

A

HANDBOOK

FOR

OUR  
FUTURE

VOLUME 1

Brooklyn Museum

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A Set of Ideas Based on Discussions Led by  
Brooklyn Museum Interns around the Role of the  
Cultural Institution in Social Justice

VOLUME 1

Prepared by Hannah Lawson  
with support from  
Suny Cardenas-Gomez, Amy Zavec, Jeffrey  
Alexander Lopez, Natalie Aguilar, Mónica Mariño,  
and Lindsay C. Harris.



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## Introduction

This handbook presents ideas and aims for the future of cultural institutions and their intersections with social-justice issues that were addressed by Brooklyn Museum interns and other arts professionals who attended the Brooklyn Museum Intern Convening in August 2021. Throughout the week of discussions, panelists and participants shared views and approaches to their work with the aim of documenting them in this handbook. These reflections and resources were generated over five days during a series of two-hour virtual Zoom sessions, and are not intended to represent fixed solutions to the issues raised during this period. Instead, we hope this handbook will serve as a conceptual and practical framework for young professionals entering careers in cultural institutions. We expect and hope that it will provide the basis for further discussions on these topics both inside and outside the Brooklyn Museum. We believe in promoting continuing conversations and partnerships with community programs and leaders as part of a concerted effort to decentralize the Museum's voice in its reimagining. Both the Intern Convening and this handbook were intended to amplify the voices of the interns. The handbook also incorporates our thoughts as young professionals about the information and insights offered at the Intern Convening by established professionals working both inside and outside the museum context.

While this handbook exists only in digital form, it is important that we acknowledge that the Brooklyn Museum stands on land that is part of the unceded, ancestral homeland of the Lenape (Delaware) people. As a sign of respect, we recognize and honor the Lenape (Delaware) Nations, their elders past and present, and future generations. We are committed to addressing exclusions and erasures of Indigenous peoples and confronting the ongoing legacies of colonialism in the Museum's work.

We also acknowledge that the terminology used and ideas mentioned in this handbook are continuously changing.

# THE BROOKLYN MUSEUM INTERN CONVENING: INTRODUCTION

# The Brooklyn Museum Internship Program: History and Values

The Brooklyn Museum’s Internship Program provides paid training opportunities for emerging arts professionals to envision the future of museums while gaining workplace skills through hands-on, real-world projects. The goal is to provide young professionals with the most current methods and tools relevant to their field and interests, assign projects tailored to support personal and professional growth, and provide space for critical dialogue that reconsiders the role of museums today.

It is important to acknowledge that paying interns for their time, expertise, and labor is a relatively new development at the Brooklyn Museum and one that relies on outside funding. It has also become an expectation in the museum field. In June 2019, the Association of Art Museum Directors, comprising 227 museum directors in the United States, Canada, and Mexico, “call[ed] on art museums to provide paid internships” to ensure that this kind of training becomes more accessible and equitable.<sup>1</sup>

These efforts to create a more equitable and diverse internship program did not begin here but are based on decades of progress within the Museum.

The creation of space for young professionals to share their ideas and perspectives while learning through internships is essential to promoting the sort of growth and bold change that will ultimately benefit everyone in the field. As an extension of this mission, the establishment of an Intern Convening has allowed Brooklyn Museum interns to lead discussions crucial to the future of cultural institutions and begin to craft that future together, informed by the insights of other cultural producers, organizers, educators, and leaders.

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<sup>1</sup> “Association of Art Museum Directors Passes Resolution Urging Art Museums to Provide Paid Internships.” Association of Art Museum Directors, June 20, 2019. <https://aamd.org/for-the-media/press-release/association-of-art-museum-directors-passes-resolution-urging-art-museums>.



## Staff Collaboration

**Mónica Mariño**, Senior Manager of Adult Learning, Brooklyn Museum (and coordinator of the Internship Program at the time)

**Natalie Aguilar**, Senior Museum Instructor/Interim Internship Coordinator, Brooklyn Museum (intern with the Adult Learning division)

## Intern Leaders

A group of four summer interns worked together to plan, invite, and facilitate the main discussions at the Intern Convening:

**Jeffrey Alexander Lopez**, Public Health

Jeffrey Alexander Lopez holds a B.A. in Political Science and Spanish from Montclair State University in New Jersey. He enjoys working on graphic design, editing, and Latinx community outreach. He has been an intern at Latin American News Digest as well as a curatorial intern at the Brooklyn Museum, both in the Arts of the Americas department and the American Art departments. Lopez was selected to participate in the Museum's Intern Leadership Council. He is currently the Editor-in-Chief for La Montaña and an EMT for the Summit Volunteer First Aid Squad.

**Hannah Lawson**, Criminal Justice

Hannah Lawson is an artist, educator, public programmer, and writer based in Brooklyn. Lawson received a B.F.A. in Studio Art and completed a thesis in Visual and Critical Studies at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2021. As an assistant in the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access department (DEIA) at the Brooklyn Museum, Lawson is honored to support the Museum's initiatives and the work of its staff.

