

Slide 1) Introduction:

Good morning and welcome to Outside the Box: Activities in the Galleries. My name is Lee Rubinstein and I have been a docent at the Getty Center in Los Angeles since the inception of the program in 2012.

The Getty Collection is focused on Western European art from the 12th to the 19th century with paintings, drawings, pastels and manuscripts as well as sculpture and decorative arts objects. Mr. Getty was particularly enamored of French furniture and the collection showcases that. The photography collection includes everything from the time of photography's invention to the present day. The The Getty Villa houses the Antiquities collection.

While we welcome the public in droves, an important part of the Center's mission is offering tours to school children from across the state. we provide busses to Title I schools and typically welcome over 150,000 students annually.

The goal of today's workshop is to show you some different ideas about activities in the galleries for both adult and student visitors. You will leave here with a workbook and, I hope, some inspiration.

I hope you'll have a chance to get to interact with the other docents in the room and to start that off, we're going to jump right in with an activity.

Slide 2: (image)

Please pair up with someone near you. Introduce yourselves and then look at the image on the screen. Now imagine it is the cover of a book. What is the book about? (Discussion)

In this workshop, we're going to talk about different activities that fall into 9 distinct categories. I suspect we'll run out of time, but that's okay because, as I mentioned, each of you is going to leave with a workbook that has all the things we will be talking about. You don't even have to scramble to take notes if you don't want. The pages of the workbook are intentionally not double sided so that, in the future you can make notes about what worked, what didn't and, of course, your own brilliant new ideas.

Slide 3: Why activities? (see slide for participant responses)

Slide 4: What makes a good activity? (see slide for participant responses)

Slide 5: What are some activities you've done?

Slide 6: Working with Students and/or Adults

Slide 7: Drawing Activities

Drawing has lots of positive aspects to it, as you can see. But, there are some drawbacks as well. For me, if anyone asks me to draw anything, I'm like a deer in the headlights, and that's because I cannot draw a straight line with a ruler. But, when push comes to shove, it can be freeing and it's very popular, particularly with students.

Slide 8: (image)

This example is Draw and Describe. Due to time constraints, we won't be able to do it, but it is in your workbook. Basically, working in pairs, one person faces the work and the other has his or her back to it. The one looking at the art must describe it so that the other person can draw it without actually seeing it. The drawings might come out rather wonky sometimes, but that's part of the fun!

Slide 9: Sound Based Activities

We think of galleries as quiet places, but they don't have to be. Assuming it is allowed, music, for example, can offer a fresh approach to an object. Having students sing, well, the younger ones at any rate, can be a great way to engage them.

For the more sophisticated crowd (you know, anyone over 12), conversation may be the sound we think of.

And of course, we have to keep in mind that some visitors may be intimidated at having to do anything that is considered performing. We also have to be respectful of others in the gallery.

I remember one occasion when a group of us did this exercise during a training. For some reason, we got carried away replete with ridiculous accents, heated discussions and lots of lovey dovey talk. We were surprised to see how many visitors who were passing through actually stopped to listen and engage with us.

Slide 10: (image)

Let's look at these two portraits and ask them to have a "conversation." What might they say, based upon how they are dressed, their body posture, etc.? (Discussion)

Slide 11: Movement Based Activities

Whether you are a Rhodes scholar or a kindergartener, we all have bodies. The ability to move around and use your body to express what you are feeling is not only freeing, it gets you to really interact with the art. And it's with you at all times, so supplies, unlike clothing, are optional.

In a pre-COVID world, this activity is a no-brainer, especially for students. But, these days, we are much more cautious. So, we aren't going to actually get ourselves into these poses, but suffice it to say tableaux are a great resource.

Slide 12: (image)

Slide 13: Writing Activities

Writing can be academic, or it can be fun, and frankly, everything in between. In your workbook, you will find examples of 9 different writing activities. But today, I want to focus on memes. So what is a meme? It's a captioned image with the intention of being humorous. And they are all over the internet. It differs from a thought bubble (discussed in the workbook) which could be amusing or serious, but with memes, there's no doubt. The sillier the better.

Slide 14: (image) Here's one I came up with for Orazio Gentileschi's *Lot and His Daughters* painted in 1622.

