

## **Denver Art Museum Education Department**

The Denver Art Museum has a strong commitment to making art meaningful and enjoyable to people of all ages and backgrounds. Under the directorship of two of the country's top museum educators, Melora McDermott-Lewis and Patty Williams, the Museum's education department has taken a leading role both nationally and internationally in three areas: 1) research about what visitors need to make a museum visit successful and enjoyable, 2) creation of rich and innovative installed learning materials in collection installations and temporary exhibitions (i.e., audio tours, labeling, video and reading areas, response journals, and hands-on and art-making areas), and 3) interactive learning for young people both in school and family groups.

### **In-Gallery Installations**

Our richly interpreted installations provide Museum visitors with a variety of ways to explore the collections on their own. Visitors can access information about art works and the people who created them through illustrated labels built into cases, on reader stands, or in wall pockets; visit browsing areas and Discovery Libraries containing books, magazines, videotapes and other hands-on learning materials related to the cultures and art in each collection; and engage in drawing, making and journal activities designed to encourage visitors to explore the creative process and reflect on their experiences with art works in the galleries. DAM staff host 30-40 visits a year from national and international colleagues wanting to see our installations and family offerings.

### **Family Programs**

The DAM is committed to being a truly family-friendly institution. The Museum's approach is two-pronged: 1) offering programs and activities at "peak family times" (weekends and school breaks) and 2) integrating family materials into installations, exhibitions, and public spaces so there's always something for families to do. The backpack program (backpacks filled with games and learning materials for families to use on their own in the galleries) and the Just for Fun Family Center (a hands-on area on the lower level of the North Building) are out at peak family times. Discovery Library costume areas, eye spy and other gallery games, and the Kids Corner (a do-it yourself art activity area in the North Building's main lobby) are always available. In addition, more than 4,000 people participate in holiday break activities and summer classes and camps. New family activities in the Hamilton Building include digital gallery games on Gameboys, special kids' "nooks" in the African and Western galleries, and a variety of gallery games plus an array of new drop-in programs especially for families.

## **Adult and Teacher Programs**

Adult programs include a wide variety of tours, studio classes, courses, and workshops. The Hamilton Building has enabled us to broaden our range of offerings and increase our programming for younger adults. Our “Hotspot” program, in-gallery stations with touchable materials staffed by college students, reaches between 15,000–20,000 people each year. As adult learners, teachers are included in our adult program mix. Our one-day teacher workshops nearly always sell out and, according to participants, impact more than 60,000 students per year.

## **School Programs**

The hallmark of our school program is our interactive touring approach. Roughly 40,000 students visit the Museum each year, and over 4,000 participate in our artmaking tours. These more in-depth collection tours combine an interactive gallery experience with a related artmaking activity. Our introductory all-Museum tours, *Perception Games* and *Enchanted Castle*, have been featured at several national conferences, as have the touchable materials and activities we’ve developed for our collection spotlight tours. Spanish language tours are a small but vital part of our offerings.

## **Community Partnerships**

The education department is involved in several strategic collaborations designed to encourage museum visitation by a broader audience. Current collaborations include work with the Mayor’s Office for Education and Children, the University of Denver VIVA program, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Denver Public Library after school programs, LARASA and DPS Indian Education Programs as well as participation in key Museum events such as Día de los Niños, Celebration of Our Lady of Guadalupe and the annual Friendship Powwow.

## **Volunteers**

The education department has a dedicated corps of approximately 200 docents. These volunteers are responsible for our school tour program as well as providing public and special request tours to approximately 15,000 adults a year. Docents are also trained for architecture, highlights, and collection spotlight tours of the expanded Museum complex.

## **Visitor Research**

Visitor research is integral to the successful implementation of programs. The education department regularly makes use of formative testing, visitor panels, observation studies and small sample surveys to formulate and refine their offerings.

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