**Suny Cardenas-Gomez**, Immigration Justice  
Suny Cardenas-Gomez holds a B.A. in Spanish and Communication Studies from Southern Adventist University in Collegedale, Tennessee. Currently, she is working towards her M.A. in Art History at Rutgers University in New Jersey. She was the curatorial intern for the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art at the Brooklyn Museum in spring 2021 and has also had curatorial internships at the Dallas Museum of Art and at the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C. Her research interests include Latinx and diasporic art, decolonizing the museum, and non-traditional archives. Cardenas-Gomez envisages a museum of the future that is inclusive and welcoming to all.

**Amy Zavec**, Institutional Pathways

Amy Zavec is currently a Collections Specialist with Lendlease, supporting an inventory and rehousing project at the Smithsonian Institution Building and the Suitland Collections Center. Prior to this and her work with the Brooklyn Museum, Amy worked in numerous institutions, including the Museum of the City of New York, the Museum of Early Trades & Crafts in Madison, New Jersey, and the Philadelphia Museum of Art. She holds a B.A. in Art History from Drew University in Madison, New Jersey, and recently graduated with an M.A. in Museology/Museum Studies from Georgetown University in Washington, D.C.

# THE BROOKLYN MUSEUM INTERN CONVENING: SUMMARY

## Goals

How can the next generation of arts leaders transform the future of cultural institutions?

Organized and led by Brooklyn Museum Interns, this series of five workshops asked how interns and young professionals can drive the field forward as they consider the arts and healing, the criminal-justice system, and the historic exclusion of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) and immigrant communities.

How can cultural institutions help create an equitable and just society?

In the first week of August 2021, a dynamic group of emerging arts professionals gathered to imagine how our institutions can advance the field. Thanks to generous support from the Citi Foundation, the Brooklyn Museum proudly presented a convening that was both organized and led by four interns from our team. Together we explored the ways in which key partnerships can open pathways for the next generation of arts leaders as they seek to transform the future of cultural institutions, especially in relation to issues surrounding criminal-justice reform, immigrant communities, and public health. We engaged critically with these topics through panel discussions and small group workshops with a team of interdisciplinary leaders, including artists, curators, educators, policy makers, community leaders, and mental-health professionals. The convening offered participants an opportunity to bring a range of insights to designs for ending BIPOC and immigrant exclusion in the arts and building truly equitable institutions. As participants shared their thoughts in scheduled workshops, our intern leaders documented the proceedings in order to support learning and inspiration beyond the program. This digital publication aims to draw together participants' ideas into a "Handbook for Our Future."

## Early Research and Emerging Topics

The Intern Convening was the culmination of nine months of planning that began with various ideas and iterations before the final structure was established. The project was devised and stewarded by the Adult Learning division at the Brooklyn Museum. In spring 2021, Mónica Mariño, Manager of Adult Learning, and Natalie Aguilar, then Adult Learning Intern and now Senior Museum Instructor/

Interim Internship Coordinator, decided on the topics the Convening would address by first assessing the interests of aspiring arts interns. They reviewed hundreds of responses to the question they had posed to the applicants: "If you were to participate in the Brooklyn Museum's Internship Program, what is one topic that you would propose we investigate? The topic does not need to be specific to art or museums." They discovered that equity and inclusion in museums and issues of social justice were the two most popular subjects. On this basis, Natalie researched the social-justice issues that were being discussed in programs at other cultural institutions, and how accessible these discussions were. The Convening aimed to address the topics of interest to emerging professionals in new ways. The research for the project was also informed by the three years of dialogue among previous groups of Brooklyn Museum interns at the Friday Museum Seminars. The final topics ultimately emerged as: public health, criminal justice, immigration justice, and institutional pathways.

Public health remains an important subject in the programs of the Adult Learning division. Before the Convening, the team had already pursued partnerships with hospitals and thought about how the Museum might more concretely center care and wellness. This Convening offered an opportunity to reconsider what might be possible in this context and what is actually desired by community members and those entering the field.

Criminal justice is frequently addressed within the Brooklyn Museum through its partnerships, programming, and exhibitions. The interns were interested in considering what museums could learn from those who have been directly affected by the system and those working within criminal-justice reform.

Immigration justice was clearly a significant topic for many, and we were conscious of the importance of reflecting on the experiences of the expansive and diverse range of immigrant communities in the United States.

Institutional pathways have always been a topic of critical interest to the interns in our program. In a Convening focused on reimagining how art museums affect the social structures, it was important to question the ways in which emerging professionals can enter and navigate the field.

## Convening Schedule

The first four days of the Convening followed the same format:

### Keynote address: 30 minutes

Keynote speaker discussed the topic, shared their work in the field, and explained why it is important for museums to be engaging in this kind of work.

### Panel

#### Part 1: Panel discussion: 45 minutes

- Each panelist discussed their own work, focusing on the ways in which it has contributed to the day's topic. Panelists were then asked to share tools or internal structures that they had used to effect progress in a specific area.
- The panel and follow-up questions were moderated by an intern.

#### Part 2: Breakout groups: 30 minutes

- Participants were divided into three or four breakout groups. Each group included one of the panelists and one intern who moderated and documented the conversation. The panelists were first asked: "What lessons can museums learn from the work that you have done?" and "What important tools should museums integrate into their practices to incorporate these lessons?" The intern moderators then opened a Q&A session to allow the panelist to provide specific responses to the interns and other participants.

#### Part 3: Sharing conclusions: 15 minutes

- Each Leadership Council intern documented the conversation of the breakout group and briefly summarized it for the larger group. This was followed by final remarks.

Participants attended one or more sessions and returned for the culminating event on the last day of the Convening. At this point, the participants' ideas were gathered in preparation for this digital *Handbook for Our Future*. The program was free and open to the public and participants could decline to be featured in the handbook.

## Collaborators

### ● Day One: Public Health

August 2, 2021

#### Keynote speaker:

**Sara Auster** is a sound therapist, meditation teacher, and author. She has spent the past decade introducing sound baths and unique environments to audiences across the globe. Sara's transformative experiences and original teaching methods have made her a leader in the sound-bath movement as she encourages deep listening and sound meditation. Recognized as a top meditation expert by *O, The Oprah Magazine*, she has also been featured in such publications as *Billboard*, *TIME*, the *New York Times*, *VICE Magazine*, and *Vogue* as well as in online publications and on television. At its core, Sara's work explores how sound and listening can transform space—both physically and psychologically—to create connection and healing. She has produced intimate events in public schools, hospitals, boardrooms, and nonprofits, and has guided large group meditations at such well-known New York locations as the Museum of Modern Art, Lincoln Center, SummerStage in Central Park, and Madison Square Garden.

#### Panelists:

**Dr. Rebecca Jacobs** is the Wellcome Trust Mental Health Curatorial Research Fellow at The Graduate Center, CUNY's Center for the Humanities. She is developing the New York City component of Wellcome's Mindscapes, an international cultural program about mental health. She was the 2017-2019 Mellon Postdoctoral Curatorial Fellow at the Museum of the City of New York, where she co-curated the exhibitions *Germ City: Microbes and the Metropolis* and *Urban Indian: Native New York Now*. Previously, she worked at the University of Massachusetts Amherst on a nationwide ethnographic study of retirement insecurity and inequality. Rebecca received her Ph.D. in American Studies from Yale University, where she taught undergraduate courses in urban studies and public humanities. Her dissertation explored competing definitions of sustainable development along New York City's waterfront, using the Brooklyn Navy Yard as a case study.

**Meagan Corrado** is a doctor of social work and a licensed clinical social worker. She earned her D.S.W. from the University of Pennsylvania in 2016, her Master of Social Service from Bryn Mawr College in 2009, and her Bachelor of Social Work from Cairn University in 2008. Dr. Corrado is the founder and creator of the Storiez Trauma Narrative intervention ([www.storiezguide.com](http://www.storiezguide.com)). She has written ten books and trained more than seven thousand clinicians, community leaders, and trauma survivors in twenty-two Storiez programs. She currently serves on the Board of Directors for the Campaign for Trauma-Informed Policy and Practice (CTIPP). Dr. Corrado is also a practicing clinician and provides therapy to inner-city youth in the Philadelphia and Camden, New Jersey, areas. She completed training in a range of specialisms including Childhood Sexual Abuse Treatment, Trauma-Focused CBT, CBT, Prolonged Exposure Therapy, and Narrative Exposure Therapy. Her experience includes clinical work in such settings as community mental-health agencies, residential-treatment facilities, schools, and homes. Dr. Corrado takes a creative approach to her work with children, adolescents, and families, incorporating elements of art, music, poetry, and play therapy into her clinical practice. She has also exhibited her own artwork in a variety of venues.

**Ping Ho**, MA, MPH, is Founder and Director of UCLArts & Healing, which transforms lives through creative expression for self-discovery, connection, and empowerment. UCLArts & Healing is an organizational member of the UCLA Collaborative Centers for Integrative Medicine, of which Ping is a Steering Committee Member and was founding administrator. She was also founding administrator for the UCLA Cousins Center for Psychoneuroimmunology (PNI). In addition, Ping has an extensive background as a health educator and performing artist. She has a B.A. in psychology with honors from Stanford University, where she was appointed to spearhead the still-thriving Health Improvement Program for faculty and staff; an M.A. in counseling psychology with specialization in exercise physiology from the University of California, Santa Barbara; and an M.P.H. in Community Health Sciences from UCLA School of Public Health.

Ping is a member of the Council of Advisers for the Academic Collaborative for Integrative Health and is Associate Editor for the Creative Arts Therapy Section of the *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*. She developed the Certificate Program in Social Emotional Arts (SEA) and Medical

SEA Program for all populations and settings. In addition, she co-developed and served as principal investigator for the evidence-based and sustainable curriculum, *Beat the Odds: Social and Emotional Skill Building Delivered in a Framework of Drumming*. Ping is also co-chair of the Annual UCLA Conference on Creativity & the Arts in Healing in partnership with Expressive Therapies Summit. She is co-author, with Erica Curtis, of *The Innovative Parent: Raising Connected, Happy, Successful Kids through Art* (Swallow Press, 2019).

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## ● Day Two: Criminal Justice

August 3, 2021

*Keynote speaker:*

**Dr. Nicole R. Fleetwood** is the inaugural James Weldon Johnson Professor of Media, Culture, and Communication in the Steinhardt School at New York University. She is a writer, curator, and art critic whose interests are contemporary Black diasporic art and visual culture, photography studies, art and public practice, performance studies, gender and feminist studies, Black cultural history, creative nonfiction, prison abolition and carceral studies, and poverty studies. She is the author of *Marking Time: Art in the Age of Mass Incarceration* (Harvard University Press, 2020); winner of the National Book Critics Award in Criticism (and four other distinguished awards), and the curator of the related traveling exhibition, *Marking Time: Art in the Era of Mass Incarceration*, which debuted at MoMA PS1 in September 2020 and was described by the New York Times as “one of the most important art moments in 2020.” Nicole’s many other publications include *On Racial Icons: Blackness and the Public Imagination* (Rutgers University Press, 2015), and *Troubling Vision: Performance, Visuality, and Blackness* (University of Chicago Press, 2011). She is also the series associate editor of the ten-volume *Gender: Macmillan Interdisciplinary Handbooks*.

*Panelists:*

**Emmanuelle St. Jean** is Director of NYC Programs at the Bard Prison Initiative at Bard College. In this role, she oversees alumni engagement, reentry services, and two fellowship programs. She previously served as a Broad Resident and the Senior Director for Shared Services and Enrichment at KIPP DC, a regional charter school serving more than seven

thousand students in Washington, D.C. Emmanuelle also spent nearly fifteen years working in public health. She is a graduate of Barnard College, Emory University, and the Broad Center.

**Giovanni Hernandez** is a social-justice advocate, public speaker, and consultant whose life was forever changed by his studies for a college degree in prison. He has since worked with organizations like the Brooklyn Community Bail Fund, the New York Immigrant Freedom Fund, and Good Shepherd Services to address the issues of disenfranchised communities and those impacted by incarceration. He has spoken at national conferences and academic institutions across the country, extolling his belief in the transformative power of these educational opportunities and the need for expanded access to them. He challenges the Brooklyn Museum and other cultural institutions to effectively strengthen and elevate their leadership in the pursuit of a more just, equitable, and hopeful society.

**Elsie Flores** joined the staff of Avenues for Justice (AFJ), a New York-based program that aims to provide alternatives to incarceration for at-risk youth, as a Lower East Side court advocate in June 2010. Before AFJ, Elsie worked in the medical field for several years as a pharmacist technician at a national drugstore chain and in a health clinic at Washington Irving High School on the Lower East Side. Elsie recently received her Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice at John Jay College. Elsie is also a 1999 graduate of the Avenues for Justice program and was presented with the Andrew Glover Youth Program's Outstanding Youth & Second Chance Award in 2008.

**Mahogany L. Browne** is Executive Director of JustMedia, a media-literacy initiative designed to support the groundwork of criminal-justice leaders and community members. This position is informed by her career as a writer, organizer, and educator. Browne has received fellowships from the Agnes Gund Foundation, AIR Serenbe, Cave Canem, Poets House, Mellon Research, and the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation. She is the author of *Vinyl Moon* (Crown Books for Young Readers, 2022); *Chlorine Sky* (Crown Books for Young Readers, 2021); *Woke: A Young Poet's Call to Justice* (with Elizabeth Acevedo and Olivia Gatwood; Macmillan/Roaring Brook Press, 2020), *Woke Baby* (Macmillan/Roaring Brook Press, 2018); and *Black Girl Magic* (Macmillan/Roaring Brook Press, 2018). Browne is the founder of the Woke Baby Book Fair, focused on social-justice-themed children's books. Her book-

length poem *I Remember Death By Its Proximity to What I Love* (Haymarket Books, 2021) addresses the impact of mass incarceration on women and children. Mahogany is based in Brooklyn and is the first-ever poet-in-residence at Lincoln Center in New York.

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### ● Day Three: Immigration Justice

August 4, 2021

*Keynote speaker:*

**Pepón Osorio** is an installation artist and the Laura H. Carnell Professor of Community Art at the Tyler School of Art and Architecture at Temple University. In 2018, he was the recipient of both the Distinguished Artist Award for Lifetime Achievement from the College Art Association (CAA) and a United States Artists (USA) Fellowship. Best known for his provocative, large-scale installations, Pepón merges conceptual art and community dynamics. His work emphasizes the exhibition space as an intermediary between the social architecture of communities and the mainstream art world. He has worked with more than twenty-five communities across the United States and internationally, creating multimedia installations based on their real-life experiences. For more than a decade, Pepón has been presenting his work in such unconventional locations as department stores, store fronts, and homes, before showing it in museums like the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts; the Whitney Museum of American Art; the Smithsonian Institution, D.C.; the Museo Alejandro Otero in Caracas, Venezuela; the Africus Institute for Contemporary Art (AIAC) in Johannesburg, South Africa; and the Museo de Arte de Puerto Rico, Santurce, allowing him to explore the subjectivity of meaning in art and the significance to it of context.

