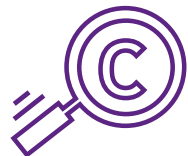


Summary, conclusions and reflections on

Interaction and Inclusion

The 2019
Trend Report on
Museum and
Heritage Education



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Preface



It was high time for a new Trend Report on Museum and Heritage Education, over a decade after the previous study was published. I am delighted that LKCA has been able to deliver on its monitoring and research role in the field of cultural education and cultural participation by publishing this edition.

The outcomes of the research are heartening. Education, participation and interaction: today they all have a firmer foothold in the world of the museum and heritage. And the relevant professionals are positive about their future.¹ Educational interests are increasingly represented within the Management Team and staffing levels have increased. I am also optimistic about the fact that institutions are no longer solely looking at schools, but are taking a wider view of education. There is an ever clearer focus on dialogue, on the visitor's own experience and on the role of the museum in society.

And yet, there's still plenty of progress to be made. One question in particular has stayed with me. When the report was presented, Valentijn Rambonnet of Reinwardt Academy asked, 'Are educators themselves part of the process?' The position of the education department may have improved, but do we attach the same value to education and the professional demands on educators as we do to the work of the curator? Look at salaries, for example, and it's hard to make the case that the two are valued equally. The composition of the organizations also leaves a lot to be desired: if museums are serious about being relevant to society as a whole, the team of educators (and the rest of the organization) will have to reflect the diversity in society as a whole.

I hope that this report will give us insights and inspiration so that we can take these next steps!

Sanne Scholten, director of LKCA

¹ The interviews for this study took place well before the start of the coronavirus pandemic.

The main outcomes of the research

Introduction

Numerous developments over the past decade have had an impact on the work of museums and heritage institutions. In the past ten years we have weathered an international economic crisis, experienced major cutbacks to the sector and responded to far-reaching reforms in the education system. The National Centre of Expertise for Cultural Education and Amateur Arts (LKCA) has explored the consequences of these developments for the educational work carried out by museums and heritage institutions. Despite the cuts made to the sector ten years ago, abandoning educational activities was out of the question. From that point on, in order to qualify for government subsidies, museums and heritage institutions were required to develop an education and participation plan. This requirement initially applied to organizations that received national subsidies, but in most cases provinces and municipalities also followed suit.

Almost without exception, museums and heritage institutions – from historical archives to castles – regard education as one of their core activities. How museums and heritage institutions perform this task varies and changes over time. *[Interaction and Inclusion. The 2019 Trend Report on Museum and Heritage Education](#)* presents the results of a study conducted among educators at museums and heritage institutions in the Netherlands in 2019, with the aim of gaining a clear and comprehensive picture of how this sector has fared since the 2007 Trend Report. What have been the main developments in the twelve years since the previous Trend Report was published?

What role do these professionals envisage for education? Where do the priorities lie and which new trends are already taking shape? The report addresses these questions on the basis of a wide-ranging survey and some thirty in-depth interviews.

Summary and conclusions

While several clear similarities with the 2007 Trend Report emerge, a number of other developments have come strongly to the fore or faded into the background since then. What actions are the institutions taking? Why are they focusing on these actions and how do they go about determining their approach? In the sections that follow, we will describe the main outcomes and conclusions of this research.

The position of education in the institution

In comparison with 2007, it is clear that education has come to occupy an even stronger position in museums and heritage institutions. The interviews and survey show that, in most cases, educators have gained more influence on policy, for example because the head of the education department now has a place in the Management Team and education has become an integral part of the institution's policy plan. In addition, educators are often more closely involved in a museum's or heritage institution's exhibitions than they were in the past. Educators are more likely to be part of the project teams that create exhibitions, and the relationship with curators appears to be less skewed than it used to be, although the progress made in areas such as salary is far from complete.

The education department (known by another name within some institutions) has – to varying degrees – increased in size at most institutions. However, the figures from the survey temper this finding somewhat, indicating that the growth in education departments is less marked when viewed in relation to the organization as a whole. Small museums are still largely dependent on volunteers to act as guides (and fulfil a range of other tasks), while volunteers in large and medium-sized museums hardly carry out any independent duties in the field of education. Until a short time ago freelancers were hired to fulfil this role, but recent changes in the legislation

that governs the hiring of freelancers have led to more guides being hired through temporary employment agencies or offered employment contracts for a limited number of hours.

