

## **MoMA**

- 1. Meet me at MoMA.  
How a niche experiment became a world benchmark.**
- 2. MoMA – March 2, 2015**
- 3. Meeting with: Laurel Humble**

Laurel Humble works for The MoMA Alzheimer's Project. In that role she coordinates and teaches the Meet Me at MoMA program in addition to leading training for professional and family caregivers. Throughout her career at MoMA she has taught programs for individuals with special needs and disabilities and groups from community organisations, as well as high school students from across New York City. Ms. Humble graduated from the University of Georgia with a B.A. in art history with a focus on the work of Jackson Pollock and the New York School.

### **4. Mission and vision of MoMA education in a nutshell**

From its mission statement it's immediately clear that MoMA considers education as one of its fundamentals <http://www.moma.org/about/index> Founded in 1929 as an educational institution, The Museum of Modern Art is dedicated to being the foremost museum of modern art in the world.

Central to The Museum of Modern Art's mission is the encouragement of a profound understanding and enjoyment of modern and contemporary art by the diverse local, national, and international audiences that it serves.

To achieve its goals The Museum of Modern Art recognises:

- That modern and contemporary art originated in the exploration of the ideals and interests generated in the new artistic traditions that began in the late nineteenth century and continue today.
- That modern and contemporary art transcend national boundaries and involve all forms of visual expression, including painting and sculpture, drawings, prints and illustrated books, photography, architecture and design, and film and video, as well as new forms yet to be developed or understood, that reflect and explore the artistic issues of the era.

- That it is essential to affirm the importance of contemporary art and artists if the Museum is to honour the ideals with which it was founded and to remain vital and engaged with the present.
- That to remain at the forefront of its field, the Museum must have an outstanding professional staff and must periodically reevaluate itself, responding to new ideas and initiatives with insight, imagination, and intelligence. The process of reevaluation is mandated by the Museum's tradition, which encourages openness and a willingness to evolve and change.

In sum, The Museum of Modern Art seeks to create a dialogue between the established and the experimental, the past and the present, in an environment that is responsive to the issues of modern and contemporary art, while being accessible to a public that ranges from scholars to young children. It's from this inclusive thinking that new programs originate.

In day to day education the core values that underlie the work are summed up in three principles:

### **Accessibility**

MoMA is a place for people of all ages and abilities.

We work to create access to art, to spaces, to resources, to experiences, to artists, to art-making, to conversations and to ideas.

We foster openness to art and ideas, with the goal of expanding perspectives about art and its role in our lives while enriching and nurturing communities of Learners.

### **Engagement**

We believe that art prompts meaningful conversations, critical thinking, creative expression, personal growth and social engagement that become memorable learning experiences.

We strive to create environments and experiences that help make connections with and between people and art, and the museum, and in doing so, build communities based on dynamic, challenging, playful, and transformative engagement

### **Creativity & Experimentation**

We believe that innovation is creativity with a purpose.

When The Museum of Modern Art was founded in 1929, it was conceived philosophically as a laboratory for experimentation with exhibitions, and equally as a place to explore new methods of teaching. Today we continue to embrace this spirit of the "laboratory" by continually researching and experimenting with new and creative methods of teaching, learning, and engagement.

The values of creativity, art making, and experimentation are also central to our own working process in which we encourage iterative development and creative and collaborative working practices. We believe in promoting creativity and experimentation to help us to depart from the familiar, challenge our assumptions, and help us gain new insights on our world.

#### 5. **"Meet me at MoMA" is a specific program for people with dementia and their caregivers.**

"Meet me at MoMA" is a specific program for people with dementia and their caregivers. This program has inspired many of museums around the world, including M HKA. One of the guiding approaches used at MoMA that has proven very effective is the 'VTS' or 'Visual Thinking Strategy'. The method focuses on three key questions:

- What's going on in this picture?
- What do you see that makes you say that?
- What more can we find?