*Panelists:*

**Dr. Cecilia Garibay** is Principal of Garibay Group, a nationally recognized audience-research and consulting firm, where she spends much of her time thinking about the role of museums and other informal-learning institutions in championing and fostering social change. She regularly consults with institutions on audience development, organizational change, and inclusion. Dr. Garibay is widely acknowledged as a leading voice in the study and development of equity-focused research and evaluation in the field of informal learning. She has successfully bridged the worlds of research and

practice, bringing theoretical acumen to a range of projects and injecting practical wisdom into her consulting.

**Joanne Hyppolite** was born in Haiti and grew up in Boston, Massachusetts. She is the Supervisory Museum Curator of the African Diaspora at the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, D.C. Before joining the museum in 2014, she was the chief curator of the HistoryMiami Museum for eight years. Joanne has published two popular middle-grade novels for children with Penguin Random House: *Seth and Samona* (1995) which won the Marguerite DeAngeli prize for New Children’s Fiction, and *Ola Shakes It Up* (1998). Her adult fiction has been published in *The Caribbean Writer*, an international literary journal, and in the anthology *The Butterfly’s Way: Voices from the Haitian Diaspora in the United States* (Soho Press, 2001). She holds a Ph.D. in literature from the University of Miami, an M.A. in Afro-American Studies from the University of California, Los Angeles, and a B.A. in African American Studies and Creative Writing from the University of Pennsylvania.

**Dahee Lee** is the Youth Organizer at the MinKwon Center for Community Action in Queens, New York. She coordinates and supervises the Youth Programs at the center, including the Youth Empowerment Program (YEP) and the Organizing Committee (OC). She empowers students through youth programming, organizing workshops, and creating community spaces. Through student-led participatory approaches to organizing, Dahee strives to develop empathetic, engaged, and impactful community leaders. Prior to joining the MinKwon Center, Dahee was a middle- and high-school educator and an organizer for low-income students in New York City. Dahee is Korean American with roots in New Jersey and New York City. She received her B.F.A. in Design and Technology from Parsons School of Design.

**Nkem Ndefo** is the founder of Lumos Transforms, a wellness program in Los Angeles and creator of the Resilience Toolkit. She is a skilled practitioner, dynamic speaker, and valued strategist. She is known for her special ability to connect with people of all kinds by holding powerful healing spaces, weaving complex concepts into accessible narratives, and creating synergistic and collaborative learning communities that nourish people’s innate capacity for healing, wellness, and connection.

## ● Day Four: Institutional Pathways

August 5, 2021

*Keynote speaker:*

**Emmanuel Ortega (aka Babelito)** is the Marilynn Thoma Scholar in Art of the Spanish Americas and an Assistant Professor in Colonial Latin American Art at the University of Illinois Chicago. He is a Scholar in Residence at the Newberry Library for 2022–2023. As a scholar and curator, Emmanuel has lectured on images of autos-de-fe, nineteenth-century Mexican landscape painting, and visual representations of the New Mexico Pueblo peoples in Novohispanic Franciscan martyr paintings. His writings include “The Mexican Picturesque and the Sentimental Nation: A Study in Nineteenth-Century Landscape” (*The Art Bulletin* 103, no. 2 [April 2021]) and his book project, *Visualizing Franciscan Anxiety and the Distortion of Native Resistance: The Domesticating Mission* (under contract with Routledge). He also is a frequent lecturer for the Arquetopia Foundation for Development, the largest artist residency in Mexico. Emmanuel’s exhibition, *Contemporary Ex-Votos: Devotion Beyond Medium*, opens at the New Mexico State University Art Museum in September 2022.

*Panelists:*

**Cassandra Cavness** currently serves as Development Assistant for the Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts in Alabama. Her main responsibilities include writing grants, creating adult programming, and leading the Museum’s Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion (DEAI) efforts. Cassandra is also Board Treasurer for the Alabama Museums Association, the Southeast Regional Director for the National Emerging Museum Professionals Network, and a member of the Mayor’s Young Professional Council for Montgomery. She graduated in 2015 with an M.A. in Museum Studies from Syracuse University. Thanks to a 2019 National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Scholar award, Cassandra was able to continue her existing research on the need for diversity in the arts. Since 2019, she has also partnered with the University of Alabama as a guest lecturer in its Public History department.

**Lauren Zalut** works as Director of Education and Tour Programs at Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site. In this role she oversees education programs and guided tours, and leads family and school programming. Using the historic site as a catalyst for conversations on contemporary social issues,

Lauren has worked to incorporate information and discussion about lived experience in prison and mass incarceration into all education programs. She has led Eastern States Fair Chance Hiring Initiative (FCHI), recruiting and hiring formerly incarcerated people in a variety of roles. Throughout her career, she has initiated collaborative programs between grass-roots organizations, social-service agencies, and museums. Lauren earned a master's degree in Museum Education and a certificate in Non-Profit Leadership. She is also trained to teach college courses in correctional facilities through the Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program at Temple University.

**Sierra Van Ryck deGroot** is the Assistant Director of Education at Poster House in New York. She has a B.A. in Art, Design, and Interactive Media, Fine Art, and Art History from Seton Hall University and a M.S.Ed. in Museum Education from Bank Street College of Education. She is also a co-president of the National Emerging Museum Professionals Network (NEMPN) and the Secretary and Peer Group Liaison on the Board of the New York City Museum Educators Roundtable (NYCMER).

**J. A. Forde** is the Director of Strategic Partnerships and Community Support for Qatar Museums in Doha, Qatar. He previously spent almost three years as Director of Corporate Relations at the Brooklyn Museum and now serves on the Museum's Board of Trustees. J. A. has experience as a director in both corporate and nonprofit settings, including roles at a boutique public-relations firm and at Andy Warhol's *Interview* magazine. However, it was his experience raising funds for AIDS research throughout the 1990s that set the stage for his subsequent success in directing the various aspects of rebranding, relationship building, and event management that can effectively address institutional challenges.



# EMERGING IDEAS AND APPROACHES

These key ideas and approaches developed from information shared at the Intern Convening. After the first four days, participants were invited to reconvene and reflect together on the themes and advice of the week. We, the Brooklyn Museum interns who led the discussions, considered how we might connect these ideas and approaches into actionable steps that would be useful for museum interns in the future.

## Hiring Processes and Workplace Culture

“It is my responsibility as someone who is bringing people into this role [as an intern at Poster House] to make sure that if I am doing the work to [diversify] outreach, it’s important that the space is a safe [one] for them to come to. Because I am not going to invite you to a space that is going to harm you. I am not going to invite you to a space where I know I am fighting a hard battle and I’m on my way out.”

—Sierra Van Ryck deGroot

“[Is it] truly a safe space for folks of color, folks with marginalized identities, [who can] recognize that this really [is] a safe space? Do I need to go into a space of appeasement? Or can I let this person in privilege kind of work their stuff out without me having to run after to fix them? That’s where I would say trust building starts in community—in the institution, within the bodies of the people making up the institution.”

—Nkem Ndefo

[In reference to her travelling exhibition *Marking Time: Art in the Age of Mass Incarceration*] “We are really radically and transformatively thinking about who has access, very broadly, to enter these spaces. There is a concept that was developed by a sociologist called ‘threshold anxiety,’ and it applies to all cultural institutions. It really is about the built environment but it’s also psychic, social, gendered, able-bodied. It’s about whose bodies are these spaces meant for, and how does the threshold let the public know if they are welcomed or not welcomed.”

—Dr. Nicole Fleetwood

### Active Suggestions for Interns:

You should not need to scour the internet for internship postings. If hiring managers at a specific institution are committed to expanding recruitment and altering hiring practices, the job postings and application process will be widely accessible to a diverse range of candidates. Identify organizations

outside of higher education like community groups, and programs for workforce development to recruit from, and share these with your supervisors and intern coordinators.

If a question, format, or request in an application does not sit right with you, ask about it in your interview or once hired. Your experience is valuable and your efforts to address these issues can lead to change.

As an intern or emerging professional, identifying whether or not a workplace is one in which you will be able to show up fully and have your ideas heard and integrated can begin in the interview. If your potential supervisor has clear answers to your questions, you can be more confident that they are actively and consistently addressing the work they do with DEIA initiatives always in mind.

The work interns do is valuable and you should not be exploited for unpaid labor. Cultural institutions have a responsibility to center education, not use mentorship as an excuse to request and accept free labor. If an institution is conscious of these issues and inequities, these discussions will be followed by actions that align with equitable values. Challenge those in hiring positions about what they will be offering you in exchange for your labor.

You should be receiving public and private support and recognition for your ideas and the work you do. Include your name on your research, save documents you write, be confident in your contributions, and ask to be the one to share them in larger meetings.

When an internship ends and you are reflecting on what you’ve learned, take time to think about the aspects of the professional environment that worked best for you.

## Museum Resources and How They Can Be Shared

“Some people will never step into a therapy office, but they WILL participate in an arts program. They WILL step into a museum. They WILL connect with a coach, a peer, a mentor ... While we can’t call ourselves (unless we are) licensed mental-health professionals or clinicians, there are so many different therapeutic things that we can do beyond the closed doors of a therapy office that people will remember forever—that are really transformative

and will support people in finding their sources of strength and resilience.”

—Dr. Meagan Corrado

“How do you navigate systems you’ve not worked in before? How do you use cultural institutions to build social capital? And also identity-building and empowerment?”

