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Youth peer education programs in modern and contemporary art museums.
A comparative analysis of three case studies: Youth Insights Leaders,
Tate Collective Producers and Blikopeners

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Acknowledgments

Youth peer education programs in modern and contemporary museums were introduced to me at the beginning of my master's studies at Leiden University, during a visit to the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam. My first encounter with a group of young educators was at the Stedelijk BASE exhibition, through an audiotour designed by the Blikopeners. Later on, I had the opportunity to meet a young Blikopener tour guide wearing a bright red coloured jacket, ready to share their refreshing perspectives on the artworks exhibited and eager to hear also about the visitors' thoughts. This event sparked an interest to delve further into the social and cultural possibilities that such programs can offer to museums and its audiences.

I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Mirjam Hoijtink, for her constructive feedback, support and guidance on topics that have broaden my understanding of museums and their potential as a public sphere for debate through education programs. Throughout this experience I've also been able to develop a profound interest towards education in the field of museum studies.

Lastly, I would like to thank my family and friends for their endless support and encouragement during my studies.

Introduction

According to the International Council of Museums (ICOM) “a museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment.”¹ As of 2019 however, there has been an ongoing debate and process for a new proposal of museum definition which has created much of a stirrup in the arts and culture field, changes that also stem from current discourses that reinforce perspectives advocating for feminism or diversity.² Taking the still current definition from 2007, it can already be observed some keywords that have quite layered implications, such as public or education.

What is of relevance for the investigation that follows is the notion of the museum as an educational centre in benefit of a public. In this case, the focus will be on museums that currently present modern and contemporary art along with a particular education methodology that is understood as a youth peer education program. Just as it can be observed with the case of today’s debate of a museum’s definition, museum education programs also have changed throughout time to catch up with society’s advancements in terms of cultural democratisation, as in presenting themselves as accessible and open spaces where everyone can feel a sense of ownership no matter their cultural, social or economic background.

However, modern and contemporary art museums present an ongoing challenge since their creation and establishment during the twentieth century. For many audiences, the white cube and its modern style education can be problematic in terms of engagement due to the abstract nature of the works of art. And younger generations can also feel discouraged to become involved with museums because of their perceived image of academic exclusivity. There is an additional hardship to overcome when it comes to young audience engagement with museums, as increasing popular mass media considerably attracts young people over engaging with arts and culture at museums.

1 “Museum definition,” International Council of Museums, accessed October 12, 2019, <https://icom.museum/en/activities/standards-guidelines/museum-definition/>.

2 “The Extraordinary General Conference postpones the vote on a new museum definition,” International Council of Museums, accessed November 10, 2019, <https://icom.museum/en/news/the-extraordinary-general-conference-postpones-the-vote-on-a-new-museum-definition/>.

The last decades, however, have also brought us great technological advancements and the opening of a whole digital world in which a great part of young people have been brought up with. These are novelties that can also be used as valuable assets per part of museums to expand their audience engagement with a young public. Social network services (SNS) being a core instrument to market peer education programs to young audiences to not only virtually engage with art but also participate in unique experiences within a museum's space and its collections.

Before going further into the matters of youth peer education programs in museums of modern and contemporary other issues that must be tended to. Museums present themselves as "open to the public", it must be analysed what this "public" is that they are in service for. Our society nowadays, more than ever, demands transparency and clarity, a call for democracy that has its repercussions as well in artistic and cultural institutions. This matter at hand is thoroughly covered by Jennifer Barret's study on museums along with the use of Jürgen Habermas' theory of the public sphere, as public spaces where public discourse and matters can take place. Andrea Witcomb reviews this application of Habermas' theory of the public sphere to museums as an enlightening understanding of space and vision through the history of museums and public spaces.³

Because this study will also cover up the topic of museum education, Eilean Hooper Greenhill provides extensive and well-founded research in writings as an experienced scholar with an interdisciplinary approach to the field of museum studies due to her background in fine art as well as in sociology. Her interest in sociology of education and culture came into being after her working experience in locations such as the National Portrait Gallery in London. It was in an environment as the National Portrait Gallery that her attention was drawn towards the social life and cultural boundaries of museums and the processes of learning. Parallel with this, during the 1980s her academic endeavours were directed to education and the visitor's experience in museums and galleries, an area which then had a lack of literature of research.⁴ In *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge* (1992), *Museums, Media, Message* (1995) or *The Educational Role of the Museum* (1999), she developed theories that have largely contributed to today's vision of the productive intersection of curatorial, education and communication fields in museum studies, particularly youth peer education programs.

3 Barret, *Museums and the Public Sphere*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.

4 "Professor Emeritus Eilean Hooper Greenhill," University of Leicester, accessed October 12, 2019, <https://www2.le.ac.uk/departments/museumstudies/AboutUs/people/professor-emeritus-eilean-hooper-greenhill>.