More detailed information about the technique can be found at <http://www.vtshome.org/>

Making attempts to find out how a work of art can link to participant's life is the starting point in the interaction with people with dementia and their caregivers. The goal of the activity is to empower the connection between the artwork, the patients, the caregivers, the educator and the museum in all possible directions.

#### **It took time to learn about learning**

From 2006 "Meet me at MoMA" focuses on people with dementia still living at home. When the museum promotes this activity for the first time, only 25 came (of the 100,000 that were invited). But the success grew rapidly through word-of-mouth advertising. In

the beginning, the museum focused on the (art) experience of the person with dementia. But the caregiver soon became as more and more important in the whole of the activity. The relationship between the person with dementia and caregivers, and between the various participants is what concerns the educators most. Their shared experience creates a sort of community with art as a common interest.

### **Listening as an essential skill**

The educator pays a lot of attention to the social aspect interaction during the activity, and this is perhaps the biggest difference with other activities with (target) groups. This group dynamics ensures that about 80 people per month participate in the program. For the educators listening skills and alertness are of great importance: they should be able to grasp the interaction in real time. This hyper-alert state determines the success of the activity.

### **How applicable is the program to Flemish museums?**

M HKA did a first series of guided tours based on the Meet me at MoMA program in collaboration with Alzheimer patients and care givers. Seen the positive results the program has proven its usefulness. The coming years the experience will get the M HKA staff is ready to share their expertise with among other Flemish museums. The Alzheimer project in M HKA can be seen as a pilot project ready to be picked up by other museums. With the support of local organisations it will be possible to program the Alzheimer project more widely. For the government and researchers Alzheimer's disease is a top priority for the years to come (source?). With a population that for the first time in history will consist of a majority of 60+ citizens, the treatment of Alzheimer disease and the integration of patients in society becomes a prime importance concern. The M HKA can provide support and insights in different areas. The more museums can offer this program to the local communities the greater the contribution to society.

## **6. Takeaways**

### **Eight remarkable learnings about education**

- The MoMA Alzheimer's Project expanded on the success of the Museum's education programs for people with Alzheimer's disease and their care-partners. It's very interesting to see that one of the main goals of the project was to share what they were doing through the development of knowledge that can be used by museums, assisted-living facilities, and other community organisations serving people with dementia and their caregivers

- Whether you're a teacher, student, or lifelong learner, MoMA Learning is your destination for tools and strategies for engaging with modern and contemporary art. They offer very interesting free resources for teachers and students. Red Studio, for example, is a website developed by MoMA in collaboration with high school students about issues and questions raised by teens about modern art.

- A new program can start with a focus on a target group, an insight and progressive insight. It's through exploratory thinking that insights in the effectiveness of a program grow. Success isn't measured in numbers but in qualitative feedback of participants.

- It's good practice to calculate the cost of post research and testing from the outset of a program. It's not enough to invest time in the development of a program, the evaluation of findings has to be an integral part of the program. The research after the program has run is essential to refine the program. The growing knowledge of how participants experience the program is re-injected into the organisation.

- Education programs can run on different speeds. MoMA attracts a majority of tourists who have different needs than the local community. It's the short versus the long term. Both are treated equally important and demand specific resources. Long term community projects are only possible through grants. The fact that there's a supporting patron of a program stresses the importance of a professional, profoundly based, long term approach.

- The development of a long term program for local communities helps to build strong relationships between participants. The program is the start of social interaction that often continues after the museum visit.
- Once a program works it's worth the time and effort to refine and improve. Then spread it. The more museums can use your program, the better.
- A new program proves it's worth over time. To guarantee that the program can run for several years the involvement of a long term sponsor has proven essential.

#### Quotes

"At first the medical and scientific world delivered the experts on working with people with dementia. Now the educators and the participants of Meet Me at MoMA are regarded as the specialists." **Piet Van Hecke, M HKA Antwerp**

"Whatever the target group, an in depth study of their needs can unveil the sparkle of a new program. It all starts with an insight." **Peter Aerts, S.M.A.K. Ghent**