

A National Convening for Teens in the Arts
2010 Education Report

Art & Identity



THE INSTITUTE OF
CONTEMPORARY ART/BOSTON

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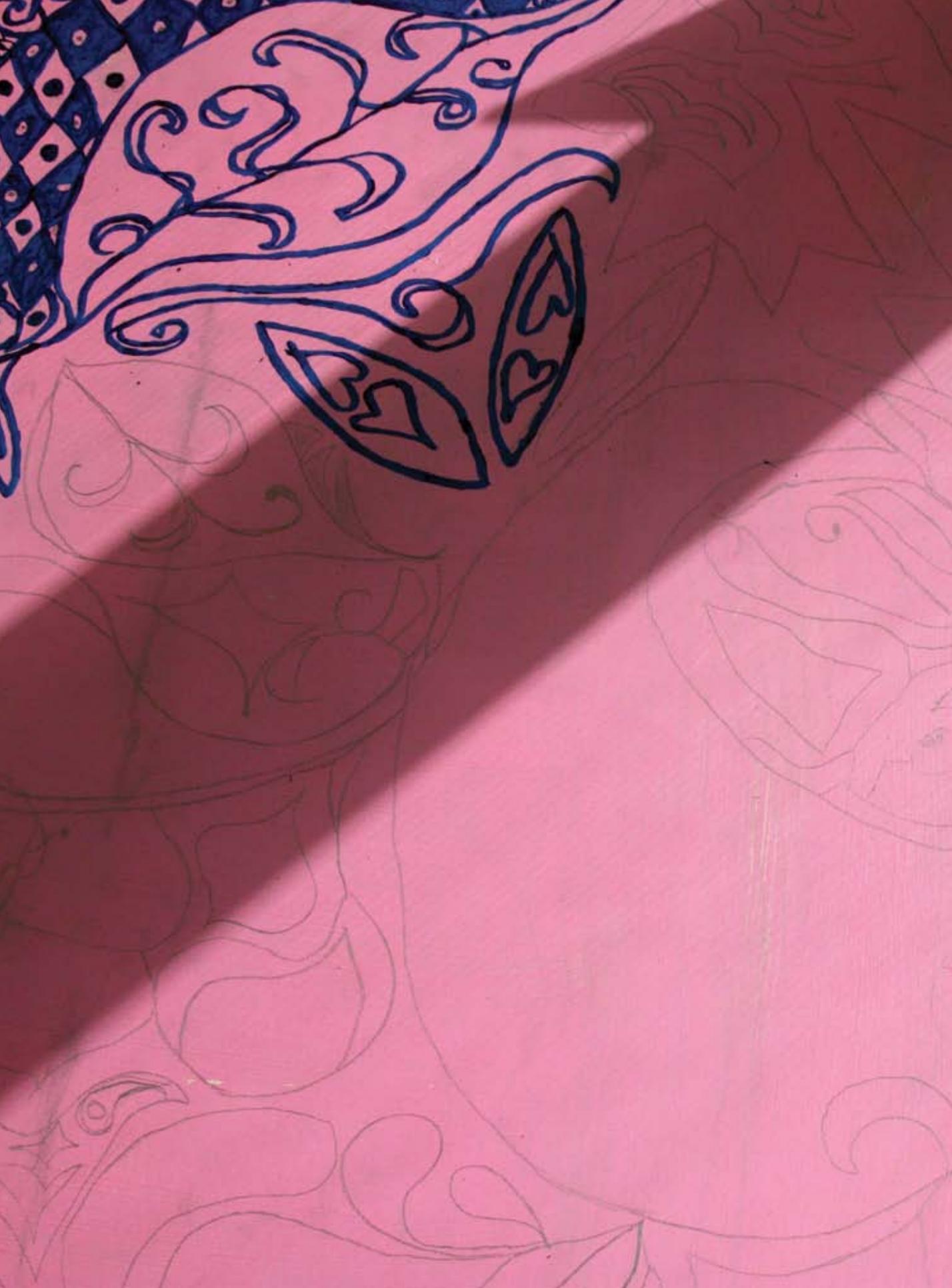


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Introduction

by Jill Medvedow



The 2010 National Convening for Teens in the Arts was the second in a new initiative

launched by the Institute of Contemporary Art/ Boston (ICA) to champion and facilitate teens working together in contemporary art museums and centers. This year, seven organizations from across the country participated, spending three days at the ICA's waterfront location. The participants exchanged ideas, shared experiences, and made friends with other young people with a passion for contemporary art.

This on-site meeting at the ICA followed months of online interaction, resulting in four topics for the convening's teen-led discussions: museums as safe spaces; leadership opportunities in museums; civic engagement and social justice; and education in the twenty-first century. For all of us in attendance, it was thrilling to see adolescents take on some of the most pressing issues of our time. Even more, they were doing so with an impressive intentionality, working across geographic, racial, and gender boundaries, and displaying a determined spirit of collaboration and optimism. At the ICA, teens are both artists and audiences. Now, as a result of these convenings, they have taken their well-earned place as young leaders engaged in their communities.

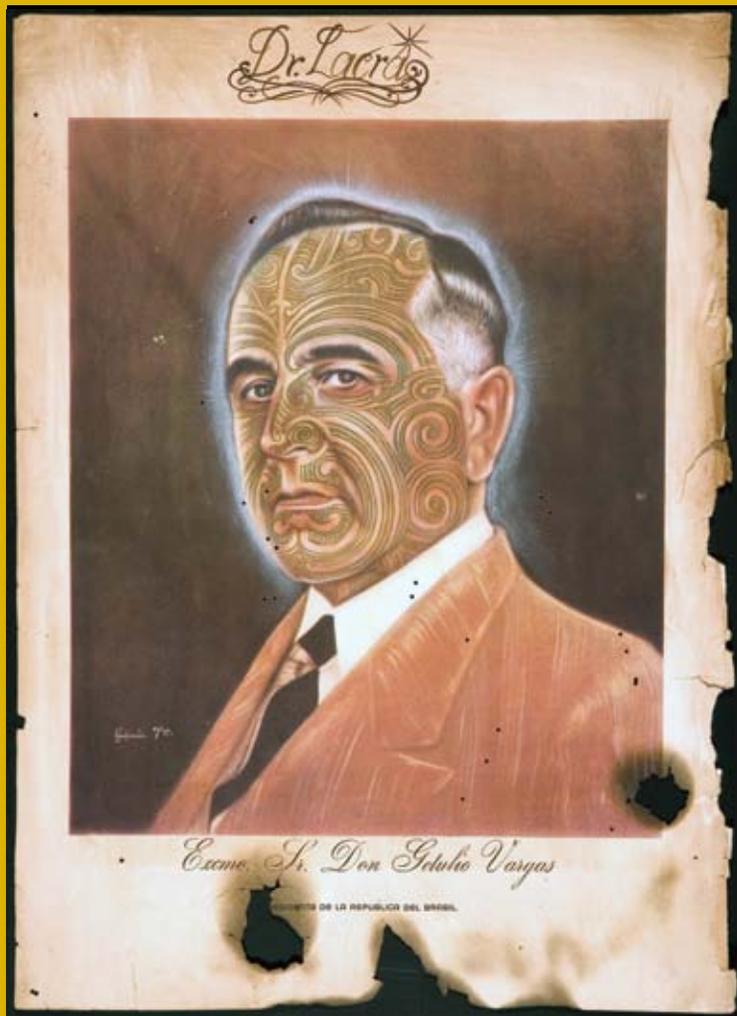
After our initial convening in 2009, we made several changes to deepen the experience of our participants. We expanded the number of participating museums and included two museums whose aim was to establish new teen arts programs. We added a significant professional development component to better serve the adult educators in the group and to ensure that their time in Boston was beneficial to them and to their respective institutions, and we invited all the organizations to contribute to this report. Seeking to introduce the achievements of other teens in Boston, we showcased local teen arts at an opening Teen Night reception. Lastly, we added a six-month evaluation component to the project so that we can better learn from, articulate, and improve our performance at the ICA.