Now when it comes to technology and museums there has been a fast but steady development in such field, observed through the growing presence of museums on the social media sphere. In the current research, Ana Luisa Sánchez Laws thorough study *Museum, Websites and Social Media. Issues of Participation, Sustainability, Trust and Diversity* (2015), not only analyses the use of museum websites for the democratisation of information on collections but also investigates social media as an efficient communication platform with audiences. Such an interaction brings audiences closer to the institution and creates a space for dialogue. Young audiences' avid use of social media makes a great case for youth peer education programs to invest in developing a relevant online presence.

The inclusion of digital and social media as part of museum strategies for audience engagement is the most apparent. Platforms as Twitter, Instagram and Tumblr have a relatively high use and impact, thanks to their simple and intuitive microblogging, photo and video-sharing interfaces. Among the noted features of these social network services is its worldwide outreach which enables museums to tear down barriers and allow access to their digital content to people all around the world. They market their news, projects and exhibitions through digital services that do not need a large investment as a television advertisement, posters or banners, and they can have a towering impression on users of social media given the widespread reach that their content can gain online.

Nowadays the algorithms embedded in these digital services play also a grand part in the ever-growing scheme of marketing. They offer relevant information to users enabling interaction with content that correlate to a person's interests that are retrieved from their searches on SNS. People that are interested in cultural and artistic ventures are most likely to interact with such content, which in turn can also be an opportunity for museums to have their content be spread around by users who share their news feed on their profiles. Youth peer education programs are now more than ever using this virtual space to invite young people to participate in activities that allow a close encounter with the museum's collections.

With these matters in mind, youth peer education programs developed in museums in modern and contemporary art will be approached. Understanding the museum as an extended public sphere of interaction in which young people that are born as digital natives can make the most out of an engaging experience with art. The focus of this research is to comprehend the expanse of the meaning-making potential of peer education programs that are conducted by young educators in today's museums featuring modern and contemporary art.

Amongst leading institutions, there are stimulating programs of art engagement for young audiences through collaborative workshops with artists, such as Studio 13/16⁵ at the Centre Pompidou in France, Habitació 1418⁶ at MACBA in Spain or The People's Studio⁷ at the MoMA in the United States of America. However, many preeminent museums of modern and contemporary art seem to lack on peer education initiatives led by young people for a young public. For this thesis, the youth peer education programs of the Youth Insight Leaders at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, the Tate Collective Producers at the Tate Modern in London and the Blikopeners at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam have been chosen as the three particular case studies to be analysed due to their long tradition, correlation and innovative programming. The particularities of each program will be assessed to observe the variety of methods that such an educational methodology can offer, alongside the distinct uses of SNS and its repercussions on young audience engagement.

The central research question of this thesis is: what is the meaning-making potential of youth peer education programs in museums of modern and contemporary art today? By surveying three examples of programs of referential institutions of cultural capitals, similarities and differences can be observed in the approaches to this methodology. What does it mean for museums to open up their spaces for public debate on diverse matters affecting society through the means of art and dialogue with young minds? And can the use of social media aid young audience engagement? Assessing the various degrees of agencies and methods employed in this selection of cases can provide an awareness of the prevalent effects of such programs on the participants, the museums and the audiences.

5 "Studio 13/16," Centre Pompidou, accessed December 10, 2019, <https://www.centrepompidou.fr/cpv/resource/cMdAqnL/rM6MyE>.

6 "Habitació 1418," MACBA, accessed December 10, 2019, <https://www.macba.cat/ca/habitacio-1418>.

7 "The People's Studio at the Creativity Lab (for adults and teens)," MoMA, accessed December 10, 2019, <https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/5130>.

The Whitney Museum of American Art in New York was founded in 1930, through the patronage of Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney. A pioneering entity considered as a distinguished institution that houses art of the United States from the last century and up until our days, providing a space to feature new and emerging names long before their reach to notoriety and acclaim.⁸ Its collection now includes more than 24.000 works by over 3.500 American artists. Their exhibitions ranging from retrospectives of renowned American artists to presentations of the young breakthroughs in the art world.⁹

Their Education Department has been active since 1967, following philosopher and educator John Dewey's *Art as Experience* (1934) as a model for the creation of dynamic experience of art with their audiences. Museum education is for them a process based on experimentation and creativity, integrating close and profound aesthetic experiences to achieve a lasting impact in terms of understanding the world that we live in through art.¹⁰

The programs developed for the youth are activities and events carried out throughout the year in which the collaboration of teens along with artists and museum staff create a unique space to exchange knowledge, ideas and work together for the creation of projects in and for the museum. The Youth Insights (YI), an after-school and summer program geared towards high school students in New York City with the purpose of creating a connection of art and artists with the younger generation, has a long tradition of more than 20 years with its founding in 1997.¹¹ In 2009, the YI Leaders peer education program was introduced as a yearlong, paid after-school internship. Since then high school students have been able to adopt the position of a Leader and organise public programs, events, interactive tours, assist educators or even write for the Whitney's teen blog.¹²

8 "About," Whitney Museum of American Art, accessed October 12, 2019, <https://whitney.org/about>.