In general, educators are satisfied with the facilities made available to them for public activities and the resources open to them have increased in recent years. In comparison with 2007, for instance, more institutions have spaces where workshops can be held. This also reflects the shift towards enabling the visitor to engage more actively with the museum experience. Visitors are increasingly being encouraged to express their impressions and opinions, to experience and to participate. Not surprisingly, the large and medium-sized institutions generally have more facilities at their disposal. For example, few small institutions are in a position to offer audio tours, while their online applications for education are more limited and far from being a standard feature.

Interaction

One of the terms to feature prominently in the title of this publication is 'interaction'. The days of one-way communication from museum to visitor are pretty much over, our interviews reveal. Guides are expected not simply to 'broadcast' information, but also to engage in dialogue. Activities such as treasure hunts (digital or otherwise) challenge visitors to discover, draw their own conclusions and converse with other as much as possible. Active participation in the form of workshops, artistic explorations or playful encounters is also encouraged in many places. Many of those interviewed mention 21st century skills as an inspiration for educational programmes and as a goal of their efforts. The idea underpinning most of the activities that educators devise and organize is the desire to be a museum or heritage institution that is relevant to everyone. Institutions are considering the implications of this ambition for their collections. And addressing the question of how to express multiple perspectives and give their visitors a voice in the way collections are presented. One key source of inspiration in 2007 was conspicuous by its absence twelve years on: Kolb's learning styles no longer featured in the interviews for the 2019 report.

Objectives

It is interesting to note that the objectives which emerge from the 2019 survey largely correspond to those of 2007. Both reports put *increasing enjoyment* at the top of the list of priorities, closely followed by *transferring knowledge and insight*. The focus on learning and development goals in particular has intensified in the intervening period. Museums and heritage institutions now place a stronger emphasis on civic education and are keen to make visitors *aware of issues in society*, for example, as well as helping them to develop their own sense of identity and discover new personal interests. One item that ranks considerably lower than it did in 2007 is *providing information about the collection*. This reflects a shift towards enabling people to experience their own meaningful encounter with what they see and hear, with less of a focus on the story of the museum or heritage institution itself.

It's an approach that also chimes with the greater role these organizations want to play in society. Museums and heritage institutions are increasingly aspiring to develop into a meeting place for the widest possible audience. The goal is therefore to offer a showcase in which multiple perspectives can be seen and heard. Participation, co-creation, diversity and multiple voices are terms that museums and heritage institutions attach to this ambition. It's a development that is very much in line with the current debate on the new definition of museums, a debate in which their role in society is being emphasized more strongly than before. These objectives also come to light in the target groups mentioned by the institutions we interviewed and surveyed.

Target groups

Museums and heritage institutions want to be there for everyone. In recent years, the range and diversity of activities they offer their visitors has grown. Of course, visitors with a lively interest in culture remain an important target group, but since they are already familiar with these institutions and know what they have to offer, special activities for this group are seldom organized. In both 2007 and 2019 families were and still are a target group on which almost all institutions are keen to focus and for which an increasing number of specific programmes are being developed. Concerted efforts are

being made to ensure that not only children of various age groups but also the parents or grandparents will have a meaningful and enjoyable experience. Interaction between the different generations takes pride of place in this regard. It's encouraging to see that Dutch museums have been internationally acclaimed in recent years for their activities and exhibitions for children.

Most children visit museums and heritage institutions in an educational context and groups within education therefore represent another key target group. The decision to focus on a specific group may depend on the collection. From both the survey and the interviews, primary education emerged as the main educational target group for many museums and heritage institutions. Compared to 2007, we are now seeing an even stronger focus on this educational sector. This may be due to the strong emphasis placed on primary education since the introduction in 2013 of the national *Quality Cultural Education* policy programme. The cutbacks to the cultural sector have also made it necessary to make choices. It is striking that all respondents, whether or not they participate in *Quality Cultural Education*, often approach schools directly rather than via the coordinators in charge of cultural education at local or regional level. There is evidence of a growing awareness that a museum or heritage institution can function as an external classroom or give an extra dimension to education in a school setting and be far more than just a 'fun outing'.

For some time now, the government has been working to bring about a stronger focus on students from pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO) and senior secondary vocational education (MBO). Compared to 2007, large and medium-sized institutions are therefore devoting increasing attention to groups from these streams of education. Smaller institutions may follow this example in the near future.