This convening was made possible thanks to generous support from John Hancock Financial Services. We also thank artist Raúl Gonzalez for his contributions to the conference. ICA Teen Arts Council member Donovan Birch and alumna Rhonda Edwards, Director of Programs David Henry, Director of Education Monica Garza, and our former colleagues Rosanna Flouty and Colleen Brogan all made enormous contributions to ensure the success of our 2010 convening. We are grateful to the Bronx Museum of the Arts in New York, the Contemporary Arts Center in New Orleans, Marwen in Chicago, the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, the Seattle Art Museum, and the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York for their time, institutional commitment, and shared dedication to teen arts education. Most importantly, though, the success of the convening was due to the talent, generosity, articulateness, and commitment of the participating teens and educators.

It is clear to us that the teen convening is filling a national need for conversation and community among teens and educators in museums. It is tremendously rewarding to see how meaningful this gathering has been to our peers and how each of the different organizations are taking ideas from the convening and applying them to their own situations. This report offers many of the ideas that were discussed at the 2010 convening; I hope it also provides a sense of the excitement, inspiration, and urgency that permeated the ICA this past August.

-JILL MEDVEDOW, DIRECTOR OF THE INSTITUTE OF CONTEMPORARY ART/ BOSTON

Overview



Dr. Lakra, Sin titulo/Untitled (Don Getulio Vargas), 2006, watercolor and pencil on vintage magazine, 15 1/8 x 11 in. (38.5 x 28 cm), Collection of Geri and Arnie Obler, New York

The Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston (ICA) has long been known as one of the leading

arts-education institutions in the United States. The ICA has dedicated itself to investing in teen education programs in order to create engaged and informed future leaders and arts audiences. The museum believes that contemporary art possesses a unique power to connect with teens; many of the themes at the core of contemporary art—identity, authority, popular culture, and originality—are equally central to the lives of adolescents. The ICA also understands that arts education provides teens with the tools they need to take action and think creatively.

One of the best ways to expose adolescents to the pleasures of reflection, inspiration, provocation, and imagination contemporary art offers is to encourage them to have direct contact with artists. Toward that end, the ICA connects teens with visual artists such as Shepard Fairey and Roni Horn in its galleries, and film and performance artists such as Francis Ford Coppola and Bill T. Jones in its theater. The ICA creates initiatives with important resonances in the lives of teens. But perhaps one of the ICA's greatest contributions to providing and promoting exemplary arts-education opportunities for adolescents is its annual teen convening.

In the summer of 2009, the ICA hosted an unprecedented museum arts-education event called Generation O: A National Convening for Teens in the Arts, inviting five outstanding arts institutions from across the nation to send one educator and two teen representatives to the ICA to share ideas on how museums can better

serve a teen audience. The 2009 participants included the ICA/Boston; Marwen, Chicago; Museum of Contemporary Art/North Miami; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; and Slanguage, a Los Angeles-based art collective. Generation O was unique among such gatherings in that it specifically sought to empower youth as a key voice in arts education.

Looking back, Generation O was a monumental success for the ICA; the participating institutions returned to their own arts-education programs with greater perspective on issues relevant to teens and with insight into how best to adapt the lessons learned. For several months following the 2009 event, the ICA continued conversations with the participants, brainstorming over what a second iteration of the conference might look like. Educators, teens, and the ICA staff identified improvements that could be made, including: inviting a more diverse group of organizations at various stages in their development of teen programs; focusing on quality over quantity in the topics for the second day's discussions; and adding a professional development workshop to the schedule.

The second annual conference, Art & Identity: Making Art to Belong, Making Art to Distinguish Oneself, took place at the ICA from August 11–13, 2010. The theme of the conference was inspired by an exhibition at the ICA featuring the provocative work of Dr. Lakra, an accomplished artist and tattooist, whose art addresses issues of cultural and personal identity via tattoo imagery—symbols that can represent both individuality and group



affiliation. The tension between these two poles mirrors the struggle many teens face as they form their own identity.

Seven institutions representing diverse communities, unique challenges, and exemplary teen programs were invited to the 2010 teen convening. Participating organizations in the conference included the Bronx Museum of the Arts in New York, the Contemporary Arts Center | New Orleans (CACNO), the Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston (ICA), Marwen in Chicago, the Seattle Art Museum (SAM), the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, and the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York. In addition, Boston-based artist and educator Raúl Gonzalez joined the group to share his experiences in working with youth. The Seattle Art Museum brought a West Coast perspective lacking in the 2009 teen convening, and the Contemporary Arts Center | New Orleans—still addressing the emotional and personal tragedy of Hurricane Katrina in their public programs—was able to share their experiences in addressing controversial issues and emotional healing in teen programming.

During the four weeks leading up to the 2010 teen convening, ICA teens hosted preliminary online discussions, achieving greater participation from teens and museum educators than they had the year before. The online discussions provided

a unique opportunity for teens and museum educators to develop and refine topics to be discussed at the convening, to share their opinions, and to build a foundation of respect for each other and for the convening. Based on these online conversations, the participants decided to focus on four main topics: civic engagement, leadership, museums as safe spaces, and education in the twenty-first century.

On Wednesday August 11, 2010, the convening began with presentations delivered by the museum educator and teen representatives from each organization. The day also included breaks to tour the Dr. Lakra exhibition in the ICA galleries. The presentations gave teens and educators a chance to share their personal connections and experiences in their respective institutions and to connect the convening's key topics to their specific programs.

On Wednesday evening, the ICA Teen Arts Council hosted a Summer Teen Night in honor of the teen convening, with over two hundred teens from Boston participating in the evening's activities, including teen-led exhibition tours and performances by Boston youth groups.

On the second day, the teen convening attendees participated in an art-making activity with Raúl Gonzalez in the Bank of America Art Lab. Afterward they convened for the four teen-driven discussion sessions. Although the discussions were whittled down from seven topics in 2009, each of the four questions included two to three parts and were formulated to encourage participants to think deeply about the relationship of the topics to their own programs.

On day three, the ICA Teen Arts Council took the teen representatives on a tour of Boston's South End neighborhood, while the museum educators met for a professional development roundtable. The roundtable was designed to build upon the teen-driven conversations by brainstorming practical, functional changes for advancing programming and identifying issues of shared concern. ICA Director of Programs David Henry, Harvard scholar Edward Clapp, Marwen

Executive Director Antonia Contro, and Seattle Art Museum Deputy Director for Education + Public Programs/Adjunct Curator Sandra Jackson Dumont led the discussion.

ICA Fast Forward alumni program participants made use of their filmmaking skills to document and photograph the event, and they represented the ICA at the work session discussions and presentations. The end result of the extensive planning and collaboration was a more inclusive event that at every stage highlighted the opinions values and skills of teens.

In order to measure the overall impact of the conference on its participants, the ICA is currently collaborating with outside consultant Julia Gittleman of Mendelsohn, Gittleman & Associates on a rigorous six-month study. Gittleman is using written and online surveys and conducting phone interviews to collect qualitative and quantitative data from the three levels of participants: teens, museum educators, and institutions (via senior staff that approved their organization's participation). Gittleman's research is scheduled to conclude in March 2011.

Chapter five of this report—Lessons Learned—begins to illustrate how attendees are already reflecting on their participation in the 2010 convening. One point of consensus has been that it cannot be overstated how rewarding it is for a young person to be selected to represent

their institution, to travel to a new city, to spend three days with teens who enjoy similar interests, and to have their opinions honestly valued. For museum educators, on the other hand, networking and participating in an intergenerational dialogue proved to be especially meaningful. Organizations such as the Contemporary Arts Center in New Orleans, Seattle Art Museum, and Whitney Museum of American Art all appreciated having an opportunity to learn about the diverse programs other museums offer to teens. As New Orleans indicated, “the convening illustrated how art brings together a diverse group of people and still allows everyone to have an individual voice.”

Organizing two national conferences for teens and museums has provided the ICA with new opportunities to expand its work in teen arts education. The knowledge gathered from these events has proven invaluable for the professional development of the educators, whose opportunities for training in afterschool arts education are otherwise limited. In addition, giving teens the responsibility for leading discussions, shaping the conference activities, and determining the direction for future programs presents them with yet another way to take action and think creatively at the ICA.

(Please refer to the appendix for a more detailed schedule of the 2010 teen convening.)



Convening Participants



The Bronx Museum of the Arts

Founded in 2005 and designed to make contemporary art and culture accessible to urban youth, the Teen Council at The Bronx Museum of the Arts is structured around the production of MuseCasts—video podcasts available on YouTube—and MuseZines, a graphic publication of original work and commentary by a small group of high school students (or Teen Council members) working closely with instructors in the media lab. In addition, the Teen Council participates in the museum's ongoing series of interviews with contemporary artists and in field trips to various nonprofit organizations and art institutions to generate ideas for future MuseCasts and MuseZines. Held during the academic calendar, this program provides twelve teens with an open forum for exchanging ideas and engaging in dialogue on issues affecting young people. The program also helps to promote the Bronx as an important cultural, political, and artistic force.

Contemporary Arts Center | New Orleans

Since its inception in 2009, the CAC Teen Board has been committed to providing a platform for teens to express their voices and share their creativity. The CAC Teen Board provides teens with resources and support to create and exhibit

multidisciplinary artwork. Teens connect with local artists, professionals, and like-minded peers to complete each project, gaining different perspectives on the contemporary art world. Projects include everything from graphic design to curating exhibitions to creating films and putting on performances. The CAC Teen Board also organizes workshops to connect other local teens with professional artists. Workshops have included artists such as Lionel Milton and Miss Pussycat.

The CAC Teen Board's mission is to promote teens' cultural development by enabling them to become leaders in their own arts education. This mirrors the mission of the CAC, which is focused on the presentation, production, and promotion of the art of our time, and to initiating and encouraging collaboration among diverse artists, institutions, communities, and supporters.

The Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston

Founded in 1997, the teen programs at the ICA have grown from a small video production course in the museum's basement to an industry leader and central part of the ICA's core mission. The Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston offers a variety of free and paid programs for high school students, including school tours, Teen Arts Council (TAC), Teen Nights, and Teen New Media programs in video, animation, music, and digital image design, which serve over six thousand teens in Boston each year. The Teen Arts Council is a group of motivated high school teens

that develops and promotes creative events and opportunities at the museum to connect teens to contemporary art and to each other. Teen Nights are ICA art happenings organized and promoted for teens by teens. TAC plans the events, which can include artist talks, workshops, performances, art-making activities, and other creative projects designed to expose teens to contemporary art. Fast Forward is a year-long advanced video and audio production program. Students gather weekly for focused new media art making, culminating with a major screening of their work at the ICA and distribution to youth film festivals. WallTalk is the ICA's in-school art and writing program, reaching over two hundred teens a year in Boston middle and high schools.

Marwen

Marwen is a nonprofit arts organization dedicated to inspiring and educating underserved youth through the visual arts. The organization was founded in 1987 and is unique among the participants of the teen convening in that it is not connected to a museum but a nonprofit entirely dedicated to youth arts education. Marwen offers free studio art programs, college planning, and career development services for underserved Chicago public school students grades 6–12. Marwen also has Alumni Programs focused on its college-age graduates. With a focus on comprehensive studio art instruction and higher education and career development goals, Marwen offers more than eighty-five courses and serves students from more than two hundred thirty schools each year. Each term ends with students evaluating the effectiveness of the courses and with a student-work exhibition in the Susan and Steve Berkowitz Gallery. Marwen also offers its most dedicated students an opportunity to explore a more independent style of art making through a longer term program called the Marwen Lab, which runs for three terms and culminates in its own exhibition. Embedded in all of Marwen's programming are opportunities for students to engage with a series of exhibitions of emerging artists hosted in Marwen's Untitled Gallery.

Seattle Art Museum

The goal of the Seattle Art Museum's (SAM) Teen Programs is to provide free, engaging experiences for teens across a range of commitment-levels. Our programs include: ART ATTACK: Teen Night Out; Teen Advisory Group (TAG); and Teen Workshops. SAM offers young people outside the school environment opportunities to meet and collaborate with prominent visual artists; express their ideas in discussions; participate in tours and studio workshops; and much more. TAG participants engage in timely, issue-based discussions that connect the art on view with lived experiences of youth. They gain important leadership and critical-thinking skills and earn community-service hours. Participating in SAM Teen Programs is a great way for teenagers to shape public events for their peers, collaborate with contemporary artists, and meet teens from around the city.

Walker Art Center

The Walker Teen Programs foster meaningful connections between youth and innovative contemporary artists through teen art workshops, exhibitions and showcases, and internships. The centerpiece of the programs is the Walker Art Center Teen Arts Council, a diverse group of twelve high school students who meet weekly to spearhead events and design programs for other youth in their community. The Walker is dedicated to providing opportunities for youth to engage in contemporary art forms through after-school programs.

Whitney Museum of American Art

Since 1997, the Whitney Museum of American Art has offered a variety of after-school programs, tours, events, and internship opportunities for diverse New York City high school students through Youth Insights (YI). By offering unprecedented access to art, artists, and the museum



itself, YI programs provide a framework for teens to exchange ideas, learn, collaborate, and develop a sustained engagement with American art and culture.

The Whitney currently offers two semester-long after-school programs each spring and fall for tenth- through twelfth-grade students: YI Artists and YI Writers. The YI Artists program brings teens together with contemporary artists, providing opportunities to work collaboratively, discuss art critically, think creatively, and make art inspired by this exchange. In the YI Writers program, teens work closely with contemporary artists to explore the connections between art and text through critical and creative writing and art making. Teens that complete either of these programs are eligible to apply for the YI Summer Intensive program, an introduction to careers in the arts and the museum field, and the YI Leaders program, a year-long paid internship program in the Whitney education department. Teens in YI Leaders learn to develop and lead tours of the museum, plan programs and events, create

interpretive materials, and manage the Whitney's teen blog. In addition, YI graduates are eligible for Contemporary Community internships, in which they serve as teaching assistants in our partnership with the Regent Family Residence, a transitional housing facility for families in need.

The Whitney is dedicated to supporting a well-integrated teen program within the museum. This program structure offers teens opportunities for extended engagement and challenging new experiences, and it also inspires teens to find and share their artistic voices and unique perspectives on American art.

Raúl Gonzalez

Raúl Gonzalez was born in El Paso, Texas, and grew up going back and forth between El Paso and Ciudad Juárez, México. In 2009, Gonzalez received an award from the Artadia Foundation for Art and Culture. He was voted Boston's best visual artist for 2010 by readers of the Boston Phoenix. His work has been exhibited widely in the Northeast, including at the Drawing Center in New York, the Aidekman Gallery at Tufts University in Medford, MA, and at the Mills Gallery at the Boston Center for the Arts in Boston, as well as on the West Coast at the SCION Installation in Los Angeles. He is currently working on his first large-scale public commission, a mural sponsored by the Boston Arts Commission to be installed in the neighborhood of East Boston in 2011. Gonzalez is committed to introducing youth to the visual arts and has taught in the education departments of the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Gonzalez has been selected to collaborate with over one hundred twenty-five youth from all over the city of Boston to create a work titled, "and their families," to be shown in the Linde Family Wing of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston in the spring of 2011. Gonzalez lives in Somerville, MA, with his wife, Elaine Bay, and their infant son Raúl, IV. He is represented by Carroll and Sons, Boston.

Topic-Based Discussions



On the second day of the teen convening, participants discussed four complicated and provocative issues in museum education. Teens and museum educators alike shared their unique perspectives, but the conversation was primarily teen driven and moderated by ICA Teen Arts Council member Christian Allen and Fast Forward student Chavella Lee.

1. Museums as Safe Spaces: How are museums creating “safe spaces” for teens to explore sexual, gender, and racial identity? As museums seek to attract more diverse audiences, what can they do to extend programming to teens? What new tools/languages are being created by teens to describe these explorations?

“When I first came to museums, I felt like museums offered pieces of art without any bias. They just want you to interpret for yourself, and that’s the most important thing for you, as the viewer. The openness and the respect of opinions creates a safe space.”

—**OGÉ**, WHITNEY MUSEUM TEEN

“In my opinion and experience with contemporary art museums, the museums really make an effort to bring in diverse artists with a diverse range of perspectives. You can always find something to identify with in each of the artists, or if you can’t that’s even more powerful.”

—**KAITLYN**, WALKER ART CENTER TEEN

The conversation on museums as safe spaces explored many possible boundaries of the concept. Teens agreed that museum galleries were a safe and neutral ground where everyone had the opportunity for self-expression and critical thinking. Yet, while teens agreed that museums on the whole were safe places for ideas and self-expression, they noted that museums don’t always represent different groups equally; teen representative Kaitlyn Andrews from the Walker Art Center argued that she would like to see more transgender representation in contemporary art museums. Teen representatives agreed that they personally felt supported and safe in museums but understood that the majority of their peers felt alienated by the institutions or felt museums weren’t a place for them. Teens brainstormed ways to get their peers excited and involved in museums, such as better advertising, advocacy, and outreach. Teen representative Will Freeman from the Walker talked about providing “universally relevant” programming. Libby Vieira da Cunha, museum educator from the Contemporary Arts Center | New Orleans, advocated for student curating as a way to bring teens into the museum.

2. Leadership Opportunities in Museums: Many organizations cite leadership skills as a key goal for teen programs in museums. Are leadership skills a driving reason for teens who seek out museum experiences in the first place? What does leadership mean to a teen? What leadership opportunities are available in museum programming, and what opportunities do teens crave? How might a teen perspective change the way we speak about our programs, whether online, in schools, or beyond?

"I consider myself a leader... Maybe it's just a lifestyle, making people question things deeper than they normally would, I do that and I consider that a great leadership skill."

—**CHAVELLA**, ICA TEEN

"I don't think leadership skills are a driving reason why teens seek out museum experiences, but it's rather something you build unconsciously when you're participating in the program."

—**SEON**, WHITNEY MUSEUM TEEN

Most teens agreed that they had not initially pursued leadership skills when they got involved in the museum, but that those skills had evolved over time. The only exceptions were two ICA teens who said they were attracted to the ICA programs specifically for the leadership opportunities they provided. Many teens struggled to define leadership and to differentiate the leadership in a museum from other kinds of leadership. According to many of the teens, leadership in a museum requires more creativity and an artistic aesthetic and less politics or "fake" attitudes or power. Danielle Linzer, the museum educator from the Whitney, asked if the teens thought it would be effective to use "leadership opportunities" and "life skills" as advertising techniques for young people, instead of "free food!" and "fun games!" The group concluded that the term leadership was intimidating and might scare away teens who need a safe space such as a museum to grow and learn to be a leader. With that, the teens and educators started to explore other terms for leader, such as "mentor," "ambassador," and "vigilante of self-empowerment."

3. Civic Engagement and Social Justice: Many museum educators are using terms such as "civic engagement" and "social consciousness" to describe mission-based programming. What do civic engagement and social consciousness mean to a teen? How can museums best integrate these terms into their missions? Should museum programs be focused on social justice issues? How do these ideas resonate with teens?

"I think the neat thing about using art as a means of civic engagement is that art is, in my mind, another medium for communication, such as a newspaper or anything else, and that the cool thing museums or any art place can offer is showing that you can spread these ideas or spread awareness about a certain social justice issue through art."

—**KAITLYN**, WALKER ART CENTER TEEN

"If you are at a museum that really values social justice issues, or by contrast a museum that only deals with ancient history and not contemporary issues, it really differs in what you show and share to the community. Talking about what it is you value and what you pay attention to defines social justice."

—**CHRISTIAN**, ICA TEEN

Defining social justice and civic engagement was difficult for the teens, but they each offered a unique perspective. The broad consensus among the teens was that civic engagement was about community and neighborhood issues and that social justice was about human rights and larger, global issues. Teens stressed how important contemporary art was to bringing awareness to important, controversial issues. They described contemporary art as emotional, tragic, relevant, visual, and poignant, and more effective in approaching difficult issues than either words or politics. Teens offered suggestions of ways to make the museum more civically engaged: Chavella, a teen representative and graduate of the Fast Forward video production program at the ICA, suggested taking the programs outside of the institution and offering activities, talks, screenings, exhibitions, and events in public parks, neighborhoods, and schools. The discussion then led to how teens were being taught

social justice issues at school, and many admitted that they had no education of any kind in the topic. Some of those who did felt that what they were taught had a liberal bias and they admitted they were suspicious that they weren't getting the whole picture. Many acknowledged that they did not expect social justice to be a focal point of a museum's mission, but they agreed it was a great idea to make it one, since contemporary art is so relevant to today's issues.

4. Education in the 21st Century: What are museums contributing to teen education in the twenty-first century? What is the relationship between museums and other sources of art education for teens? Is it necessary to attend art school to become an artist? For adults, how do museums interface with schools and other after-school programs?

"Museums seem to be making an impact by offering an alternative. Statewide and nationally, schools are being held to the standard of standardized testing. Museums offer an alternative and offer different ideas, I don't know if it's presenting facts about anything, but it's presenting different ways of interpreting information."

—ADRIANA, WALKER ART CENTER EDUCATOR

"I know public schools really put the pressure on museums or outside programs to make up for what they lack. I've heard about so many awesome programs with Joe and Rosanna [ICA staff], and I'm grateful, but I feel like these programs for teens should be promoted where all the teens are, in the schools. Because there are so many who have no idea what's going on, and that's just sad."

—CHAVELLA, ICA TEEN

"If we just define art as painting or drawing, we're ignoring great films, books, and dances. I think by broadening our definition of art and introducing it in the museums and in classrooms, we can get people thinking about different careers, not just art making."

—RAÚL, ARTIST AND EDUCATOR

This was a very heated topic on the discussion forums on the Spruz website preceding the event, and teens and museum educators alike came to the convening prepared to share their opinions. The discussion started out with descriptions of how museums are being "tapped to fill the gap" left by public schools, as described by Rosanna Flouty of the ICA. Teens voiced their appreciation for the learning environment in museums; the words they used to describe learning in a museum context were "organic," "critical," "exploratory," and they liked that museums were more about "self-discovery" than test taking and good grades. Students were also enthusiastic about opportunities for alternative learning structures, such as intergenerational programming or classes on nontraditional subjects, such as DJing or using Photoshop, an idea advocated by Chavella, a teen representative from the ICA. From there the group moved on to a more abstract discussion about how art and art education were not given value in public school systems. Museum educators and teens alike called for a new language: teens wanted a new way to express the skills and empowerment they gained from art, and educators wanted a new way to discuss the value of their programs to schools, administrators, and even parents.

In general, the teens proved that they were craving support. They expressed enthusiasm and curiosity for Marwen's arts education curriculum, which offered classes in money management and college applications, alongside the more traditional art courses.

The discussion ended with access and advertising: teens suggested starting student outreach councils or student ambassador programs focused specifically on recruiting, outreach, and awareness. They proposed that documentaries and videos could be particularly dynamic mediums with which to express the value of the programs.

Discussions with Museum Educators



On the third and final day of the convening, the museum educators met without the teens for a professional development roundtable to talk about next steps the museum administrators, educators, and teen program managers should take to go forward with the lessons learned from the teen convening. Led by Sandra Jackson Dumont, Antonia Contro, and Edward Clapp and moderated by David Henry, the museum educators posed questions to the panel and discussed as a group thought-provoking issues that had arisen during the second day's teen-driven discussions, and debated the best ways to make effective changes based on the lessons learned.

1. How can we promote the value of teen arts education? Are partnerships with schools key? Are there other ways?

"I would love to see arts organizations and schools doing more advocacy work together. Quite often the schools are just as equally interested in getting something from the museum. We chronically

undervalue education in this country, and we have to think what would we do differently when the schools have their hands tied."

–DAVIDA, SEATTLE ART MUSEUM EDUCATOR

"What if we thought differently about partnership: we think of partnerships with bureaucracy, but we don't think about relationships with the student body."

–SANDRA, SEATTLE ART MUSEUM ADMINISTRATOR

When discussing effective partnerships, the educators brought up important terms such as agency, autonomy, ambassadorship, and bureaucracy. Educators agreed that the most successful programs gave teens agency and autonomy in recruiting and organizing events. Some of the more experienced museum educators stressed rethinking the term "partnership": Sandra Jackson Dumont from the Seattle Art Museum wanted museums to think about partnering with the head of the student body or the student council instead of with the school bureaucracy; Marie Lamb from the Contemporary Arts Center | New Orleans urged the educators to think about partnering with individual teachers rather than with the statewide departments of education. The educators concluded that partnerships were fruitful and promising but stressed that they must rethink their approach to choosing school leaders with whom to make contact.

2. Does anyone feel young people with whom they work have a unique generational perspective? Does this create a barrier or a unique opportunity?

"'Broadcast learning,' where you stand up in front of the classroom as a teacher and the students receive information one way, is a thing of the past. Now there are multiple conversations, and we need to take that into consideration when we're in learning environments."

—EDWARD, HARVARD UNIVERSITY SCHOLAR

"We are no longer the holders of the knowledge; the kids are sharing knowledge with us, and I find that's fun to engage."

—JOE, ICA EDUCATOR

This was a fascinating question for the museum educators, who ranged greatly in age, background and experience. Each identified with the generational barrier in a different way. The discussion broke naturally in two parts: the first was focused primarily around digital natives (these people were born and raised with a high familiarity of digital technology) and how to make best use of tools in a digital age. Antonia Contro from Marwen stressed that part of the mission of arts educators should be to slow kids down and get them thinking critically about their world. Teens also needed to learn the importance of patience in making good artwork. Joe Douillette, Fast Forward program manager at the ICA, pointed out that educators are no longer the "bearers of knowledge," and that education is more of a shared exchange—that can be something fun to play with, but also can take you [the teacher] off the pedestal. All educators discussed the challenges of their jobs, their audiences, and their teens, and shared moments in which they had been forced to rethink or relearn ways to teach and educate on the job.

In the second part of the discussion, David Henry asked if the museum educators in the room felt adequately educated and prepared for their careers. Almost all, hesitantly, said no. They agreed that a background in art history or visual



art did not prepare them for the realities of working with youth, but they also contended that a background in social work or psychology did not prepare them to fit into the museum's larger mission. Edward Clapp voiced a need for a field-wide, nationwide journal or effort to "professionalize" after-school programming.

3. Facebook has been a powerful tool for the field, but it reveals a lot of private information. How do others address social networking sites with the youth they work with?

"We talk about this all the time, and how in the teens' professional lives they are going to be Googled for jobs and colleges and nobody else is really talking to them about that. I don't think they're getting that reality check in school. These traces are going to be available, and you don't know how they're going to be used. We need to keep a healthy perspective about Facebook."