Slide 15: (images)

I have four examples of objects here. Take a couple of minutes and come up with a clever meme for one of them. Don't worry if you don't think it's brilliant. We're all friends here and are experimenting. (Discussion)

Slide 16:

We all love to talk...well...except perhaps for middle school students. And finding new ways to use our words can be fun, if we make it so. In your workbooks, you'll find quite a few examples, 15 I believe. But since this isn't the Gilligan's Island workshop (you know, 3 hours!), we'll limit ourselves to one activity.

Discussion-based activities work for almost everyone, although they should be tailored to the age of your audience. It's pretty easy to do; most of these activities require few, if any, supplies. But, there's always the other side of the coin. Sometimes your group is shy, or perhaps English isn't their first language and some concepts may be more challenging to express. So, knowing your group is very helpful in this circumstance.

Slide 17: (image)

One of my favorite activities with older students and adults is Crime Scene. It's a completely off-the-wall way of looking at an object.

As detectives, your group is tasked with figuring out the murderer, the victim, the weapon, the method and the motive. Detailed instructions and more examples are in the workbook.

Slide 18: Discovery Based Activities

Most visitors are game for some exploring. Having to find a small detail can reinforce the idea of close and slow looking at an object. Remember, it's not just looking closely, it's about slowing down as well. According to the research, most visitors look at a work of art for about 3.2 seconds before they move on to another object.

With much of these types of activities, the burden will be on you, as some preparation may be required.

Additionally, you have to scout out where the works you want to use might be hung. If a painting is skyed it may be hard for visitors to pick out those tiny details.

Slides 19: (image)

The dreaded words of a high school essay...compare and contrast! But this one will be more fun. If you have two paintings in your galleries of a similar subject (and chances are you will be drowning in them in any International Gothic or Renaissance gallery), ask your visitors to look at the two works closely. They should be looking for similarities and differences.

There's an example of Mary Magdalene in your workbook, but let's take a quick look at these two works. They are the same story, but how do they differ? How are they similar?

Slide 20: Game Based Activities

Games can be terrific icebreakers. Of course, some of the more boisterous ones may not be allowed in your museum, so look at the possibilities with an eye toward what you might or might not be able to use. Check out your workbook for ideas.

Slide 21: Emotion Based Activities

Art is all about emotion. You may love it or hate it. Indifference is usually not a problem.

We all want our visitors to engage with a work. Sometimes, they need a bit of encouragement. Perhaps they are shy or don't want to express their feelings in front of strangers.

So what can we do? Well, activities can go along way toward making it easier for visitors to pinpoint what they are feeling in a way that is non-threatening

In your workbook, there are several more suggestions. The activity I am sharing today is one that requires close looking, but can also engage the audience as they let their imaginations run wild.

Slide 22: Heartbreak Hotel

In this activity, someone has been devastated by a bad break up ("It's not you; it's me.")

Picking one image, come up with a great story as to what happened. I'll randomly ask for volunteers for each image and you need to tell your stories as to what prompted the break up based on what you see in the art. "She is very clingy; he never appreciates me"...you know what I mean. (Discussion)

Slide 23: A Bag of Tricks: Discussion (review pros and cons)

There are two schools of thought about props. Some educators feel visitors need only their imaginations while others say a bag of supplies is helpful, especially with students. Personally, I think props can be quite helpful. Let's look at these items and I'll explain the advantages of each one.

Slide 24: (images)

Gold leaf: Since it's challenging for visitors to really understand just how thin and fragile gold leaf is, I keep a piece sandwiched between two pieces of plexiglass.

Loom: When discussing tapestries, it's fun to demonstrate the art of weaving. In the past, I used students, asking several of them to stand in a line and have one child walk in front of the first one, behind the second, in front of the third, etc.

Acrylic color paddles: These are great to demonstrate color mixing without any paint. You simply put the paddles together, hold them up to the light and students can see that blue and yellow make green.

Canvas: This is great to allow visitors, especially students, to touch an actual canvas.

Agate slices: Mr. Getty was all about French furniture and some of it features inlays. These slices are great to pass around so that visitors can get a sense of the material used in that cabinet or table.

Small shapes: These are great for very young students. Students can match the shapes with things they see in the galleries, whether it is in a painting, a sculpture or in decorative objects such as furniture, glass

or pottery.

Having things that visitors may touch helps them relate to the object and they might be less inclined to touch the actual item, and avoid giving security a heart attack.

Slide 25: Close and thank you.

Q and A:

