

The history of the metropolitan museum of art and visual thinking strategies

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History of The Metropolitan Museum of Art

The Metropolitan Museum of Art was first originated as an idea back in Paris, France in the year 1866. It all began when a group of fellow Americans who were in France at the time decided that America needed a diverse educational background in Art and its history. One man in particular known as John Jay who was an attorney at the time proposed the idea during his time in Europe. Shortly after the it was agreed the project begun of creating an institution which would represent a strong education of art to the American people. The project went smoothly with the various contributions of artists, art collectors, and businessmen and many other various people.

By the time April 13, 1870 came about The Metropolitan Museum of Art was first ready to be opened to the public. The initial opening took place in the Dodworth building on Fifth avenue. On November 20th, 1870 the museum received its first piece of art which was a Roman sarcophagus. Over the next year the museum would receive various European paintings. The museum specifically would receive works from artist such as Anthony Van Dyck and Nicolas Poussin. These works of art would ultimately be what created the first collection of works at The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

By March of the year 1880 The Metropolitan Museum had been relocated from its original home which was in Douglas Mansion to what is its location to this day at Fifth Avenue 82nd Street. Throughout the 19th century the various collections of the museums came alive. The Met gained the collection of the Cesnola Cypriot Art which overs back to the Bronze art age

through the Roman age period. Obtaining this particular collection was successful in giving the museum's name in classical representation.

By the time 1902 rolled around the museum had open the great hall. Which was one of the most famous works of architect of the time period. By the time the 20th century had come about the museum had obtained works of art from all over the world and from various time periods. Including ancient Egypt, European paintings, works from Africa, and American style paintings. By the time the 1970s came about the museum had undergone a major plan and outline for serious architectural renovations. Which was known as the master plan. Some of the outcomes which were resulted in this master plan included but not limited to The Michael C. Rockefeller Center, The American Wing, and The Temple.

These exhibits gave the experience to the public of European paintings, African arts, Sculpture, and the Renaissance period. Over the years and various periods of expansion The Met has constantly organized and renovated various collections and sections having those renovations and by the early 2000s the renovation of the Greek and Roman art galleries which had took over a 15 year period to complete were finally done. Along with the painting, sculpture galleries which represented the early 20th century.

By late November of the year 2011 the museum galleries which focused on the art from the Arab lands, Turkey, and later Southern Asia was finally renovated and newly open to the public. Shortly after the Northern section of the museum which focused on The American Wing reopened to the public after also be renovated.

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The Met Cloisters opened to the American public in 1938. The Met Cloisters is the branch of the larger Metropolitan Museum of Art which focuses on the architectural side of things. More specifically the architectural medieval art. Over the next decades The Met Cloisters would continue to grow and expand as more works would be added to the collections. Over the years The Met Cloisters received would receive the 12- century limestone apse which was brought over by the church in Spain.

Over the years the various collections at The Met Cloisters continued to grow due to the generosity of various contributors such as Rockefeller. The Cloisters received various artifacts such as a 12 century ivory cross which was contributed to the English abbey of Bury Saint Edmunds.

Visual Thinking Strategies in Museum Education

The concept of Visual Thinking Strategies was first developed Philip Yenawine and Abigail Housen over a period of twenty-years ago. The initial idea behind the concept is obtain the skills behind literacy visual skills, communication, and making observations and learning how to communicate what they think and feel from their observations. The outline of using this practice which was recommended by Yenawine and Housen was the familiar routine of having students use open ended questions as they make their observations. What is going on in the particular picture? What are you observing to make you come to your conclusion?

Having students be able to make observations and use this type of outline was beneficial to used both in the classroom and the museum setting

because it gave students the opportunity to have a voice and express themselves and their visual creativity. Along with having educators the opportunity to listen and having students communicate and express among themselves.

As a museum educator at The Metropolitan Museum my main goal would be to use the approach which Philip Yenawine discusses in Visual Thinking Strategies: A Lecture by Philip Yenawine. In the video Yenawine discusses his experience working a group of high schoolers and trying to cover a lesson on greek mythology. He comments on how his initial experience was he asked the students what the different concepts were and what they had studied and didn't receive much commentary from the student's. The teacher explained that she taught the students about greek mythology, however, they never grasped the concept fully. He explains throughout school teachers spend a great deal of emphasis being taught concepts. However, never fully grasped them. Yenawine explains how during his time period working at The Metropolitan Museum he understood how the arts can be applied to basic concepts of life and it can be applied throughout.

Yenawine goes on to explain that in applying art and being able to grasp the concepts both students and adults need to be able to self identify with something in order to grasp the concept better. In this case he is discussing the concept of painting that everyone needs to be able to use their own tool or their own concept to be able to understand the painting.

He furthermore leads the discussion up to the 20th century. During this time period artists are developing their own signature styles. What really stood

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out to me was in terms of teaching the expression of art or anything or any subject for that matter is you can give the background information. However, you should give enough background so students and adults understand what is happening.

However, still allow room for observations and personal input. The problem with schools today as he gave for an example is teachers lecture and present information in a way that students can not fully grasp and maintain the concept. Therefore you can spend a great deal of time giving the background on a topic and students may not fully understand what they even learned. Therefore if they have something they can self identify with or relate with they can grasp the concept better.

In our class we discussed the idea of the importance of fitting the topic towards the age group you are working with. I remember Professor Williams explaining how in his experienced when he worked at The Metropolitan Museum he would make sure whatever exhibit he was discussing with his students was at their level. Example being if the students were age five and could only see up to a certain point he would get down on their level and observe from their viewpoint. I agree that is good on both accounts because you get to view from their perspective.

As someone who is a preschool teacher, if I was a museum educator and decided that I was going to bring my preschool aged students to The Metropolitan Museum of Art I would make sure to narrow down my lesson plan to suit their level. I would use Venawine approach and asked them what they think they saw in the picture? However, I would narrow it down to fii

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their age and asked them other questions such as what colors do they see? Do they see if people in the picture look happy or sad? By asking questions such as these it allows students to be able to grasp ideas of the picture or piece of art but geared toward their age group in a way that they would be able to comprehend.

Also, in my role of as a museum educator I would provide my students with crayons and paper and allow them to draw or color in the different colors that they see in the particular painting or piece of art they are observing at the time. I believe this would help my students be able to fully grasp the concept. If they have the ability to create something as they are observing. I find that young children creating art projects and coloring and just expressing themselves creatively speaking helps them in both their educational and cognitive growth.

In conclusion, as a museum educator and a preschool teacher, I support Philip Yenawine method of Visual Thinking Strategies. I hope to apply these concepts in both my career and I hope other educators in both schools and museums will follow the same lead. I believe that it is a two way street for both educators and students because students understand the means of having a voice in their education and expressing their ideas and creativity. While on the other hand educators are able to sit back and listen and observe instead of constantly lecturing and talking.

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