



# BEYOND THE TOUR: PURPOSEFUL MUSEUM PROGRAMMING

Ames Morton-Winter, M.A.Ed., ALM  
The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art  
Coordinator, Youth and Family Programs

Ashley Williams, M.A.  
Gadsden Arts Center & Museum  
Curator of Exhibitions & Collections

## Workshop Objectives:

Participants will explore approaches to museum programming that go beyond traditional knowledge-centered tours by emphasizing dialogue, reflection, creativity, and emotional response. Through hands-on activities and shared examples, we will explore practical strategies to design experiences that foster inclusion, connection, and lasting impact for diverse audiences.

## **Guiding Values:**

Present and Attentive

Curious

Non-judgmental

Respectful

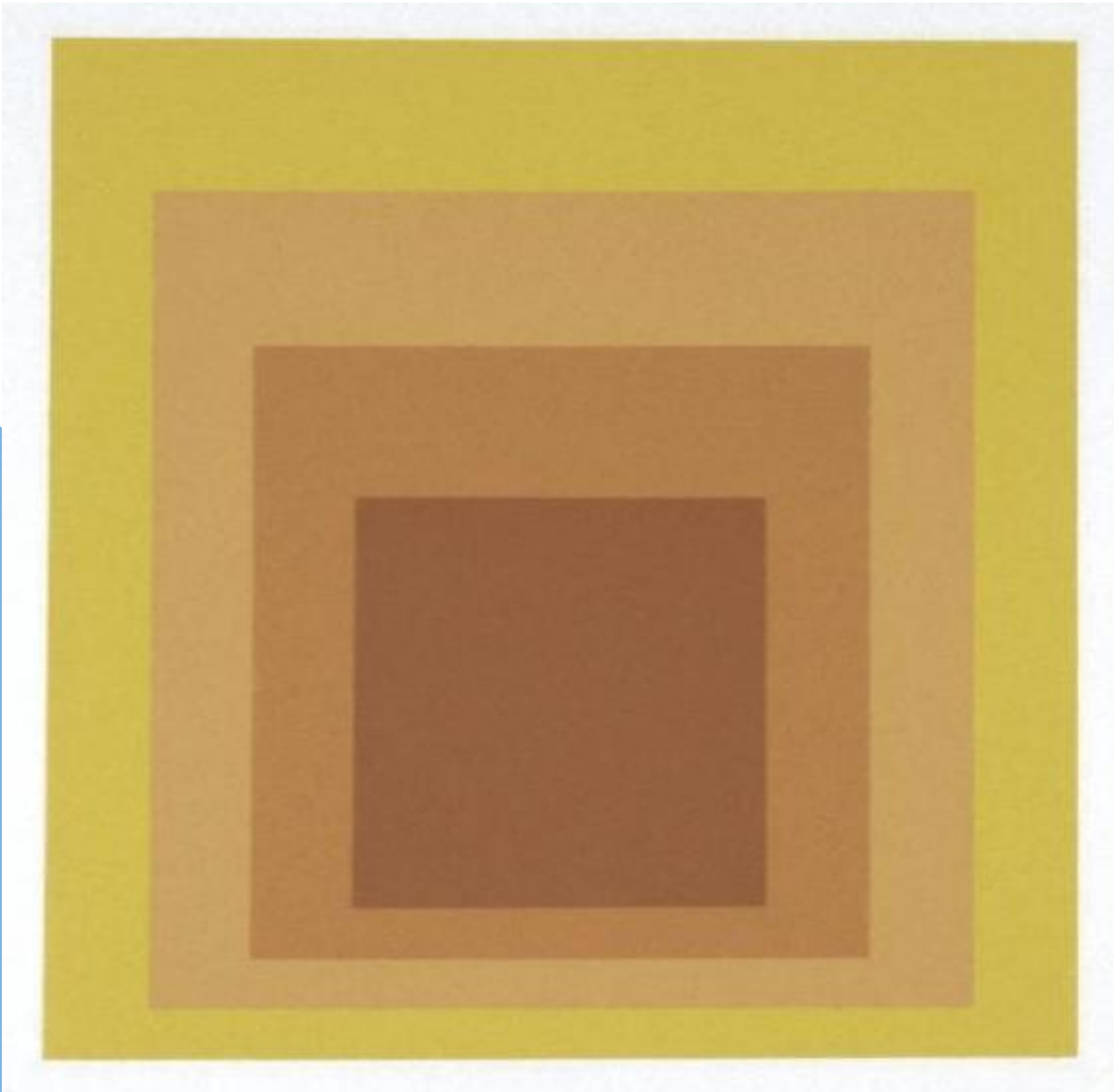
Authentic

Open and Accessible

# Agenda

- Grounding
- Group Response/Turn and Talk
- Introduction to Visitor Response Pedagogies by Ames Morton-Winter
- Whole Group and Small Group Explorations of VRPs
- Introduction to Edu-Curation by Ashley Williams
- Art Making in Galleries: Whole Group Sketching
- Case Study and group share





Homage to the Square, 1970s  
Josef Albers  
Screenprint  
Gift of Mrs. Robert Feitz  
SN8551.16

