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Event
Response –
Exhibition
Opening:

Art
Exploration:

Jennifer Jurgenson

ARTS 299

Art Exploration

2/3/09

Nicholas Laurent's *La Famille de Bourbon-Conti* painted in 1737 immediately caught my eye as I passed it in the Krannert Art Museum. I was struck by the obvious action in the painting as juxtaposed to the still portraiture of some of the other pieces in the European gallery. I wanted to understand exactly what was going on and I stood in front of it for a long time attempting to create a story in my own mind to match what I saw.

The piece is oil on canvas and it depicts a scene in a forest. The scene shows a group of four obviously wealthy women (as shown by their elaborate dresses and dainty well-groomed puppy) seemingly just standing by as a woman in their group has fallen down. A man is pictured standing above the woman offering her help to which she refuses. Most of the action of the painting is being taken place in the foreground, but there are two sheep herders also pictured in the distance. The vegetation of the forest is mostly dark greens and browns and the vibrant pinks, blues and gold of the women's gowns stand out against their background. Two dogs are pictured in the painting as well. One of the dogs belongs to the group of wealthy women and is held by a pink leash while the other dog seems to belong to the man and lays lazily next to him. The exchange between the fallen woman and the man is at the center of the painting, with the four other women standing off to the left. The position of the characters in the painting makes it feel a little lopsided because there is hardly any action going on in the right side of the piece (aside from the sheep herders in the background). The characters in the painting are very lifelike and evoke a sense of movement. The man and woman coupling in the center is especially vivid and full of

movement.

I think this piece causes its viewers to stop and think the interaction that is taking place. The viewer wants to know why the fallen woman will not let the man help her up. Her arm is outstretched with her palm open as if to not even be appreciative of his effort. I think it is also very interesting to look at the four bystanders in the painting. These women obviously know the woman that has fallen but have made no moves to help her. It seems like the only character in the painting that has a reaction to the interaction between the man and the woman is the dog on the pink leash. The dog looks like it is barking in opposition. Only one other woman, besides the dog, is actually looking at the interaction. This painting fosters a general curiosity in the viewer because of the storyline it creates.

I think this painting may be trying to convey a message of independence on the part of the fallen woman. She could accept the help given to her by the man, but for whatever reason she does not. I find it interesting that these obviously wealthy women are taking a leisurely stroll in what seems to be a thick forest. Perhaps the group as a whole is showing their independence from their strict societal roles.

1. Why do you think that the fallen woman is refusing help from the man? Do you think these two people know each other, or do you think they just met? Is he wealthy or poor? Why is he walking with the women in the first place?
2. What is the significance of the two dogs in the painting? Why is one dog barking at the interaction between the man and woman and why is the other not calm?
3. What is the relationship like between the group of women? Do they like each other? Do they like the woman that has fallen -- if so, why haven't they moved to help?

Keywords:

**Object
Guide:**

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ARTS 299

2/16/09

Artist Unknown (attributed to Pieter de Hooch)

Dutch/Netherlands

Dutch Interior

Oil on canvas

Given 1942

Accession number: n/a

This relatively small painting (it is roughly about 14 inches x 14 inches) shows a domestic, interior scene. It was painted in the late 1600s using oil on canvas. The scene takes place inside a darkened kitchen. Almost the entire canvas is shrouded in darkness except for three figures (two women and a small child) in the front of the scene. There are only three sources of light in the painting: a fireplace that is set on the right side of the canvas, a wall candle on the right side as well (situated at the same height as the women's faces), and a candlestick being held by one of the women. One woman is sitting down with a large ladle in one hand and coins in the other hand. She is turned toward the other woman who is standing up and she has her hand outstretched as to give the other woman the money. The other woman in the painting is standing turned toward the seated woman. One hand is holding a candlestick and the other is reaching out to accept the money being given to her. The baby is seated in a high chair in between the two women facing the fireplace. The candlestick gives off the most light in the scene and works to light up both the women's faces.

This piece was intended to be owned by an average consumer. It reflects the Dutch idea of a clean and orderly home because straight lines are used throughout the painting. The home was seen as a direct reflection of the country and thus kept in an orderly fashion.

The woman who is seated in the scene is the "woman of the house" and the woman who is standing is the maid. The woman

of the house is giving her maid money to visit the market and buy the necessary groceries for the day. The scene takes place in the very early morning, thus there is no natural light in the room yet.

Pieter de Hooch's attribution to this painting is currently questionable. De Hooch was a Dutch painter that lived from 1629–1684 and the subject matter of the work is similar to his own pieces. While it is unclear whether Pieter de Hooch was the artist behind *Dutch Interior* or not, we do know that it is in fact a 17th century Dutch painting. The subject matter is similar to the household and domestic scenes produced by the Delft School during this time period. This type of interior painting showcases the detail put into creating a simple, yet pristine living space. As mentioned before the Dutch valued their living spaces and kept them in order as a sign of the well-run nation in which their homes resided.

Bibliography

Fuchs, R.H. *Dutch Painting*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1978.

Sutton, Peter C. *Pieter de Hooch, 1629–1684*. Hartford: Yale University Press, 1998.

Annotated
Question
Plan:

Jennifer Jurgenson

ARTS 299

Annotated Question Plan

2/16/09

Question Set I.

1. What do you see in this picture?

Two women and a child in a dark room that is lit by candles.

2. Where is the scene taking place?

In a kitchen. The room is very dark, but there is a fireplace and a pot for cooking.

3. What are the main characters doing?

The two women are exchanging money.

4. Why is it dark/why are the women using candles?W

It is night or it is early morning. They don't have electricity.

Question Set II.

1. Why does the maid have to go the market everyday?

Because they don't have electricity or a refrigerator.

2. How do you think life for Dutch people in the 17th century is different from our lives?

They have to wake up early and do work, they don't have the technology we do, have to make all their own food.

3. Does the room itself (if it is clean or dirty, neat or unorganized) show us anything about the people who lived there?

It shows us that they value clean and orderly spaces.

Question Set III.

1. Would this painting have been owned by a normal person?

Yes. It shows everyday life.

2. What can we learn from looking at still life portraits of other people's cultures?

We can learn how they lived, what they wore, the things they did with their time.

3. How would it look if someone painted a picture of your family's kitchen during the morning?

Family members eating breakfast, packing lunches, parents drinking coffee, the TV might be turned on

Tour Stop:

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ARTS 299

Tour Stop

9/24/09

1. The students will be exploring *Dutch Interior* in the Trees gallery. This painting's attribution is questionable, but the current didactic label attributes it Pieter de Hooch. The students will engage in a role playing/acting game.

2. Artist Unknown (attributed to Pieter de Hooch)

Dutch/Netherlands

Dutch Interior

Oil on canvas

Given 1942

Accession number: n/a

3. Supplies needed: ladle or some type of big spoon, chair, candlestick (or something that could represent a candlestick)

4.

Questions

Question Set I.

1. What do you see in this picture?
2. Where is the scene taking place?
3. What are the main characters doing?
4. Why is it dark/why are the women using candles?

Question Set II.

1. Why does the maid have to go the market everyday?
2. How do you think life for Dutch people in the 17th century is

different from our lives?

3. Does the room itself (if it is clean or dirty, neat or unorganized) show us anything about the people who lived there?

Question Set III.

1. Would this painting have been owned by a normal person?

2. What can we learn from looking at still life portraits of other people's cultures?

3. How would it look if someone painted a picture of your family's kitchen during the morning?

Class Management

Students should first and foremost examine the painting that we are going to be discussing. If there is time left, the person leading the tour could ask the students to walk around the Trees Gallery and find a painting that looks similar to or has some of the same characteristics of the *Dutch Interior* and then explain why.

Statements

"We are going to work together to pretend we are the characters in the scene. I'm going to ask a few volunteers to come up and act as if they are two women that are pictured. Your classmates will give you prompts of different situations that might have happened that morning and you will have to respond by acting out your reaction."

**Audience
Study –
Kids@Krannert:**

Jennifer Jurgenson

ARTS 299

Audience Study

2/3/09

Event Observations and Description – Kids @ Krannert, 2/28/09

Kids @ Krannert focused mainly on children's activities that correlated to the current exhibitions at the Krannert Art Museum. The purpose of this event was to get local community members to

the museum. Kids @ Krannert is a way for children to experience the art museum in a fun and interactive way. The exhibits that were highlighted were the Audubon paintings and the Jean Luc Mylayne photographs. Each activity incorporated the idea of birds or bird watching. The activities were: live bird drawing, mask making, a “Where’s Waldo” type bird finding game, bird call bingo and origami making.

The event was geared toward children ages 2–8. The people that attended were mostly families that were from the Champaign–Urbana area. Most came in groups of two or more children and a set of parents. There were not many sets of just a child and parent. The children were very lively and interacting with each other and their parents. The parents helped to guide their children through each of the activities.

Overall, I think the event went very well. The children seemed to enjoy themselves at each of the different activities. I also think the parents enjoyed the fact that the children got to take something home with them. I think that the event was a good way for the local parents to expose their children to something new. Every parent I talked to said the reason they came out was because the event was fun for the kids. The parents I talked to did not have any suggestions at ways the event could be improved.

Audience
Development of
College
Students:

Audio Guide
Script:

Audience
Study – Art
After Hours:

Event
Response –
Additional
Event:

Final Paper: <!-- /* Style Definitions */ p.MsoNormal, li.MsoNormal, div.MsoNormal {mso-style-parent:""; margin:0in; margin-

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ARTS 299

Final Paper

5/8/09

Museum Audiences:

How to Bring a Diverse Group of Visitors into the Art Museum

Museum outreach is one of the most important facets of how the museum is run as a whole. After all, what good is an amazing exhibition if no one is at the museum to enjoy it? It has been my opinion that museums segregate themselves to cater to a particular portion of society. The pretentiousness is only heightened when the subject of art museums comes up. I believe wholeheartedly that museums are meant for every person in a community to enjoy, whether they have a wide breadth of knowledge on the subject or whether they are completely new to the material being presented to them. Over the course of the semester, the ARTS 299: Museums in Action course has looked at how museums can be more open to a wider public audience. My work with helping to plan museum events has made me even more passionate about finding a way for everyone to enjoy what there is to offer at the Krannert Art Museum. The audience studies and student questionnaires only made me more interested in what the museum can do to bring in students as well as community members. Actually sitting down and talking to people in the Champaign-Urbana community made me realize that there is a desire to experience culture and art, but many people are just too intimidated to seek out these experiences on their own. I think it

should be every museum's goal to be as "engaged" as possible. An engaged museum refers to a space that is in tune with what the community surrounding it needs and wants. The subject matter of the museum space is engaging and draws visitors in without having to resort to gimmicks or low-brow spectacle. While I do want museums to be accessible to all, I in no way hope to change how the museum itself is presented. I believe that museums have a sense of intellectualism and learning that should stay intact. I think the bigger issue is trying to change *how* people think about museums and not changing *what* a museum essentially is in an attempt to make the visitor more comfortable. I know this task is difficult, but I think that people's perceptions of museums can change and that is what will create a more welcoming space and a more diverse audience.

When looking at trying to widen the range of audience members for a particular museum, we must first answer the question: who are museums for? It has been a long standing stereotype that museums are meant for the educated, upper class and tourists. In most big metropolitan areas the museum is placed in the busiest and most expensive part of the city. The Art Institute of Chicago is located along Michigan Avenue on the lakefront. This part of Chicago is generally geared towards tourists and people who have the means to take advantage of the high-priced Michigan Avenue shopping attractions. This same idea applies to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. The Met is located in the Upper East Side area of Manhattan which is a very affluent area of the city. Many times the cost of becoming a member of these museums is out of the range of normal, working-class community members. Because of these stereotypes, many people assume that if they are uneducated or do not have a high-paying job they are not welcome in the museum space. It is my opinion that museums are meant for every person, whether they are young or old, educated or not. They are, after all, public places that are meant to enrich the community, not segregate it. If anything, museums should be geared more towards people who are unfamiliar with their content so they can take advantage of learning about something they would have otherwise not been given the opportunity to learn about it. Overall, museums are meant for every member of a community to enjoy and their programs/outreach activities should represent that.