—Cecilia Garibay

“There are a lot of brilliant thinkers in the more academic world who have thought about how limits of language are often in spaces of pain and trauma. And so we really don’t always have the right words, we aren’t going to be able to have the words, to tap into and really process trauma. So that’s why something like sound and art, it’s so obvious, right? To utilize them to create space for connection and processing.”

—Dr. Rebecca Jacobs

### **Conclusions for Interns:**

Of course, the art and/or objects stewarded by a cultural institution can be activated in ways that bring people together through shared or novel experiences. Educators and programmers become a huge resource as they build on the work of others to create tailored access points to the objects and ideas. They can do this with a sense of responsibility for conveying information about different cultures and cultural practices with informed sensitivity.

Space is another significant resource of many cultural institutions, which often have large foyers or gardens and plazas where people can congregate. These kinds of spaces can be activated by and for community members as general meeting places or even as public-health sites offering such amenities as free COVID-19 testing.

Could the museum also offer accessible therapeutic resources that have been redesigned for educators to use?

When we think through the allocation of the museum’s resources, those who have been previously incarcerated should not and cannot be left out.

This is part of what it means to truly serve members of the community around us. This same degree of consideration must also apply to youth and individuals with different abilities.

Many large cultural institutions also have considerable influence in the field, one that might be shared and leveraged to effect widespread change.

We also reflected on the ways revenue could be redistributed throughout the museum as well as externally through grants or even public art.

## **Building Trust and External Relationships Responsibly**

“If there is one thing that you’re already doing, [find out] who in the ecosystem is doing something similar—how can you become Voltron and put together your greatest assets and really respond?”

—Mahogany L. Browne

“The trust and communication, the intention of why you’re approaching various organizations to partner with them [is worth considering]. For example, you want to think about why it is that you’re doing this work? Why do you want to partner? Is it to pat yourself on the back that you’ve done something good or are you trying to move the needle or change the conversation?”

—Emmanuelle St. Jean

“When I think about museums as institutions, institutions are made of people, so when I have done work around institutional change and connection with community, often we have an institution that holds traumatized people which creates a traumatized organizational culture. And when we are traumatized, we don’t trust. So then we have this institution that holds a lot of power but nonetheless has trauma, trying to establish authentic connections with communities who are vulnerable, marginalized, and oppressed. So the power differential is huge, and the trauma is different on both sides. So I think about how we build the capacity to build trust (which isn’t something that happens in your head, it happens in your body) and how we do this so that people can come together collectively for the solutions that can only be found when people are connected.”

—Nkem Ndefo

“Fifty percent of our collection is donated to us, so we [as curators] had a responsibility to work with people who gave us objects over time, and that meant building a relationship slowly over time with them, it meant meeting people where they were at in terms of their understanding of museums. In immigrant

American communities, museums are not necessarily in their lives. Either from where they lived before or where they are now.”

—Joanne Hyppolite

### **Active Suggestions for Interns:**

Any work you do inside a cultural institution will inevitably be centered on serving communities.

Remain mindful about the use of the word “community” and what it means. How are you defining it and who is included? How are you reaching out to these communities?

Although you may have exciting ideas about changes and new partnerships, be aware that as a temporary employee you will not necessarily be in a position to see these changes through or maintain these relationships. Consider playing an active role in existing partnerships before building new ones. You might inadvertently cause harm if there is no one able to continue your work once your internship ends.

Reflect on the quotes above from panelists when you are researching, writing a proposal, or talking to members of the public in your departmental role. Think about how you are building relationships and inviting people into the museum space.

Keep an eye out for and uplift people and organizations who are already doing the work you may not be able to do in your specific role at the cultural institution.

## **Dismantling Power Inequities and Creating Infrastructural Change**

“I am very interested in change and how change happens—transformative and liberating change—with the recognition that systems are the biggest source of suffering, systems of inequity, however people erect systems, people run systems, people perpetuate systems, and people have the power to change systems.”

—Nkem Ndefo

“I think there is a space, and there is a time and a place to use clinical language. Many of us have fancy degrees that we paid a lot of money for—may still be paying a lot of money for in student loans. I think that our education is valuable, and I do think that language matters, but I also think that there is a time

and a place for using clinical language for speaking about diagnosis, for clustering symptoms together and calling every behavior and thought pattern something. And I think there is also a place, a really important place, for using words that resonate with people in simple ways.”

—Dr. Meagan Corrado

### **Active Suggestions for Interns:**

Take advantage of the fact that, as an intern, you can ask why. You can effect change by questioning the systems in place. Through the process of learning, you can draw attention to procedures and approaches that have not been questioned.

Look for mentors who are a decade or two ahead of you and who are doing the work that you hope to do in the future.

Continue to deconstruct the definitions of “art” and question the terminology used. Specific language can certainly be helpful, but it is important to question established parameters. Additionally, question your definitions of who can be defined as an expert, and think about the nature of expertise, which can, in some cases, be defined as much by lived experience as by formal training.