A moment to ground  
ourselves  
in the present

Box Breathing



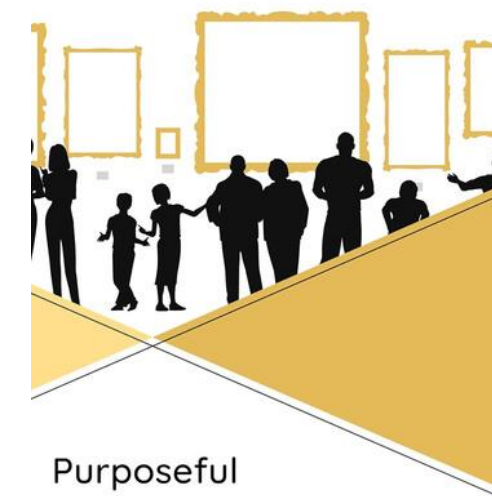
# Ames Morton-Winter

## The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art

### Coordinator, Youth and Family Programs

Purposeful Museum Programming  
Using Visitor Response Pedagogies  
(2024)

BA History, M.A.Ed Curriculum and Teaching,  
M.A Museum Studies/Education, EdD student in  
Museum Education and Visitor-Centered  
Curation



Purposeful  
Museum Programming  
Using Visitor Response  
Pedagogies

Ames Morton-Winter



# Ashley Williams

## Gadsden Arts Center & Museum

### Curator of Exhibitions & Collections

BA Art History

MA Art History

PhD Candidate, Museum Education and Visitor-Centered Curation

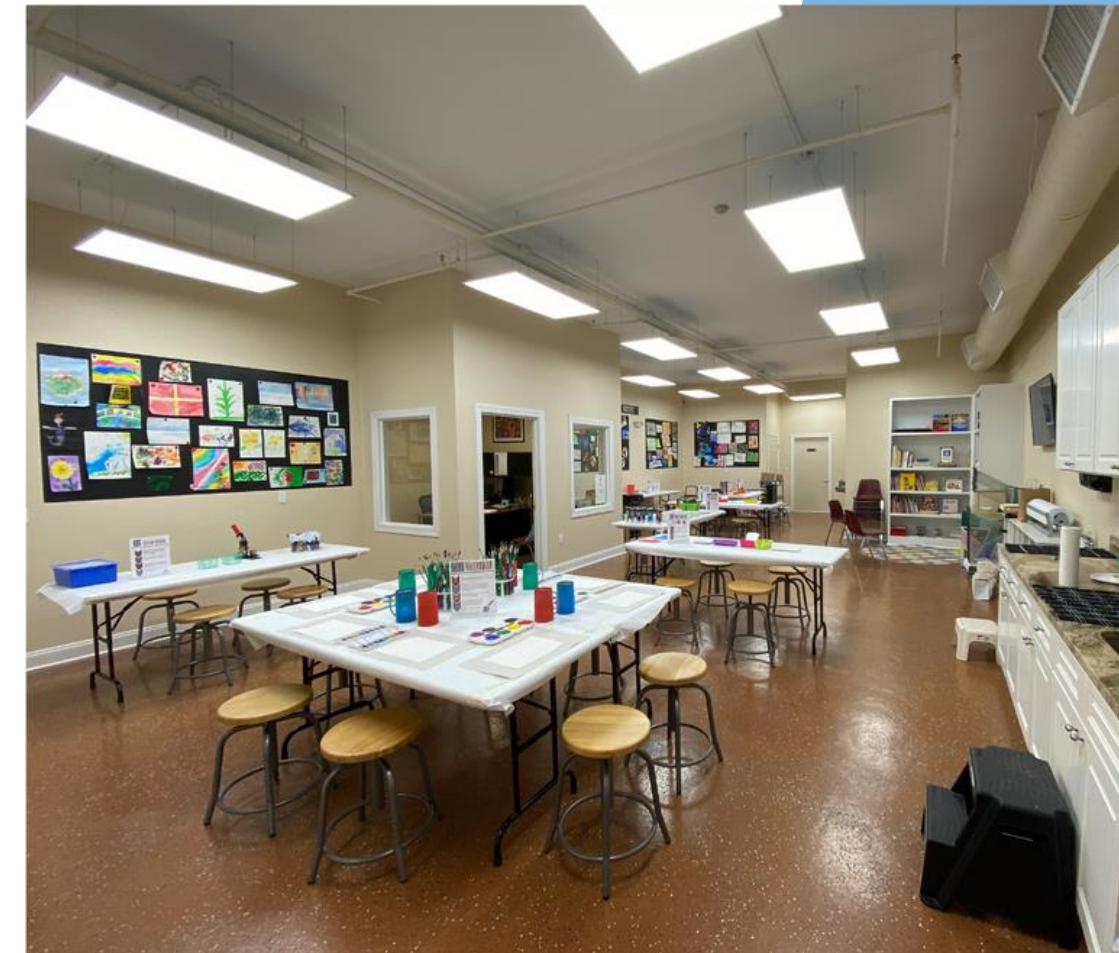
**Started as an annual exhibition  
Bell & Bates Building (1912)**

**AAM Accreditation**

**Six Galleries**

**ArtZone**

**Museum Shop**



## Introductions:

name, institution, role

If you like, share a time when you felt an immediate sense of comfort when you participated in an event or a program. This could be at a museum but doesn't need to be.