—ROSANNA, ICA EDUCATOR

"You are the media!"

—SANDRA, SEATTLE ART MUSEUM ADMINISTRATOR

The question and challenge of Facebook brought the educators back to the digital natives discussion, and in particular, the debate over how to maintain a professional relationship with teens in an increasingly open age. Educators discussed with their teens how difficult it is to juggle a professional and private life, and how the educators themselves struggle with educating “best practices” on the Internet. Rosanna Flouty from the ICA talked about how most students had very little understanding of the Internet and the fact that “everything is permanent.” Colleen Brogan, from the ICA, added that in the age of digital identities and “Googling” for future jobs, the younger generation should be taught how to craft their own digital identity and not just be passive users. “You are the media!” exclaimed Sandra Jackson Dumont. Many of the other educators agreed, but felt wary and unprepared themselves to educate teens on all the risks and potential benefits of the Internet. As a consequence, many of them decided to err on the side of caution, encouraging their teens—as Antonia Contro suggested—to “slow down” and think about process and consequences.

4. How do you create an acceptance of teen programs within the institution, beyond the fact that you can bring in grant funding? Do people find this to be an issue in their institutions? Do you feel like you are a separate organization within an organization?

“I’m also aware of how we have a meta-level job to do. That interests me and I know it interests all of you: changing the face of how visual art and teens are being perceived in general by the world at large.”

—ANTONIA, MARWEN ADMINISTRATOR

“We track the impact of our program on teens, but we don’t track the impact of the teen programs on the greater institution. We know the sales go up in the restaurant and in the museum shop when we offer a program. You need to compare how the program impacts the institution beyond the teens.”

—SANDRA, SEATTLE ART MUSEUM
ADMINISTRATOR

The focus of the fourth question was value for teen arts-education programming in the greater museum institution. Educators brought their different experiences to the table to help their colleagues understand the best ways to market and represent their programs in their respective institutions and on grant applications. These issues changed the tone of the conversation: the first three questions had related to best practices as educators, while the fourth question asked how best to survive as an educator in an institution not entirely dedicated to youth education.

When asked how to make the program seem more valuable beyond just bringing in good funding, many talked about the stress and pressure of grants and grant writing for the programs and about ambassadorship within the museums. They also discussed different tactics for making the teen programs more valuable within the institution at large. Sandra Jackson Dumont suggested that responsibility should be put on the students to represent the programs in front of board meetings and all-staff meetings, and Edward Clapp pointed out that the teens shouldn’t be seen as “second-class citizens” within a museum, because they brought in the exact audience the institution craves: young, hip, urban, culturally involved, and engaged.

Other suggestions included tracking how teen programs influence the finances and programs of the institution at large, not just within the education department. Nevertheless, everyone involved agreed that the value of grants should not be belittled. Grants are valuable and necessary, but efforts should be made to ensure that programs aren’t terminated when funding diminishes. Sustainability, relevance, and momentum were key ideas and terms in the conclusion of the fourth and final discussion.

Lessons Learned



(Professional titles reflect positions held by participants during the conference)

The Bronx Museum of the Arts

By Hannie Chia, Coordinator for Group Visits and Family Programs and Co-Instructor for Teen Council; and Cynthia Roman and Frank Rodriguez, Teen Council alumni

The 2010 National Convening for Teens in the Arts proved to be an inspiring experience for us at The Bronx Museum of the Arts (BxMA)—especially for us personally, as teens and as an educator. Having the opportunity to converse with representatives from varying institutions throughout the nation brought to our attention the unique programming offered around the country and the exceptional individuals who create and participate in them. The convening allowed for each institution to bring up the issues they faced, to discuss them, and to talk about the programs and events they had successfully implemented.

Reflecting upon the convening, each BxMA representative gained a new perspective on teen involvement in museums and the importance of meeting other institutions from across the nation. For BxMA teen representative Frank Rodriguez, interacting with his peers and learning why they do what they do was extremely illuminating and important. Cynthia Roman, another teen representative, found that the experience solidified her dedication to museums. She hopes to continue

her relationship with teens as she steps into the next chapter in her life—college. As for the educator, Hannie Chia, the experience has affirmed her belief that teens are an important asset for museums, and that they are able to offer new and fresh perspectives. After the convening, the three of us discussed how we could integrate some of the discussions and newfound ideas into BxMA's Teen Council. Cynthia and Frank even had the opportunity to sit down with the museum's executive staff to present their ideas and to suggest changes that could benefit Teen Council and the museum as a whole. As one of their first initiatives, both teens are currently in the process of establishing an alumni network to connect past Teen Council members.

In the upcoming years, the Bronx Museum would like to see Teen Council take a more active role in the museum and in the immediate community beyond the current projects: MuseZines, MuseCasts, and artist interviews. In an even larger context, the museum hopes to connect teens from across the nation and possibly the world to Teen Council via the Internet by building a website that will be launched later this year. As the convening did for the teens and educators prior to the Boston meet-up, the Bronx Museum would also like to have the future website serve as an open forum for teens to discuss significant teen issues as well as to share their ideas through the arts. With the help of our colleagues and teens across the nation in museum teen programs, we look forward to seeing these ideas come into fruition within the next few years.



Contemporary Arts Center | New Orleans

Marie Lamb, Director of Education; Libby Vieira da Cunha, Teen Board Coordinator; and Carlie Peters and Taylor Milton, CAC Teen Board members

The Contemporary Arts Center in New Orleans was honored to be a participant of the ICA National Convening for Teens in the Arts after only our first year of teen board programming. Our initial anticipation and excitement for the convening was immediately satiated by the energy, responsiveness, and openness of all the participants. We found exchanging ideas with such a diverse group to be insightful and inspirational. The topics we addressed were important issues not often discussed with youth directly. On a personal level, Taylor and Carlie were thrilled to meet other teens from different areas with similar interests and passions. Carlie thought “that hearing the different ideas other people had on the same topic was a really great experience,” and Taylor was inspired by how much more outreach we can do to better our community. The experience changed our perceptions of the relationship between teens and museums and what teen programming can offer. Seeing the array of different programming at each institution was particularly useful to us as such a young program. There were a lot of great, inspirational projects, such as the zine produced by the Bronx Museum and Teen Nights hosted by the ICA, which we have decided to recreate at the Contemporary Arts Center. The convening illustrated how art brings together a diverse group of people and still allows everyone to have an individual voice.

The Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston

David Henry, Director of Programs; Rosanna Flouty, Associate Director of Education; Christian Allen, Teen Arts Council member; Chavella Lee, Fast Forward participant; and Colleen Brogan, Teen Programs intern

As host, the teen convening represents for the ICA the climax of months of planning. The anxiety that the youth from other cities must feel in anticipation of going to a new city and meeting new people is, for us, the anxiety over logistical details and concern that our guests feel their time has been well spent. This year we had high expectations, because Generation O, the first teen convening, was such an incredible success. Still, we learned a great deal from the earlier convening and made a number of improvements, most notably, the addition of a Teen Night organized by our Teen Arts Council and highlighting young artists from a range of other Boston organizations, a professional development session specifically for the educators in the group, and more rigorous and compelling online discussions. While we take pride in having created a new, national model for teen-driven conversations it is the engagement with our peers from around the country that makes our efforts worthwhile. We can no longer





imagine talking about the role of museums and their potential for engaging young people without a “young person” at the table. The input of the participants this summer, including the Boston youth at the teen night, has reaffirmed our commitment to welcoming new voices at the ICA across generations, across neighborhoods, and across programs.