Be conscious of when and how you are being asked to do advocacy work if you are an individual with a marginalized identity. This crucial work should be undertaken by all staff in all areas of the cultural institution, not just those deemed to be directly affected by the outcome.

## List of Contributors

Sophia Abrams  
 Adjoa Jones de Almeida  
 Laval Bryant-Quigley  
 Gloria Cordona  
 Aida Garrido  
 Kayly Hernandez Panameno  
 Keonna Hendrick  
 Kassandra Ibrahim  
 Divine Jones  
 Zaida Lagunas  
 Emily Leopold  
 Brittany Lugo

Sarah Lukacher  
 Kimani Magloire  
 Sierra Mainard  
 Christina Marinelli  
 Ella Mints  
 Zach Ngin  
 Adam O'Reilly  
 Dalila Scruggs  
 Audrey Walen  
 Veda Yagnik  
 Shirley Zheng  
 Youchen Zhou

**Audience Participants:** Jennifer Abreu, Natalie Aguilar, Kaelyn Andrade, Anu Annam, Jahaira Arias, Sara Auster, Adriana Benavides, Olivia Berkowicz, Gabrielle Bertrand, Jenny Beville, Cameron Biden, Alysson Biermaier, Ellen Bennett, Ofronama Biu, James Bowe, Autumn Bryant, Jay Buchanan, Ruth Caccavele, Barbara Callahan, Anais Caro, Adelyn Castro, Shelley Cathart, Kevin Certantes, Lola Chalmers-Dibbell, C. Chase, Jose-Romarah Chery, Dara Cohen-Vazquez, Peter Collazo, Hillary Cook, Ethan Cornell, Natalie Cramer, Jennifer Cuglietta, Aicha Diallo, Kathleen DiDomenico, Alfredo Dillanes, Noemi Diop, Britney DiTocco, Matt Dexter, Kaila Dollard, Madeline Duffy, Erin Earp, Elina Eihmane, Lisa Falk, Alex Falk, Beth Ferraro, Tara Fireball, Marlis Flinn, Miriam Fogelson, Lisa Fried, Lucy Galloway, Enid Garber, Bridget Girnus, June Goff, Ruth Goldenber, Robert Goldenberg, Emmy Goldin, Marissa Gonzalez-Kucheck, Denise Gonzalez, Nora Gordon, Laura Green, Ahuva Haimson, Gina Hall, Symonne Harris, Richard Hathaway, Judy Hnat, Arianna Ho, Sibylle Hornung, Sehrish Hussain, Lenore Jaffe, Njeri Jennings, Carly Johnson, Natela Kasradze, Rabia Kassim, Marguerite Keane, Yeji Kim, Kikesa Kimbwal, Marj Kleinman, Rachel Kohl, Michelle Korte, Kretel Krahn, Josip Kresović, Pranav Kumar, Katherine Kusiak Carey, Anna Lane, Patricia Lannes, Holly Lapine, Khin Thethtar Latt, Conor Lauesen, Daniel Lawson, Yasmeen Ledezma, Teresa Leung, Sarah Lieberman, Maria Liu Wong, Morgan Lloyd, Rey Ondres, Eliana Lopez, Rick Luftglass Jana Lulovska, Jenna Lutes, Molly Macfadden, Jesus Maldonado Trevino, Valia Matsentidou, Robin Mayers-Anselm, Kristen McCauley, Kerry McLaughlin, Catherine Mercedi, Rugile Miliukaitė, Oldine Monestime, Rashida Moore, Grace Munoz, Priya Namana, Christie Nicholson, Anna Nolskog, Jake Noss, Leonie Nowitz, Adam Odomore, Maggie Ordon, Frank-Thomas Ortiz, Victoria Oshel, Bomina Park, Cynthia Pegado, Lucinda Pelton, Denise Penizzotto, Luis Pérez González, Janina Pinzon, Monika Plemen, Jevaughn Bradley Porter, James Preut, Keondra Prier, Geraldine Provost Lyons, Dena Rapoport, Emma Ratner, Neha Raval, Christian Reeder, Miguel Resenziz, Maygan Reynolds, Nancy Richner, Annie Roberts, Paula Rodriguez, Naya Rosado, Liz Rubel, Gabrielle Santas, Laura Sato, Nancy Schneider, Keidi Schureck, David Serxner, Linda Siegal, Shori Sims, Anne Smith, Amy-Sharee Smith, Roxanne Smith, Louse Springborg, Caterina Stamou, Ashley Stanford, Jade Steward, John Stewart, Kate Stodart, Zoe Taber, Justin Thomasson, Ambika Trasi, Grabiela Trinidad-Perez, Megan True, Nawang Kinkar, Natalia Ventura, Jennifer Villa, Victoria Waldron, Jamie Waldron, Xingyun Wang, Stacy Weiland, Danielle Whyte, Angela Wilde, Kelly Williams, Laura-Lee Williams, Elizabeth Wind, Lisbeth Woodington, Sachi Yanari-Rizzo, Grace Yasumura, Shirley Zhong, Yiyang Zhou.

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