How were you impacted? Why do you think you still remember this?

## YES/NO/MAYBE - WHOLE GROUP RESPONSE ACTIVITY

Most museums design programs with institutional priorities in mind more than visitor needs.

Traditional docent-led tours no longer meet the needs of today's audiences.

A museum educator's job is more about creating conditions for discovery than delivering information.

Every visitor wants to actively participate in a program.


If visitors never learn a single fact but leave feeling inspired, the program is still successful.

Programs designed with community voices should take precedence over curator-driven ones.

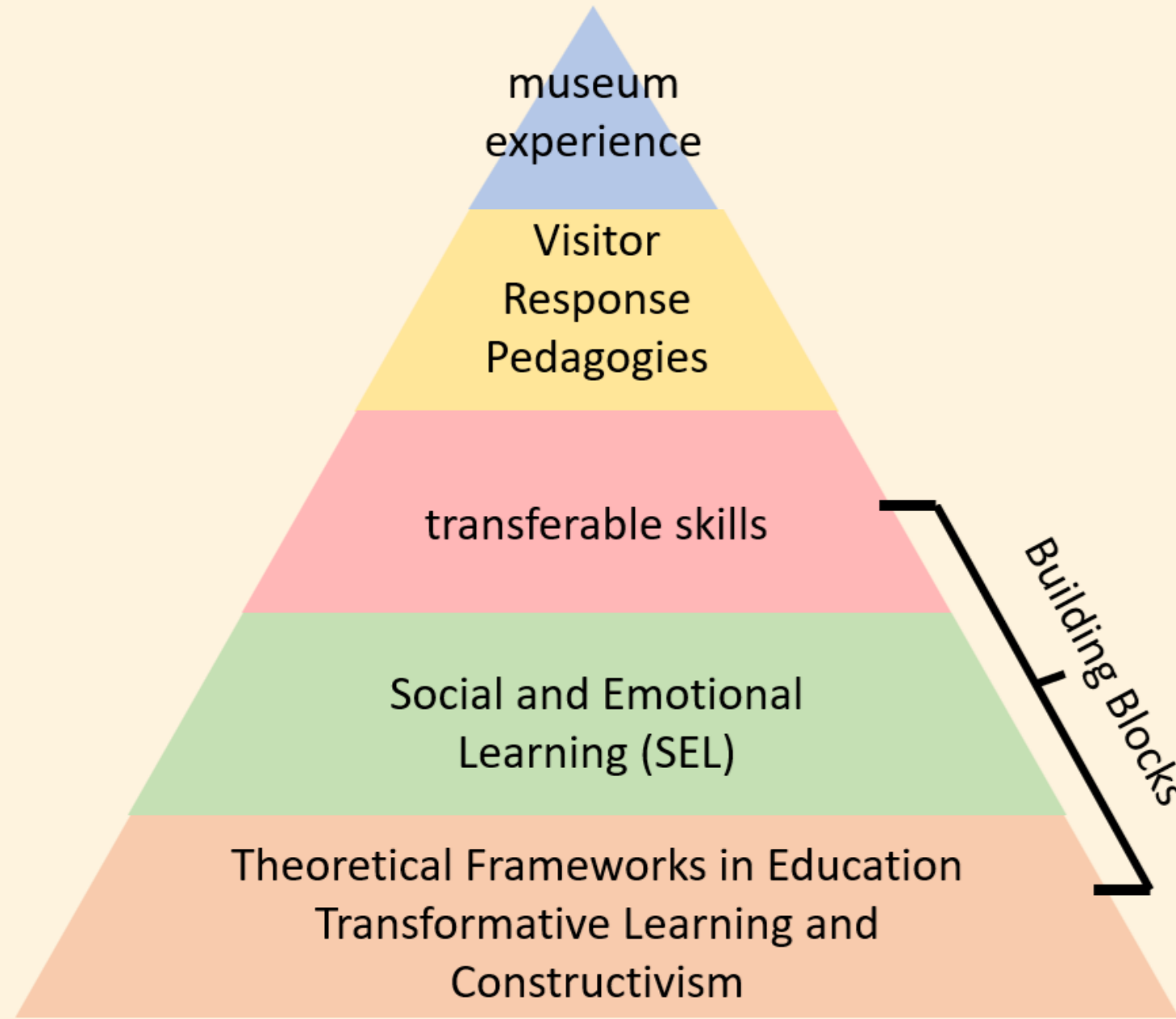
Visitors don't need to see everything — depth with one object can be more powerful than covering many.



