sketched a very neat drawing of a sentimental Victorian painting entitled *The Letter*, by Maria Brooks; another wrote a brief reaction paper outlining their responses to the serene autumn landscape depicted in *Delaware Water Gap* by James Lambdin; and a third student wrote a detailed two-page paper, answering every question on the assignment, focusing on a colourful modern landscape painted by an unknown artist in the style of the French Nabis. Other students were scattered through the rest of galleries, writing about artworks from a range of different time periods.

The students were especially interested in the main hallway, which displayed contemporary art in juxtaposition with non-Western objects. Two students stood together in front of Ernesto Yerena's *Our True History*, writing about the woman's intense and intelligent gaze, and reflecting on their own families and cultural roots. Three other stu-

---

41 Charles, student reaction paper for Yantz, ARTH 150, October 18, 2019.

42 Jerry, student reaction paper for Yantz, ARTH 150, October 18, 2019.

43 Bob, student reaction paper for Yantz, ARTH 150, October 18, 2019.

44 Laura, student reaction paper for Yantz, ARTH 150, October 18, 2019.

45 Helen, student reaction paper for Yantz, ARTH 150, October 18, 2019.

Figure 2.1. Students in front of Osawa Tanner painting in galleries of LaSalle University Museum. Photograph courtesy of Miranda Clark-Binder.

dents selected non-Western objects, including a Burmese Mandalay Buddha, a Chinese Ming Dynasty Lion-Dog, and a Nigerian *Ibeji* (twin) statuette.

At the end of the hallway, a student admiring the large *Dancer* by Charles Searles wrote enthusiastically about their cultural heritage. "This painting reminds me of my mother dancing, and the patterns remind me of my African roots … I absolutely love to dance so this picture really grabbed my attention by the movement going on … Then the painting was so open, I felt invited to start dancing in the museum."[46]

In this "Introduction to Art" class, the professor's assignment prompted the students to engage with artworks on emotional as well as analytical levels, with regard to elements of style. In upper level art history courses and more specialized courses in other disciplines, the assignments were often more rigorous. Some faculty have also involved their students in game-like activities within the art museum. Others have asked their students to write ekphrastic poetry, or to split into groups and conduct scavenger hunts through the galleries. These are just a few of the many varied educational opportunities and interactions within LSUAM.

Conclusion

Dewey wrote that "while all thinking results in knowledge, ultimately the value of knowledge is subordinate to its use in thinking. For we live not in a settled and finished world, but in one which is going on, and where our main task is prospective, and where retrospect—and all knowledge as distinct from thought is retrospect—is of value in the solidity, security, and fertility it affords our dealings with the future."[47]

---

46 Donald, student reaction paper for Yantz, ARTH 150, October 18, 2019.

47 Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 177–78.

LSUAM has been a site for critical thinking, spontaneous interactions with original artworks, and pedagogical experimentation since its opening by Brother Daniel Burke in 1975. As it approaches its fiftieth anniversary in 2025, LSUAM remains committed to its Lasallian mission of experiential education. LSUAM continues to provide a safe communal space where faculty and students come together, construct and share meaning, and reflect on their experiences. And sometimes they even dance.

Postscript

With the onset of the global pandemic in March 2020, LSUAM's galleries became quiet and empty of visitors. LSUAM continued to serve La Salle faculty and students, pivoting quickly to provide virtual educational Zoom programs in lieu of in-person visits. These programs offered different kinds of teaching and learning experiences which, in some respects, extended the communal function of the galleries. Without the presence of material objects, lessons often involved a museum educator presenting a slide show with information and images designed to complement course material, followed by questions and comments from faculty and students. Though the environment was more controlled than in the galleries, these virtual learning experiences offered faculty and students opportunities to interact with one another and to learn together, outside of the ordinary virtual class framework.

Select Bibliography

Bates, A. W. *Teaching in a Digital Age: Guidelines for Designing Teaching and Learning*. Vancouver: Tony Bates Associates, 2019. https://opentextbc.ca/teachinginadigitalage/.

Burnham, Rika and Elliott Kai-Kee. "Conversation, Discussion, and Dialogue." In *Teaching in the Art Museum: Interpretation as Experience. E*dited by Rika Burnham and Elliott Kai-Kee, 79–93. Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2011.

——. "Gallery Teaching as Guided Interpretation: Museum Education Practice and Hermeneutic Theory." In *From Periphery to Center: Art Museum Education in the 21st Century*. Edited by Pat Villeneuve, 152–57. Reston: National Art Education Association, 2007.

Dewey, John. *Art As Experience*. New York: Penguin, 1934.

——. *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education*. New York: McMillan, 1916.

——. *Experience and Education*. Kappa Delta Pi Lecture Series. New York: Collier, 1976. First published 1938 by Kappa Delta Pi.

Falk, John H. and Lynn D. Dierking. *Learning from Museums: Visitor Experiences and the Making of Meaning*. Lanham: Altamira, 2000.

Hein, George E. *Learning in the Museum.* New York: Routledge, 1998.

Kai-Kee, Elliott, Lissa Latina, and Lilit Sadoyan. *Activity-Based Teaching in the Art Museum: Movement, Embodiment, Emotion*. Los Angeles: J. P. Getty Trust, 2020.

Kolb, David. *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1984.

Longhenry, Susan. "Reconsidering Learning: The Art Museum Experience." In *From Periphery to Center: Art Museum Education in the 21st Century*. Edited by Pat Villeneuve, 180–87. Reston: National Art Education Association, 2007.