Another striking difference between the reports is the much lower score given to *approaching and guiding special target groups* in 2019. This appears to contradict some of the survey's other outcomes, such as the increased awareness of visitors with disabilities. Nor does it reflect the overall impression that emerges from the inter-

views, in which interviewees mention a wide range of projects for groups as diverse as the hearing impaired and people with Alzheimer's disease.

Inclusion and accessibility

Two themes embraced by many museums and heritage institutions, particularly those in the major cities, are inclusion and accessibility, a trend that has partly been initiated by the government. They not only feature as an international point of attention in current discussions about renewing the definition of what it means to be a museum, but they are also clearly top-of-mind among the respondents to the Trend Report. Elderly people, people with dementia, refugees, people who have been granted asylum and people with an auditory or visual impairment are mentioned most frequently as groups that institutions want to reach or have recently succeeded in reaching. In the previous Trend Report study, these target groups were still referred to as 'strangers to museums', a common term at the time for those at whom the extra efforts of educational staff were being directed. Moreover, the survey shows that excluding target groups in advance is even less acceptable than it was in 2007, and that museums are highly committed to welcoming a diverse audience. The interviews show that this is particularly true of urban areas, not least Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Utrecht and The Hague. Respondents clearly indicate that there is still a world to be won, especially when it comes to reaching local residents and people with a migration background.

In this respect, it will be interesting to see to the impact of the *Musea bekennen kleur* (Museums Show Their True Colours) collaboration, launched in March 2020. This initiative focuses mainly on inclusion and diversity within organizations.

Educational activities

The aim of museums and heritage institutions to encourage visitors to be active, to embrace new experiences and to add a significance of their own to those experiences fuels activities with an increased focus on interaction and experiential learning.

This can also be seen in the most widespread form of interaction with visitors: the guided tour. For educational groups in particular,



the traditional guided tour has largely been confined to the past. Methods such as *I ASK*, *Visible Thinking* and *Visual Thinking Strategies* were frequently referred to in both the survey and the interviews as ways of entering into relevant conversations and enabling visitors to seek out their own meaning: 'Don't tell people what to think, but encourage them to think for themselves.'

The Trend Report gives various examples of how museums and heritage institutions intend to achieve the above objectives. The visitor can embark on an exploration of their own and smell, taste and touch elements of an exhibition. Studios, workshop spaces and hubs give visitors a chance to get creative. Meanwhile the exhibition spaces themselves offer ample opportunity to draw, film and take photographs. Experience is stimulated by involving visitors in role play and letting them take an active part. Technological developments are opening up new opportunities for museums and heritage institutions, from online guided tours and VR headsets to escape rooms. Museums also offer programmes that venture out into the city or organize boot camps on the museum grounds.

Museums and heritage institutions are also increasingly trying to find ways in which the learning process can continue beyond the visit. In the Netherlands, for example, the GeoFort Science Museum in Herwijnen recreated the game *Minecraft* to enable players to take on the role of an architect, engineer or urban planner. Another example is the *Amazing Worlds Passport* developed by Naturalis Biodiversity Centre in Leiden, an online learning environment that gives primary school children access to the world of nature, science, technology and sustainability. In addition, museums and heritage institutions want to help children and young people take their interests to the next level, for example by offering technology workshops.

Collaboration

Collaboration takes a wide variety of forms. In the education sector, primary schools are the main partner. In one out of three cases, collaboration consists solely of making use of existing programmes, but medium-sized museums in particular also develop educational material on demand. In large museums, collaboration with the education sector generally involves schools *responding to concepts*. At times, effective collaboration with the education sector can be

highly challenging. Teachers have to navigate their way through an overcrowded curriculum and due to lack of staff museums and heritage institutions are very often simply not equipped to offer everyone tailor-made solutions. Taking a demand-driven approach is therefore not an easy task, despite government efforts to encourage this way of working.

Almost half of the respondents are involved in a project within the framework of the *Quality Cultural Education* policy programme. It is interesting to note that large institutions make use of local institutions or intermediaries more often than small and medium-sized institutions. The same applies to the use of provincial institutions. Across the board, we can see that large institutions use the available channels more frequently. A possible explanation for this is the higher staffing levels at large institutions, which enable more working hours to be devoted to communication and PR. Another hypothesis is that intermediaries find cooperating with larger institutions to be a more attractive prospect.

The majority of respondents believe that cooperation with universities of applied sciences and universities could be stepped up and improved. Reinwardt Academy, a university of applied sciences, forms an exception to this rule but one which is easy to account for: it specializes in educating professionals for museums and the cultural sector. Museums and heritage institutions mainly cooperate with universities in the field of research. Many institutions indicate that they would like to see further cooperation with teacher training programmes for primary education or that they would like more students from these programmes to experience what museums and heritage institutions have to offer; the twin aims of such interaction being to spark enthusiasm among this group that could lead to future school visits and to keep abreast of new developments in education.

To an increasing extent, museums and heritage institutions are also working together and in an atmosphere that seems to be becoming more positive. Respondents noted that the approach now seems to be more geared towards strengthening each other, instead of jostling for position. Collaboration takes place in various constellations,

which often centre on the type of collection. Institutions not only exchange expertise, but their interaction also includes developing joint training programmes.

The survey shows that many organizations cooperate with local artists. Another interesting finding is the increasing collaboration with welfare organizations and organizations for the elderly. This is in line with the desire to be more inclusive and accessible to all, and to fulfil a role at the heart of society. Such collaboration is more occasional than regular, although networks involving care centres are gradually developing in certain areas, as is sometimes the case with educational institutions.

Other developments

In recent years, a number of developments have had a major impact on the museum and heritage sector. Government policy has played a part in various ways. The cuts made by State Secretary for Education, Culture and Science Halbe Zijlstra in the 2013-2016 Culture Plan limited the possibilities open to some institutions. Organizations had to let staff go and various educational programmes were discontinued. However, Zijlstra's policy did have the effect of encouraging museums and heritage institutions to include an educational vision in their policy plan in order to be eligible for subsidies.

Until this year, freelancers had been the main implementers of educational programmes in larger museums but this has changed in response to new laws and regulations. As a result, an increasing number of guides are being offered a contract or hired through temporary employment agencies. The profession of guide has undergone a process of professionalization in recent years, as evidenced by the establishment of its own association (BRAM). BRAM works to strengthen the position of guides and raise professional standards.

In the summer of 2018, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science set up a new commission to review the *Canon of Dutch History* as taught in schools. The institutions that form part of the Canon Network followed these developments with particular interest and some trepidation. The review reflects a wider trend in recent years towards a focus on inclusion and multiple voices, the opening up of multiple perspectives and making culture accessible to all.

Curriculum.nu is another educational development that is currently in full swing. Citizenship and digital literacy will probably be given a prominent place in the new curriculum, but we will have to wait until the publication of the next Trend Report to say how this will affect education in museums and heritage institutions.

Final considerations

No sooner had the copy for the current Trend Report been submitted to the editor, than the museum and heritage landscape was altered dramatically by the COVID-19 pandemic. Museums and heritage institutions had no choice but to close their doors. While so much educational work revolves around face-to-face encounters, educators have shown remarkable resilience and creativity in finding alternative ways of reaching out to the public. In the face of current difficulties, the technological developments described in the report are frequently being used to give people a taste of the wealth of cultural experience on offer in museums and heritage institutions. Online tours, virtual visits on Facebook, Instagram or the institution's own website, drawing courses, games and all manner of handouts for home activities. People are experimenting with digital exhibition spaces, where visitors are invited to engage with a variety of interpretations and formulate their own responses. And while most people agree that nothing beats a face-to-face encounter with the authentic object, doing nothing is simply not an option. Perhaps in ten years' time, in a subsequent Trend Report, we will be able to conclude that the coronavirus has been the catalyst for an enormous boost to the use of digital resources that enable organizations to get in touch with their audience. And that this may be a key way to help bring about interaction and inclusion.

Lastly, in the light of recent developments, this Trend Report may well provide an inadvertently well-timed baseline measurement that will enable us to examine the impact of COVID-19 in a number of years' time. For example, has the ambition to occupy a more central and prominent place in society, a place where everyone feels welcome and free to exchange ideas, actually been realized? And is the museum of the future really an inclusive and accessible meeting place where a multitude of voices can be heard?