# Visitor Response Pedagogies and Fleeting Interactions

- **How do you make an impact with short interactions that are often fleeting and singular?**
  - **How do you create trust with your visitor and make it a safe place for the collective visitor group?**
  - **How do you choose gallery activities that move the needle in some way for the visitor?**
  - **What are the criteria for creating a impactful experience/choosing an activity?**
- 

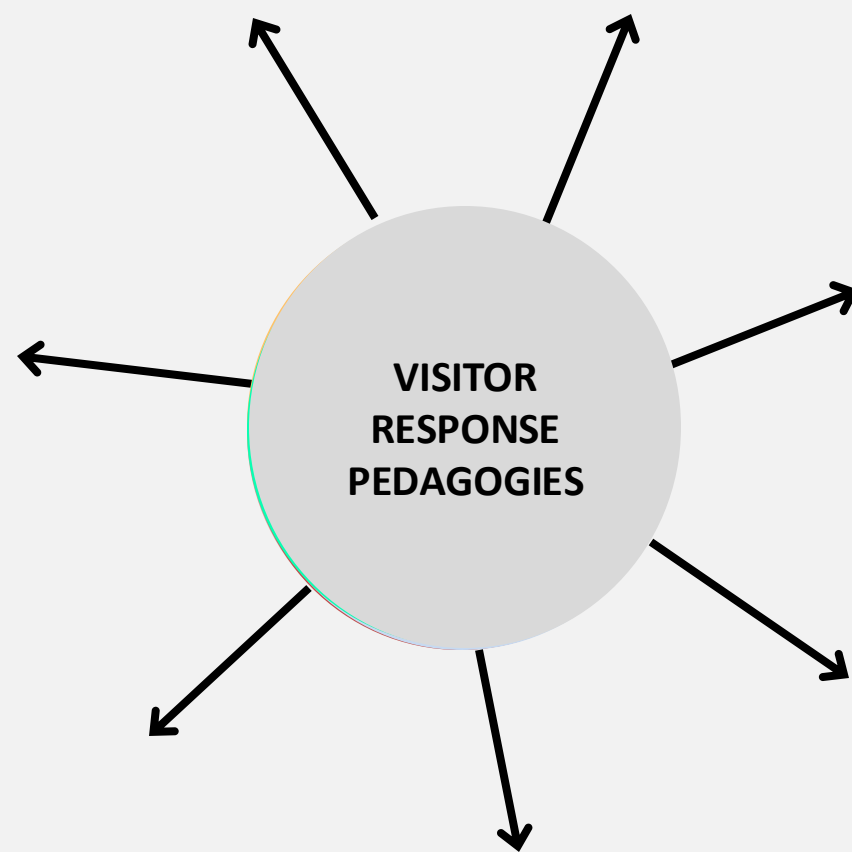
## The VRP Framework



Ames Morton-Winter, M.A.Ed., ALM

# Visitor Response Pedagogies

Educational practices that harness participants' reactions or responses to art or other kinds of artifacts in order to build transferable skills.



Ames Morton-Winter, M.A.Ed, ALM

# The 7 Transferable Skills of Visitor Response Pedagogies

Transferable skills are skills that are utilized in many forms of learning

# Whole Group Exploration: Sensory Soundscape

TRANSFERABLE SKILLS:  
ACTIVE LISTENING, CLOSE LOOKING, COLLABORATION,  
COMMUNICATION, CRITICAL THINKING, EMPATHY, SELF-AWARENESS



**Plowing in the Nivernais, 1850**  
Rosa Bonheur  
oil on canvas  
Bequest of John Ringling, 1936

**SEE**

**HEAR**

**FEEL**

**SMELL**

**TASTE**

# Small Group Exploration: GROUP POETRY

As a group, choose either the image from The Ringling collection or the image from the Gasden collection.

Each person will use a strip of paper and a pencil to write one line of poetry for this image. It does not have to rhyme, be a complete sentence, or be coordinated with the rest of the members of your group.

If it's easier, you can think of this in terms of six words, like a six-word narrative (another fun activity!).

You have three minutes to write your line of poetry. Then, each person should read their line aloud to the group.

After everyone has shared, assemble these lines into one "GROUP POEM". If you want to use the glue dots to adhere them to a piece of paper, feel free.

Let's share!



# Mindfulness:

Mindfulness is a powerful, restorative practice well suited to museums which tend to be places of calm contemplation. It prepares individuals to be more present and engage more deeply which can lead to significant impacts on social-emotional learning and transferable skills.

Breathing, Sensory Activities, Visual Journaling and other kinds of Art Making, Embodiment, Yoga, Meditations (empathy/loving-kindness), Slow Looking, Naming Feelings, etc.