There are several ways that any museum can get more community members to enjoy the programs that are offered. I think we put several of these ideas into action when planning the events for the Krannert this semester. I think planning special events for certain members of the community is a great idea. Kids @ Krannert brings families out to the museum for a fun day of activities and hopefully learning. After talking to parents of the children who participated in Kids @ Krannert, it became clear to me that families are actively searching for fun things to do on the weekends. Every parent was pleased with the activities we provided and wanted to know when more events like Kids @ Krannert would be happening. Planning special days that are isolated to one type of visitor is a great way to get them into the museum and perhaps to get them more comfortable with the space so they will have a stronger desire to return.

I think that Art After Hours was a great learning tool for us. Even though the event didn't turn out the way that we imagined it would, I still think there were valuable pieces of knowledge that can be taken from it. First, the idea of involving other student organizations in the planning and execution of Krannert events geared towards the college community became even more important. It was obvious that we had the amount of people we did at Art After Hours because of the involvement of the Runway group. I think that making the museum events relevant to students on a different level is a great way to get them more comfortable and more interested in coming to the museum. We talked several times about inviting RSO's to help the Museums in Action students with Art After Hours and I think this is a very easy way to get another facet of university students in the art museum. I predict that students will want to support their friends in different RSO's and come out to the event in greater numbers. Even if they aren't directly interacting with the artwork and the event is more social, I think that the students who come will be more apt to come back to the museum because they are more comfortable with the space.

As discussed in the Kate Goldman reading, another way for museums to appeal to wider audience is through the use of new technologies. Goldman references cell phone audio guides in her article entitled, *Cell Phones and Exhibitions 2.0: Moving Beyond the Pilot Stage*. Introducing new ways for visitors to interact with the artworks is, in my opinion, a good way to get more people to

come to a museum. The Krannert is already on the path of using new technology to better assist its visitors. The podcasts are a way for museum goers to extend their learning even outside of the museum. Any person, at any time can access information about a particular painting in the Krannert. This technology driven movement is a way for people to experience the museum without even having to leave their home. Of course a podcast and a photograph of a piece can never replace the actual act of going to a museum and viewing works. That is why I think the new program of lending out ipods for audio guides is great from visitors who genuinely want more knowledge about a painting. I have my own opinions on the concept of using cell phones and ipods in a museum setting, but regardless I think that people are attracted to new technology and with museums incorporating this technology into their programs they will find themselves reaching a wider demographic. Perhaps the teenager who was intimidated by the art museum will be more willing to come if they are given the opportunity to hear about the artworks while listening to their ipod, something that is very comfortable and non-intimidating to them.

In trying to reach a wide audience it is very important to look at the ways in which people learn in the museum setting. It wouldn't be right if the museum brought in a wide range of visitors, but then failed in teaching them in the way that is most congenial to their learning patterns. I look to the John Falk and Lynn Dierking book titled, *Learning from Museums: Visitor Experiences and the Making of Meaning*, to find the answers to helping wide ranges of audiences learn in a sufficient and meaningful way. Falk and Dierking bring up the contextual model of learning as a means for creating an environment conducive to learning. There are three levels of the contextual model: personal context, sociocultural context and physical context. Each of these levels can then be broken up in sub-categories: personal context can be separated into motivations and expectations, prior knowledge, interests, and beliefs, and choice and control; sociocultural context can be separated into within-group sociocultural mediation and facilitated mediation by others; and physical context can be separated into advance organizers and orientation, design, and reinforcing events and experiences outside the museum. I think it is so important to understand and put the contextual model of learning to use. If a museum visitor has an exceptionally rewarding learning experience at the museum the chances that

they will return are so much higher than if their learning experience was very shallow or lacking depth. It is important to understand visitor expectations and motivations and then use that knowledge to cater to them. I also think it is important to always relate the material in museums back to the visitors' everyday lives and keep reinforcing the ideas and concepts the learned even after they leave the museum space.

In conclusion, I am very interested in the idea of how museums can create better programs and outreach opportunities for all the members of a community. The Museums in Action class has taught me that there is no "stereotypical" museum visitor and events can be created to cater to any style, taste, or interest. I believe that everyone needs to be given the chance to learn and a museum is great place for that learning and cultural intake to occur. By understanding how patrons learn and what they would like to see, I think museums will do a far better job in serving their communities. It is important to look at every member as an individual and every group as important.

Works Cited

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