Mirjam Moll, Director of the Museums Association

First of all, I would like to say a sincere thank you to LKCA for the extensive and in-depth research they have carried out. This is a recurring study that enables us to track long-term developments, and its findings become more valuable with time. We therefore hope that LKCA can continue to conduct this research, now and in the future. After all, this knowledge is of great benefit to museums and policymakers alike.

It is wonderful to see that museum education is now such a valued and integral part of the sector. The report shows that museum education has been strong enough to withstand several crises, a series of cutbacks and changes to the educational system. That alone is something to be proud of, a source of hope now that the coronavirus pandemic has plunged us into a crisis the likes of which we have never seen before.

At the Museums Association, we are continuing to make the case for a support package designed to keep all museums afloat. Not only to ensure that museum education can continue, but also to ensure that it remains accessible and part of the life of every child. Because children are the visitors of the future. In the run-up to the Dutch general election, we will also bring the importance of museum education to the attention of all political parties. Museum education is one of the five priorities we have identified this year. In doing so, we make the point that museum education is essential to our fundamental rights to education and cultural development.

In the present crisis, we unfortunately find ourselves having to deal with restrictive protocols, for education and for museums. Visiting a museum is a more difficult prospect at present. Fortunately, we see many museums being hugely inventive and offering all kinds of online opportunities, not least activities that are geared towards museum education. Education has also had to go digital, and is doing so successfully. It will be fascinating to see which of these initiatives will become staples of the museum education toolkit in years to come. In short, LKCA's next Trend Report is already eagerly awaited!

Interaction & Inclusion: Who gets to participate?

A response to Interaction and Inclusion. The 2019 Trend Report for Museum and Heritage Education, delivered at the presentation of the report on 18 June 2020

Herman van Gessel
Marlous van Gastel
Valentijn Rambonnet



The 2019 Trend Report entitled *Interaction and Inclusion* shows that the educator wants everyone to participate. A noble ambition but one that is also difficult to achieve. As lecturers at Reinwardt Academy – heritage educators ourselves not so long ago – we have been invited to give our response. We would rather look to the future than the past, and with this in mind we'd like to share some thoughts with you about museum education in the next ten years.

Do educators themselves get to participate?

The report shows that the emancipation of educators is progressing steadily. They are being given greater opportunities to influence policy and are even allowed to play a larger and more frequent role in the exhibitions themselves. Yet while their influence continues to grow, the financial rewards are failing to keep pace, with salaries still lagging behind those paid to curators. It's an odd imbalance. After all, aren't educators expected to know at least as much as curators? In addition to being experts in the subject matter, they are also experts in education and communicating with the public. They analyse target groups, respond to policy and draw up communication plans, and they get to organize the whole lot into the bargain.

But let's not polarize the discussion too much. After all, we are all in the same business: curators or educators, we are all connectors who want to bring people into contact with heritage. Everything that makes a museum a museum can be described as education. What is an exhibition if not an educational product? Now that the culture sector is once again facing troubled times, the education department can so easily fall victim to cutbacks that might reverse the progress made in investment and professionalization within a matter of years. Before you know it, educators themselves will no longer be able to participate.

But who are we talking about when we talk about educators? One thing is certain, the profession does not reflect the demographics of Dutch society. Male educators can be counted on the fingers of one hand – perhaps two. It's an imbalance often seen when hard work



and social relevance come together in a profession where there is little money to be made. A greater problem is the serious underrepresentation of people with a migration background. Respondents to the Trend Report on Museum Education are familiar with the Cultural Diversity Code but they conclude that there is little evidence of change. Will that change ever come in a sector where so few personnel progress through the ranks? Meanwhile, the need for change is becoming ever more urgent: once the number of baby boomers visiting museums begins to tail off, we will have a strong need for educators who represent a new generation of visitors.

Who gets to participate in professionalization and research?

We firmly believe that the potential of the relatively new profession of heritage education can be expanded by further professionalization and research. Although it may not emerge all that clearly from the report, we have seen great strides being made within the sector over the past ten years. The Dutch educational field can now measure up more favourably to its counterparts in the United States, the UK and Scandinavia, for example, regions where research and theory are already integrated much more naturally into the scheme of things. This does not alter the fact that we would still do well to look beyond our own national borders a little more often.

Who exactly is driving this change? Various parties have been making their contribution in the past decade. The Museums Association, LKCA (not least by initiating this report) and all those individual educators who took part in training courses. The unique collaboration between university, museum and expertise centre embodied in an initiative such as *Rondleiden is een vak* (Guiding is a profession) is also a shining example. We'd like to see more developments like this please! Not only do they make us better at what we do, but they also enable us to share our knowledge and raise our status.

In the coming years, Reinwardt Academy intends to make a more substantial contribution in this area than it has to date. The Heritage Lab offers training and refresher courses, including courses on working as a guide. A training course for guides is in the making,

aimed specifically at people who want to take up this core profession, not through traditional routes but as part of the commitment to achieving greater diversity in this profession.

Is the guide still part of the picture?

The report concludes that many independent educational tasks were carried out by freelancers, especially in large and medium-sized institutions. Due to legislative changes, these institutions now employ some of their museum educators, guides and workshop teachers or hire them through temporary employment agencies. In Amsterdam's Museum district, this has had a devastating effect on many freelancers, people who once brought a wealth of passion and experience to these roles and who now find themselves out of work and losing income due to the limited number of jobs available. A worrying development, when you stop to consider how much valuable experience and expertise is being lost. Especially if this new legislation stands in the way of the further professionalization and emancipation of the guide - processes that had been previously been set out by the same museums and strongly underlined by research and the Museum Guides Now! (*Rondleiden is een vak*) symposium.

To date, people only seem to be losing out as a result of the new legislation. And there could be more adverse effects to come. Will this already shrinking group of professional guides soon fade into insignificance? Will we lose inspiring guides, artists and theatre makers among them, whose exceptional qualities lie in the way they combine their professions? With a limited number of job vacancies to fill, will institutions take the safe option even though this is the ideal moment to build a team that is diverse, in the broadest sense of the word? Our advice is: don't! Don't limit the scope of the group, don't take the safe option. It's worth remembering that in many cases the pool of guides is also a setting in which new talent – educational and otherwise – is waiting to be discovered. Bringing this pool of talent together provides an ideal opportunity to reflect the diversity in society.

Another danger is that the limited contracts that museums have no choice but to issue will serve to reduce the status of the profession once again. It remains a strange and persistent phenomenon that

the person who has the most contact with the museum's visitors and who in the eyes of many is the face of the museum, always seems to be last in line when it comes to appreciation and financial compensation.

Which sections of the public get to participate?

The evangelical urge of educators, their need to tell 'the true story', is fading into the background to be replaced by a greater emphasis on personal contact and interaction. Visitors are now being encouraged to do far more themselves. Connecting with the exhibits in their own way, actively participating, forming an opinion about social issues... and, last but not least, they are also allowed to have fun! All of these aspects reflect a new definition of the museum. The educator in the Netherlands does not seem to be waiting for this complex definition to be officially approved, but is already performing the duties it encompasses. It's wonderful to see this in action.

The museum as a place of encounter and discussion, a new public space in which people engage with heritage as a way to talk about the world – past, present and future. But who's talking to who? The report concludes that, while inclusion is now a strong focus in theory, in practice museums are still failing to reach many local residents and people with a migration background. Museums continue to be seen as places where discussions take place between people who already agree with each other. This seems out of step with the desire to become the new village square, a place where everyone can congregate to explore sensitive issues with a view to understanding each other better, a museum interested in contributing to a better world.

Sometimes it seems as if everyone is mouthing the same magic formulas: *We activate learning and enable people to shape their own meaningful encounters in relation to the sensitive social themes in the exhibition. This experience has been developed through a process of co-creation with the aim of giving space to multiple perspectives.* Are these really our aims or are we simply trying to hang on to our job, adopting politically correct terminology in order to obtain that much-needed subsidy? Are we coming up with projects that tick trendy political boxes or are we honestly meeting a real need in

society? In all these projects, shouldn't we be looking for ways to take an even more radical and urgent question as our starting point? What if we were to leave the catch-all concepts for what they are and start by using our common sense?

But whatever we decide, let's continue to gauge the impact of all those marvellous projects we create. Qualitative public research is still in short supply: why does the visitor come? And what are they taking away from their experience?

Is the education sector part of the process?