## Transferable Skills addressed in the activities covered so far:

**Box Breathing:** Active Listening, Close Looking/Observation, Self Awareness

**Turn and Talk:** Active Listening, Collaboration, Communication, Critical Thinking, Self Awareness

**Sensory Soundscape:** Active Listening, Close Looking/Observation, Collaboration, Communication, Critical Thinking, Self Awareness

**Group Poetry:** Active Listening, Close Looking/Observation, Collaboration, Communication, Critical Thinking, Empathy, Self Awareness

**Mindfulness:** Active Listening, Close Looking/Observation, Collaboration, Communication, Critical Thinking, Empathy, Self Awareness

# A TO Z VRP TOOLKIT

Art Detectives  
Artful Adjectives  
Arts And Letters  
Awe Walk  
Before & After  
Blind Drawing  
Box Breathing  
Breathing  
Cabinet Of Curiosities  
Color By Number  
Color YOUR EMOTIONS  
Curator Challenge  
Daily Schedule  
Embodiment  
5-4-3-2-1 Breathing  
Fortunately, Unfortunately  
5 Senses Immersion Experience  
Geocaching

Group Poetry  
Imagined Conversations  
Juxtapose This  
Loving Kindness Meditation  
Mind Mapping  
Mindfulness  
Multiple Interpretations  
Museum Melodies  
Naming Feelings  
Observe, Connect, Reflect  
One Word  
Personal Response Tour  
Photobomb  
Rapid Fire Response  
Repeat Photography  
See, Think, Wonder  
Seek And Finds

Six Word Narratives  
Sleep Sessions  
Social Practice Programs  
Sound Baths  
Staff Suggestions  
Tableau Vivant  
Talkback Wall  
Tour By Theme  
20 Questions  
Think, Pair, Share  
Tools Of The Artist  
Turn And Talk  
Upside Down Drawing  
Viewfinders  
Viewpoints  
Visual Journaling  
Visual Thinking Strategies  
Yoga  
Zoom In, Zoom Out

# EDU-CURATION

## Previous Experiences

Museum Educator – Art Museums, Children’s Museum

Curator – Academic Art Gallery, Art Museum

## Pat Villeneuve and Ann Rowson Love

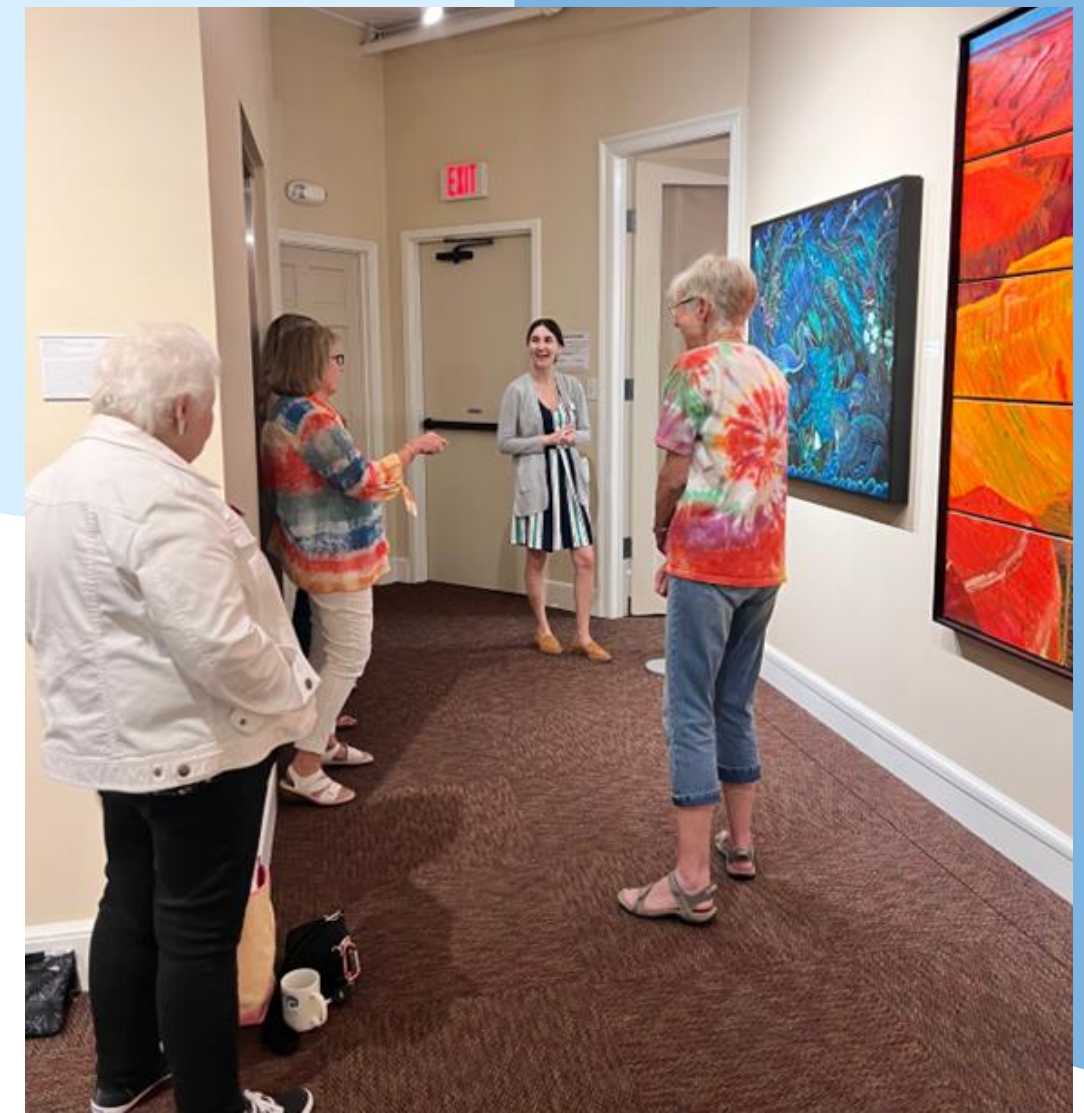
Collaborative, visitor-centered approach in art museums where curatorial and educational functions are integrated to create more balanced and meaningful exhibitions for audiences

- Approaching exhibition layouts
- Programs
- Tours



# 20 Minute Art Talks

- Throughout 2023–2024
  - Every first Wednesday of the month at 12pm
- Need for daytime, informal programming
- In person and on Zoom
- Fun and informal conversation comparing two works of art – discussion, ask questions, share comments
- Visual Thinking Strategies – ish
- Transferable skills: active listening, close looking/observation, communication, collaboration, critical thinking, empathy



# Looking at Art Through Art Making in the Gallery

Permanent Collection Exhibition with work on loan from Art Bridges



# Looking at Art Through Art Making in the Gallery

ArtZone activity brought into the Gallery

Asks visitors to draw or share their thoughts and feelings

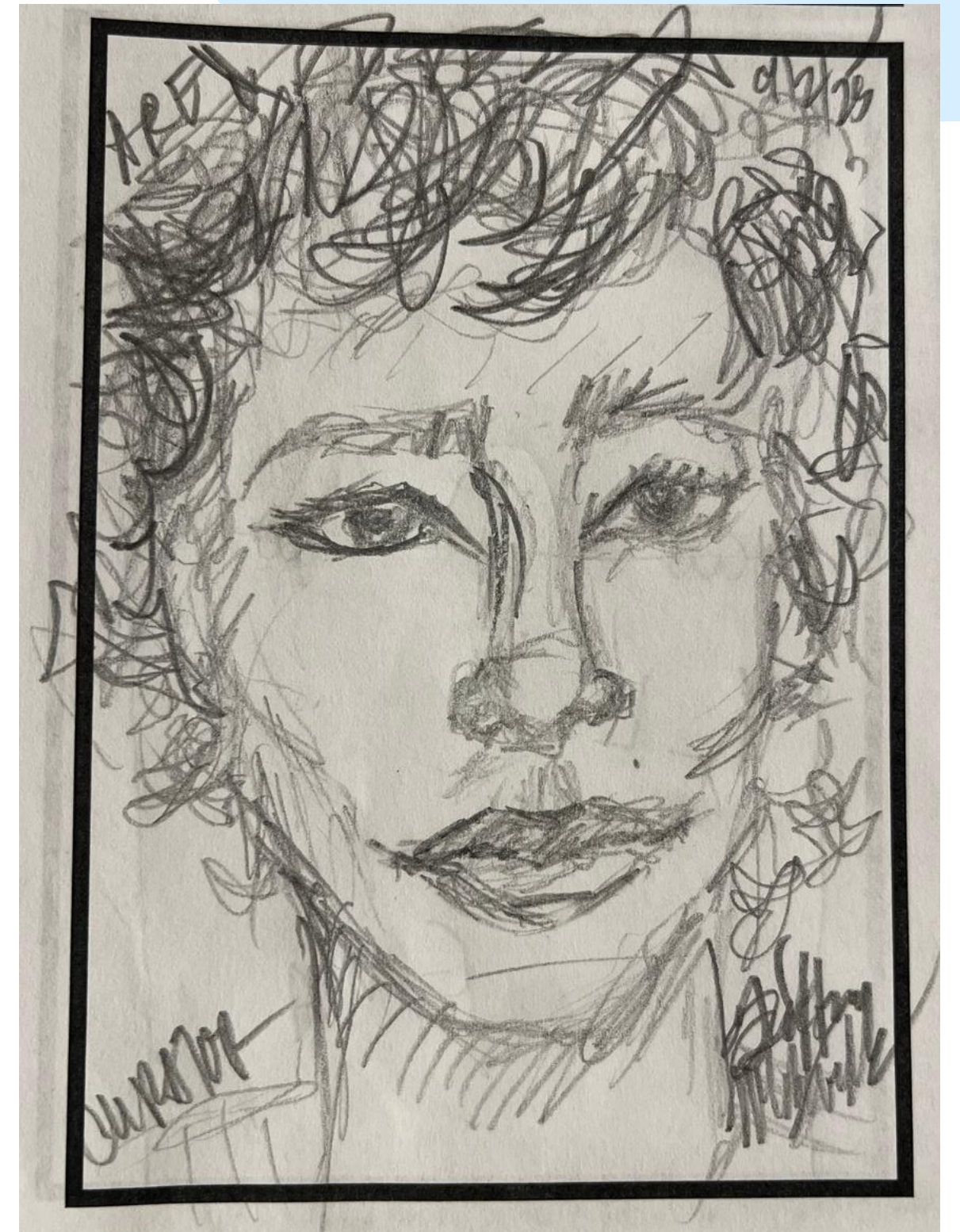
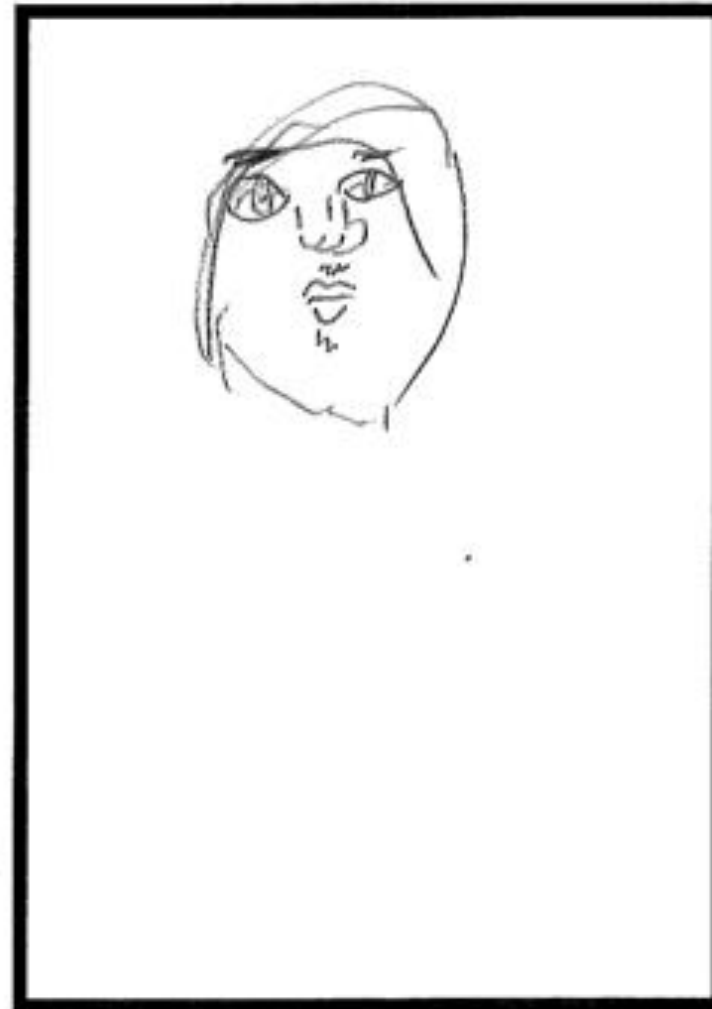
Informal activity to engage with the work outside of a tour