Marwen

Arielle Bielak, Coordinator of Alumni Programs & Exhibitions; Elvira Valencia and Gabriel Anaya, Marwen students

Marwen representatives are proud to say that they are constantly reminded of the ICA experience and of the myriad voices and concordances that left them feeling enlightened. There we all were, a group of educators, artists, and lovers of art converging to discuss issues larger than any of us individually. The ICA Teen Night was an event that really made us aware of the importance of teen programs in museums and art centers. All the groups at the convening were filled with members excited to see the possibilities of their art making and the potential that a physical space has to communicate visual expression. This allowed us to see how every one of our teens

has been immensely impacted by our respective programs and in many ways have developed into more confident young adults. Professionally, Arielle says she has gained a new perspective on the inner workings of museums and specifically how Marwen works: “Previously I had seen Marwen simply from the eyes of a student. I understand how/why certain programs work and the logistics of it all.”

We would like to see Marwen expand its student-driven programming opportunities and cultivate more consistent communication with staff and students from the other participating organizations. The community and culture that we manifested on a national level at the convening felt inspiring and necessary. Arielle says, “It is crystal clear to me that we should be offering more opportunities for our students to work with artists, to interview them, and to see their artwork at the same time.” The convening came in a timely manner for Marwen. Coinciding with strategic planning efforts, the collaborative process in our exhibition workgroups transformed by what Arielle learned in Boston, and the goals and programs that we are articulating together are clearer as a result. Our goals to bring a greater awareness to the public of our programs, to involve students more deeply in the learning process of exhibitions, and to integrate artists more fully into our educational programs are all being articulated and will likely be put into practice.

Seattle Art Museum

C. Davida Ingram, Manager, Teen, Family and Community Programs; Amy Stromme, Teen Advisory Group alumna; and Jonathan Hong, Teen Advisory Group member

SAM Teen Programs had a huge “take away” from the ICA teen convening. The experience was engaging and transformative. Teen rep Amy shared that “the ICA convening was without a doubt the most significant thing I did all summer, if not this year. In one four-day trip I met and befriended brilliant and artistic students; participated in an enthusiastic forum where I got to make my thoughts known; and [delivered] a

presentation in Boston, MA.” Jon explained that being part of the ICA teen convening gave him an opportunity to “see new things and learn new ideas; simply engaging with fellow museum teens from across the country broadened my views about the different cultures at each museum. It was also a really awesome experience to discuss deeper social issues involved with museums and the community during the forums.” The ICA teen convening crystallized a SAM approach that emphasized working with teens as critical thinkers who can theorize their own experiences as program participants. The preparation for the convening opened our eyes about translocal communication with teenagers involved with museum education. Looking toward the future, we would love to do a video conference. The new TAG 2011 group will definitely explore how to transform some of the great partnerships we have with local Seattle teen groups so that we can have a Pacific Northwest teen summit during the arc of our work. It was especially inspiring to watch all levels of ICA staff support the ICA Teen Council for the convening. Our deputy director, Sandra Jackson Dumont, pointed out that this is an example of what it looks like when an entire institution devotes itself to cultivating great teen programs.

Walker Art Center

Adriana Rimpel, Teen Programs Manager; Kaitlyn Andrews and Will Freeman, Walker Art Center Teen Art Council (WACTAC) members

The convening gave us the opportunity to challenge and refuel ourselves creatively, professionally, and personally. In such a short period of time, deep friendships were made amongst the teen council members. Those friendships have continued beyond the conference. Although our backgrounds and interests varied, we found ourselves connected to each other on an intellectual and personal level. As an educator, I felt the experience challenged my notions of responsibility, action, and approach in engaging youth with art, especially during a time in which budget and staffing cuts in public schools don't allow for an in-depth look into the arts. For Will, “the



experience allowed me to see art administrators at work and convinced me a career in their fields is something I want to pursue in the future.” From discussions that took place during our stay we realized the potential of the arts in the lives of others and the desire to reach a broader teen audience. For Kaitlyn, breaking down the barrier of the “language of art” is a focus. The ICA's Teen Night, which involved a variety of performances and visual art exhibition by teen artists that touched on everyday experiences in the lives of local youth, was a great example for Will to see how “a program succeeds when it's relevant to its audience.”

Contemporary art museums house the possibility to challenge perceptions, values, and modes of making, doing, and thinking. It is the Walker and Teen Program's goal to continue to find new and improved ways for visitors to tap into the work of contemporary artists and to feel confident and comfortable in critiquing, analyzing, exploring ideas, challenging, and contributing to what lies within and outside of the museum's walls. Attending the convening reminded us of this goal and of our own roles in achieving it. We want to thank the ICA Boston for inviting and allowing us to take part.

Whitney Museum of American Art

Danielle Linzer, Coordinator of Youth Programs; Ogechukwu Uwanaka and Seon Young Park, Youth Insights participants

The Whitney Museum of American Art was thrilled to have the opportunity to participate in the National Convening for Teens in the Arts hosted by the ICA/Boston. Personally, we found the experience to be fun, stimulating, and challenging. Collegial friendships quickly formed, and we found ourselves in the midst of an intense exchange of ideas, drawing on our shared interests and experiences in the arts and on the incredible diversity of the group assembled. All in all, the convening was a source of inspiration for each one of us. For Seon, meeting so many young people committed to arts and their communities was an eye-opening experience: "Their sincerity and passion truly touched me. On the professional level, I began thinking about how I can contribute to the community." For Oge, her experience at the convening also encouraged her to act: "Knowing the power and consequence of museums today inspires me to take a more active role in my museum. . . . Getting more people to participate in youth programs at museums is one of my goals." While we understand the potential that museums have to unite our communities, we also acknowledge the challenges of attracting young people to museums. We have to find ways to overcome common perceptions of museums

as cold, boring, and unwelcoming, and reposition them as safe, open places where young people can interact, build community, and express ideas without fear of judgment. Art is about connection and communication, and contemporary art museums—with their openness to new ideas, voices, and practices—may be uniquely positioned to create a welcoming environment for teens.

Raúl Gonzalez, Boston-based artist and educator

The convening was an excellent way to discuss issues that are important to all educators. The difference was that we did it amongst those we are teaching. It isn't every day that we allow those who we are guiding into the inner sanctum. By doing so we were able to loosen up and listen to our youth in ways that are different from those in a classroom setting. We were being taught by our students and listening to their thoughts and ideas. With encouragement and support, the teens proved that they will do their very best to create an environment for all involved that is welcoming and supportive of all those who participate. It is up to us, the adults, to do our best to continue to allow the teens to create their own path leading each other in becoming the leaders and voices of tomorrow.