The education sector is more involved than ever. The education sector and the museum educator have got to know each other better and the educator has become more familiar with the wishes and needs of teachers and pupils, partly thanks to *Quality Cultural Education*. This is an encouraging development. We can only hope that they will continue to meet each other halfway once social distancing becomes a thing of the past – sooner if at all possible. Because it's partly in this interaction that the key to inclusion lies. Through the education sector you can reach everyone! That's why it's so vital that you understand how this target group operates. Because often you only have one chance to make a positive impression on a young visitor, one that will colour their idea of what a museum is for a long time to come.

But can you really reach everyone through the education sector? Not if you overlook those pupils who are not traditionally regarded as museum visitors: those in pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO) and senior secondary vocational education (MBO). The report observes that the large museums have the financial resources and the staff to offer specific projects for these educational streams, adding hopefully that 'smaller institutions may follow suit'. That strikes us as an excellent idea, and perhaps those larger institutions can help out by sharing their experience and knowledge with those smaller institutions. Because so far, the government has fallen short in its support for initiatives in vocational education and the successes have come from other quarters: private funds, the CJP cultural platform, LKCA and the Council for Culture.

Does the online visitor get to participate?

The report pays relatively little attention to digitization. The educator sees opportunities online but sees more potential in personal interaction and authenticity. It is inspiring to see how digital products have become a resource in the educator's much broader arsenal to reach audiences. It is also encouraging to see that these resources are no longer relegated to the role of a gimmick that allows a museum to show it can move with the times. Nor are they being promoted as a comprehensive substitute for educators and guides. But could there be a false contradiction here? Digitization need not occur at the expense of authenticity, though the need to operate within time limits and budgetary restrictions will always be with us.

The coronavirus crisis has left us weary of interacting with the world through our laptops: we are hungry for contact with real people and real objects. Yet at the same time, we have also become more accustomed to a world in which online and offline are extensions of one another. Culture providers have made a rapid transition towards deploying digital resources in a host of new and creative ways. If we start thinking more inclusively, could we find ways to use our online reach as intensively as our offline reach to achieve our goals? Why not put that thought experiment into practice? What impact would that have in terms of policy and the funding of educational projects?

The report concludes with a hopeful statement of intent: the museum of the future is an inclusive and accessible meeting place in which a multitude of voices can be heard. We need that now more than ever. But it cannot be achieved without self-critical professionals who are able to stand on solid ground and look ahead without fearing for their jobs. Nor can it be done without the heritage professional of the future who comes from a broad and diverse pool of talent. In that light, it is great to see Reinwardt Academy currently preparing for a new first year with more enrolments than ever! But in all honesty, it must be said that at Reinwardt too, the diversity of both the teaching staff and the student population is far from what it should be. Interaction is coming along nicely. The time has come to follow through on inclusion.

Why should museums show their true colours?

A response to Interaction and Inclusion. The 2019 Trend Report for Museum and Heritage Education, delivered at the presentation of the report on 18 June 2020

Aspha Bijnaar,
founder and director of EducatieStudio



It's a conclusion to be positive about: over the years, museums have made major strides in the field of education; in fact, education has come to occupy an even more solid place in museums and heritage institutions.

I was asked to reflect on the Trend Report long before Black Lives Matter came to such prominence across the globe. Before the dramatic events that preceded it, most notably the murder in cold blood of George Floyd by police officers in the US city of Atlanta on 25 May.

The Black Lives Matter movement originated in the United States in 2013, in response to the murder of 17-year-old Trayvon Martin in Florida. He had just been to the store to buy a bag of Skittles and was running home with his hood up. A local resident thought he looked suspicious and called the police. Neighbourhood watch coordinator George Zimmerman appeared on the scene and shot Trayvon, who was unarmed, after a short confrontation. Riots and mass protests followed, along with the birth of the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter: a cry of desperation on Twitter, started by three black women in America. It sparked a worldwide movement and led to the founding of Black Lives Matter as a real-world organization.

The list of defenceless African-American men, women and children murdered by police officers goes on and on. But the murder by four policemen of the unarmed, non-resisting George Floyd marked a turning point, giving rise to a wave of protests against senseless and racist police violence across the globe.

As I began to read, I noticed that I was looking at this Trend Report through the lens of these developments. While reading, I relived some of the events that made a lasting impression on me during my visits to museums and exhibitions.