# Looking at Art Through Art Making in the Gallery

Transferable skills:

- Close looking/observations
- Self awareness
- Empathy
- Communication



# Small Group Sketching Activity

## Who are you?

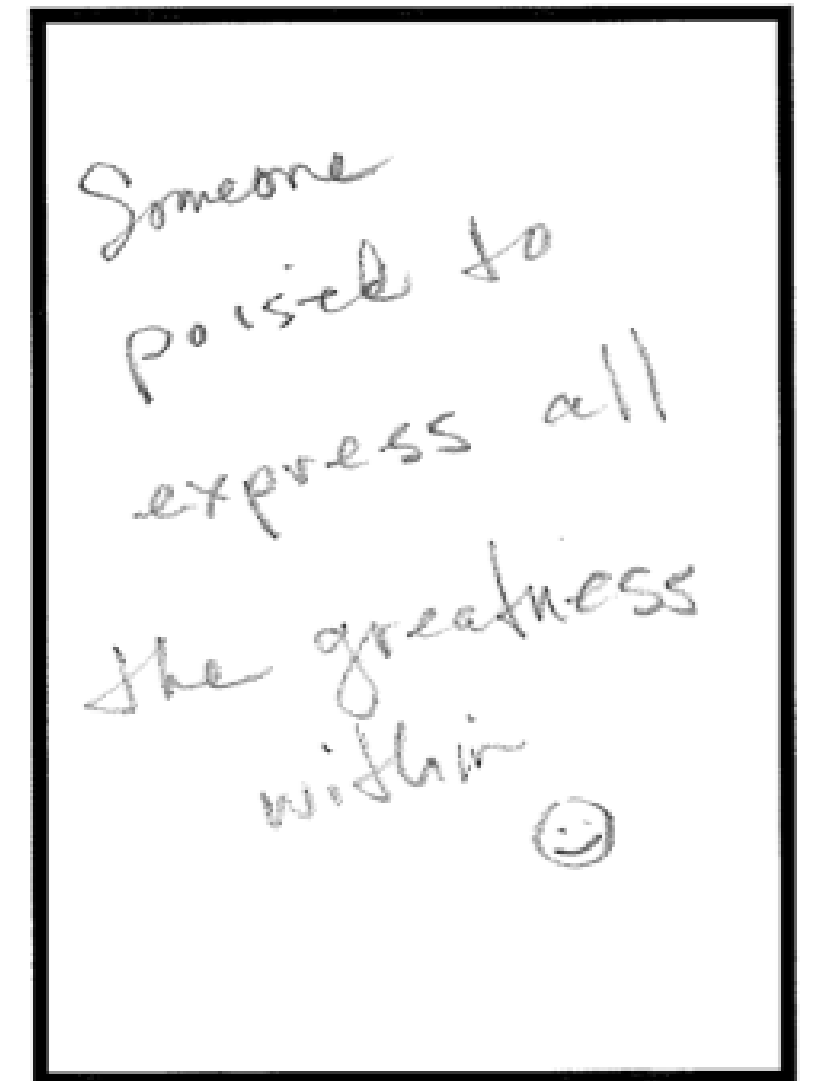
- Use your phone camera to take a moment to look at yourself.