Appendix:

Conference Schedule

**Art & Identity: Making Art to Belong, Making Art to Distinguish Oneself
A National Convening for Teens in the Arts**

Wednesday, August 11–Friday, August 13, 2010

(Professional titles reflect positions held by participants during the conference)

Day 1 **Wednesday,** **August 11, 2010**

9:00–10:00 Registration and Continental
Breakfast at the ICA

10:00–10:30 **Presentation #1: The Institute
of Contemporary Art/Boston**
Associate Director of Education
Rosanna Flouty, Teen Arts Council
member Christian Allen and Fast
Forward participant Chavella Lee

10:30–11:00 **Presentation #2:
Walker Art Center**
Teen Programs Manager Adriana
Rimpel, and Walker Art Center
Teen Art Council members Kaitlyn
Andrews and Will Freeman

11:00–11:30 **Presentation #3: The Bronx
Museum of the Arts**
Coordinator for Group Visits and
Family Programs and Co-Instructor
for Teen Council Hannie Chia,
and Teen Council alumni Cynthia
Roman and Frank Rodriguez.

11:45–12:45 Lunch Break

1:00–1:30 **Presentation #4: Marwen**
Coordinator of Alumni Programs
and Exhibitions at Marwen Arielle
Bielak, Marwen alumna Elvira
Valencia, and Marwen student
Gabriel Anaya

1:30–2:00 **Presentation #5:
Contemporary Arts Center |
New Orleans**
Teen Board Coordinator Libby
Vieira da Cunha, Director of
Education Marie Lamb, and CAC
Teen Board members Carlie Peters
and Taylor Milton

2:00–2:30 Coffee break and tour of
Dr. Lakra exhibition by ICA Teen
Arts Council members

2:30–3:00 **Presentation #6: Whitney
Museum of American Art**
Coordinator of Youth Programs
Danielle Linzer and Youth Insights
teens Ogechukwu Uwanaka and
Seon Young Park

3:00–3:30 **Presentation #7:
Seattle Art Museum**
Manager, Teen, Family, and
Community Programs C. Davida
Ingram, Teen Advisory Group
alumna Amy Stromme, and Teen
Advisory Group representative
Jonathan Hong.

6:00–8:30 **Opening Reception and
First Summer Teen Night** orga-
nized by the ICA Teen Arts Council,
with live music by ZUMIX, free
gallery tours, free food, and perfor-
mances in the theater by Boston
teen performance artists Zeek,
NIA Dance Troupe, Poetic Justice,
Sociedad Latina Music Clubhouse,
and Be 1 Example Street Team.

Day 2 **Thursday, August 12, 2010**

9:00–10:00 Continental Breakfast at ICA

10:00–10:15 Welcome Remarks by Director
Jill Medvedow

10:15–12:00 Art Making in the Bank of America
Art Lab with Raúl Gonzalez

12:00–1:00 Lunch Break

1:00–2:30 Work Session #1

TOPIC 1: Museums as Safe Spaces –

How are museums creating “safe spaces” for teens exploring sexual, gender, and racial identities? As museums seek to attract more diverse audiences, what can museums do to extend programming by using their teen population? What new languages/tools are being created by teens to describe these explorations?

TOPIC 2: Leadership Opportunities in Museums –

Many organizations cite leadership skills as a key goal for teen programs in museums. Are leadership skills a driving reason for teens who seek out museum experiences in the first place? What does leadership mean to a teen? What leadership opportunities are available in museum programming, and what opportunities do teens crave? How might this teen perspective change the way we speak about our programs, whether online, in schools, or beyond?

2:30–3:00 Coffee Break and Tour of
Charles LeDray exhibition
workworkworkworkwork with
ICA/Boston Teen Arts Council

3:00–4:30 Work Session #2

TOPIC 3: Civic Engagement and Social Justice – Many museum educators are using terms such as “civic engagement” and “social consciousness” to describe mission-based programming. What do civic engagement and social consciousness mean to a teen? How can museums best integrate these terms into their missions? Should museum programs be focused on social justice issues? How do these ideas resonate with teens?

TOPIC 4: Education in the 21st Century – What are museums contributing to teen education in the twenty-first century? What is the relationship between museums and other sources of art education for teens? Is it necessary to attend art school to become an artist? For adults, how do museums interface with schools and other after-school programs?

5:00 Summary and Next Steps
Dinner in Faneuil Hall

Day 3 Friday, August 13, 2010

- 9:30–10:00 Breakfast for Museum Educators at Doubletree Hotel
- 10:00–11:30 Professional Development Roundtable
panelists Edward Clapp, Antonia Contro, Sandra Jackson Dumont, and David Henry (moderator)
- 10:00–12:00 ICA Teen Arts Council leads teens on walking tour of galleries in Boston's South End
- 12:00–12:30 Lunch
- 12:30–2:00 Duck Tour for all participants of Boston Harbor and historic areas
- 2:00–4:00 Wrap up, Dismissal, and Next Steps
- 4:00 Teen Convening Ends

Acknowledgements

Art & Identity: Making Art to Belong, Making Art to Distinguish Oneself A National Convening for Teens in the Arts

(Professional titles in the acknowledgements reflect positions held by individuals at the time of publication)

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Rhonda Edwards, Teen Arts Council alumna

Donovan Birch, MLK Summer Scholar and Teen Arts Council member

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Cynthia Roman and Frank Rodriguez, Teen Council alumni

Contemporary Arts Center | New Orleans, Louisiana

Marie Lamb, Director of Education

Libby Vieira da Cunha, Teen Board Coordinator

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Marwen, Chicago, Illinois

Arielle Bielak, Coordinator of Alumni Programs & Exhibitions

Marwen students Elvira Valencia and Gabriel Anaya

Seattle Art Museum, Seattle, Washington

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Jonathan Hong, Teen Advisory Group member

Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Adriana Rimpel, Teen Programs Manager

Kaitlyn Andrews, Walker Art Center Teen Art Council member

Will Freeman, Walker Art Center Teen Art Council member

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, New York

Danielle Linzer, Coordinator of Youth Programs

Ogechukwu Uwanaka and Seon Young Park, Youth Insights participants

Raúl Gonzalez, Boston-based artist and educator

2010 Professional Development Roundtable Panelists

Edward Clapp, doctoral student at Harvard Graduate School of Education, independent arts and arts education consultant, and author of the forthcoming book, *20 under 40: Reinventing the Arts and Arts Education for the 21st Century*

Antonia Contro, Executive Director of Marwen in Chicago

David Henry, Director of Programs at the Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston

Sandra Jackson Dumont, Deputy Director for Education + Public Programs/ Adjunct Curator at the Seattle Art Museum

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TEENS

(www.icateens.org)



Dr. LAKRA

APRIL 14 - SEPTEMBER 6, 2011



THE INSTITUTE
OF CONTEMPORARY
ART/BOSTON

Summer night
Wednesday, August 11, 2010
6-8PM