Let me share one of these experiences with you. About two years ago I visited a museum with a friend of mine to see a temporary photo exhibition. The museum was crowded that morning. A couple of classes of 11 to 12-year-olds were being shown around the same exhibition. An enthusiastic museum educator, a real bundle

of energy, was guiding the classes through the various rooms. The pupils were listening attentively, some hanging on her every word. The educator asked questions and encouraged interaction, eliciting responses from the children in the group. Her face lit up whenever a child shared what they knew about concepts such as oblique light, reflex photography, camera angles and so on. As is the way in every class, not every child was participating actively or with the same enthusiasm. But one pupil in particular – a tall black girl – seemed almost detached from the proceedings, though no one appeared to notice. Not a single question was directed at her, no one tried to involve her in what was going on. As the tour went on she began to lag behind the others and spent much of the time staring at the floor, with the odd timid glance to the side. She clearly had no idea what to do with herself. With every minute that passed, she seemed to become more of a shadow of herself. My friend and I studied the situation intently, and gave each other a meaningful look ...

Later on, we talked about the extent to which the mechanism of exclusion can also be seen in education, in the classroom, even as early as primary school, where children of colour are all too often overlooked due to the negative ideas and prejudices that teachers have about them, their parents and their cultural background.

I found myself wondering whether the girl we saw would ever visit a museum of her own accord ... I wasn't hopeful.

The discussion about systemic racism has also erupted in the Netherlands. It makes the pages of newspapers and magazines on a daily basis. Key figures do the rounds on chat shows and panel discussions, talking about systemic racism and how to turn it around.

One voice I have yet to hear in this debate is that of the white majority who are so often silent. At the Black Lives Matter protest on Dam Square on 1 June, I saw several placards with the powerful slogan **White Silence is Violence**. It struck me that many of the protestors carrying them were white. It got me wondering: where is the voice of the white Dutchwoman willing to examine her own behaviour,



who dares to admit that her first impulse is to reach for her handbag when a man of colour sits down next to her on the train? Or the white Dutchman who holds his tongue when an angry neighbour starts ranting about Moroccan scum?

This is the kind of introspection we are going to need before white Dutch people finally start talking to each other about how to emancipate themselves from this legacy of colonialism and slavery. What solutions can *they* put forward to address the problem of systemic racism? What are they willing to do, other than simply ask this question of their fellow citizens whose skin is a different colour? Only then can we start to find a way forward together.

Only that degree of self-examination can help the museum educator to make the museum an inclusive and accessible meeting place for a multitude of voices, for children like that tall 12-year-old black girl whom she didn't seem to notice.

In many a public debate, we hear people say that the solution lies in the classroom, in education. And yes, that is where part of the solution lies.

But I would also like our young museum visitors to be challenged to reflect on essential questions: What is a museum for you? What's your idea of an inclusive and accessible meeting place? What will it take for your voice to be heard in a museum?

In the summer of 2019 the *Musea Bekennen Kleur* initiative saw the light of day. I am its coordinator, together with Sylvana Terlage, who handles the communication side of things. The project, whose title translates as *Museums Show Their True Colours*, brings museums and heritage institutions together in taking concrete action to embed diversity and inclusion in the DNA of the sector. With over 25 museums and heritage institutions now showing their true colours, we are becoming a movement that is growing and growing.

Part of the project is the development of an educational programme for schoolchildren in the 11 to 12 age group. One of the key questions guiding this programme is exactly this: what does the notion

of the museum as an inclusive and accessible meeting place for a multitude of voices mean to you?

I'd like to leave you with the following message. Ask children and young people this question. Ask them more questions of this kind. And when you do, make sure you don't overlook a single one of them. Listen closely to what they have to say and publish the results in a regular trend survey written from the interviewees' perspective.

The following museums and heritage institutions are participating in *Musea bekennen kleur*:

- Centraal Museum Utrecht
- Rijksmuseum Amsterdam
- The Rembrandt House Museum
- Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam
- Frans Hals Museum
- Bonnefanten Museum
- Dordrechts Museum
- Van Abbe Museum
- Amsterdam Museum
- Zeeuws Museum
- Museum Arnhem
- Van Gogh Museum
- National Museum of World Cultures
- Mauritshuis
- Stedelijk Museum Alkmaar
- Kunstmuseum Den Haag
- The National Maritime Museum in Amsterdam
- Cultural Heritage Agency
- Boijmans van Beuningen
- Groninger Museum
- Teylers Museum
- National Archives of the Netherlands
- De Pont museum
- Foam

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