## Ask yourself...

- How do I feel when I see myself?
- What makes me who I am?
- What is something special or unique about me that others may not see right away?
- In what ways has the community shaped who I am?

## Share your experience

- Write your thoughts or feelings, or draw your self-portrait.
- Consider sharing with the person next to you what you saw, felt, or discovered.



# Final Group Activity - A Case Study

## Case Study 1: "Gallery Stories: Community Voices"

### Program Description:

Weekly program for teens and young adults exploring contemporary art exhibitions through storytelling.

Visitors are invited to select one artwork and create a short narrative, poem, or reflection inspired by it

### Attendance & Accessibility:

Free with museum admission. Materials provided.

### Program Structure:

Facilitator introduces one or two works.

Visitors choose an artwork and respond creatively.

Participants share stories in small groups.

Reflection circle: discuss what the stories reveal about personal and shared experience

### Marketing:

Social media, school partnerships, teen programs newsletter.

### Belonging & Engagement Discussion Points:

How does creative and/or personal response to art support multiple ways of knowing?

Does the case study's approach give participants ownership of the experience?

Are participants' voices and perspectives centered rather than only the artwork?

What are some weaknesses of this program? How could it be improved?

How could this program be adapted for a tour or more fleeting interaction?

# Final Thoughts

## Quick Checklist for Educators:

- Purpose of the program is clear and intentional
- When designing a program, consider what skills - transferable, social-emotional - are being addressed. Don't just focus on content.
- Design process is participatory and inclusive, and the earlier in the curatorial process, the better!
- Visitors are engaged as active meaning-makers
- Program outcomes connect to both visitors' lives and museum mission



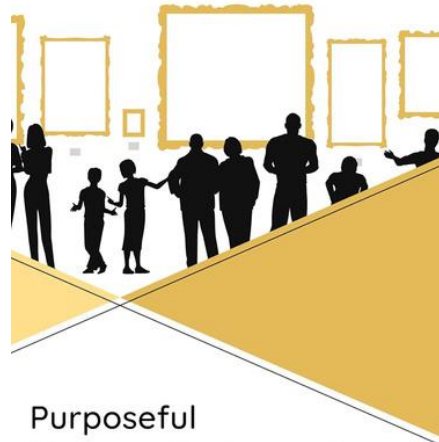
# Stay in Touch!

ames.morton-winter  
@ringling.org

Linked In:  
@Ames Morton-Winter

*Purposeful Programming Using  
Visitor Response Pedagogies*

(Rowman and Littlefield, 2024)

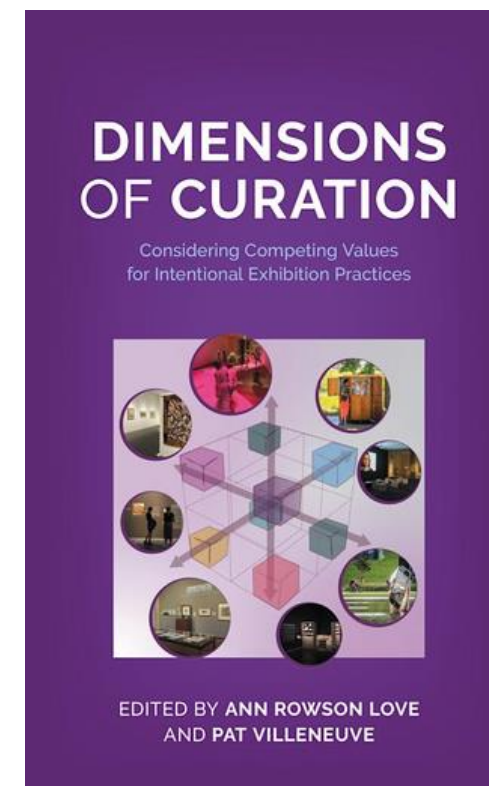


Purposeful  
Museum Programming  
Using Visitor Response  
Pedagogies

Ames Morton-Winter

ashley.williams  
@gadsdenarts.org

Linked In:  
[www.linkedin.com/in/ashnwilliams](http://www.linkedin.com/in/ashnwilliams)



A. Jacobs & A. Williams  
Dimensions of Education:  
Adapting the Curatorial  
Model for Museum  
Education in  
Love, A. R., & Villeneuve, P.  
(Eds.). (2023). *Dimensions of  
curation: Considering competing  
values for intentional exhibition  
practices.*