9 "History," Whitney Museum of American Art, accessed October 12, 2019, <https://whitney.org/About/History>.

10 "About Whitney Education," Whitney Museum of American Art, accessed October 12, 2019, <https://whitney.org/Education/AboutUs>.

11 "Youth Insights Reunion," Whitney Museum of American Art, accessed October 12, 2019, <https://whitney.org/Education/Teens/TeensBlog/YouthInsightsReunion>.

In Europe, both the Tate in the United Kingdom and the Stedelijk in the Netherlands have recognised the Whitney's youth peer education program as a great influence to their own projects. The Tate Collective Producers is presented as a group of young people between the ages of 15 and 25 that live in London, Liverpool and St. Ives, who come together so to collaborate and provide their knowledge and ideas related to the arts and culture. They also team up with artists, designers, musicians and curators for the creation of experimental and engaging events, projects and programs linked to Tate's collection and exhibitions.¹³ While the Blikopeners (presented by the museum as "eye openers") are introduced as open-minded high school, college students and young professionals from Amsterdam who work for the museum's peer education program to offer a new, fresh perspective towards art and organise events, workshops, tours, among many other activities.¹⁴ This is a program launched by the museum "to connect with young people, through young people".¹⁵

The methodology employed for this research has been structured upon secondary sources that analyse museum education with the understanding of public sphere as well as the main changes in its discourses that it has undergone until now. Also, literature on museum education, presenting a chronological approach on the main academic debates on the matter that has lead us to the recent emergence of youth peer education programs, publications on the use of the Internet or social media as instruments of support for educational and engagement purposes in a museum's context. An assessment of the selected museums' online presence on their websites and social networking platforms will also grant an appreciation of the latest data. When visiting the activities organised by the youth peer education programs of the Tate in London and the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam I had the opportunity to complement academic discourse through first-hand experiences developed and aimed by and for young people.

12 "Teens Get Involved," Whitney Museum of American Art, accessed October 5, 2019, <https://whitney.org/education/teens/GetInvolved>.

13 "Tate Collective Producers," Tate, accessed October 12, 2019, <https://www.tate.org.uk/tate-collective/producers>.

14 "Blikopeners," Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, accessed October 12, 2019, <https://www.stedelijk.nl/en/museum/blikopeners>.

15 "Five Years of Blikopeners," Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, accessed October 5, 2019, <https://www.stedelijk.nl/en/digdeeper/five-years-blikopeners>.

Chapter I will offer an overview of the role of museums as sites that are part of the public sphere offering space for debate, a hub for the creation of new narratives and opening up various ways of engaging with its audience. It will also present a general socio-cultural understanding of the spaces of museums of modern and contemporary art of today. Subsequently, Chapter II will explore the field of museum education, with its focus on youth peer education programs in museums, and the incorporation of new technologies and the Internet as platforms in which to explore and expand audience engagement. Chapter III will explore through various parameters the youth peer education programs of the YI Leaders at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, the Tate Collective Producers at the Tate Modern in London and the Blikopeners at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam.

Chapter I. The museum as a site of socio-cultural convergences

Before unpacking youth peer education programs led in museums of modern and contemporary art, it is of relevance to focus on the institutions where these projects are carried out. The birth of the 18th century museum will be presented, followed by the 19th and 20th centuries' educational ideals of extending their audiences reach and fomenting of democratic dialogue. Up to our present days in which museums explore their social responsibility through innovative approaches where public and popular culture come together to strive for diversity, inclusivity and a wide-ranging outreach.¹⁶

Jennifer Barrett, director of Museum Studies at the University of Sydney, writes on the concept of public and its use in debates on public space and public culture along with museums. The preoccupation for this has been due to her work in academia, community organisations and cultural institutions. The debates taking place now on the museums' role in our society happen to be related to a perpetual reconsideration that has been occurring ever since the emergence of such an institution. It is a ceaseless process of revision that the 21st century now requests on spreading awareness on issues that concern representation, political factors, curatorial practices and our modern technological realities. These are subjects that have much to do with a museum's environment and Barrett lays out some key points that are to be taken into consideration to later understand the interconnection of education and the public.¹⁷

A historical and chronological assessment of the museum's relation with its public through Barrett's interdisciplinary approach and revision of Habermas' public sphere is also complemented by a series of academic proposals and insights by leading figures experts on the topics of cultural responsibility, social inclusion, polyvocality, institutional critique and democracy within a museum's walls. The museum as an ever-evolving space in which public participation has been challenged is of interest to understand the genesis, development and current workings of the youth peer education programs at the Whitney, the Tate Modern and the Stedelijk. Programs that have allowed museums to become spaces of public debate through the participation of young people through the arts and culture as a platform.

16 Szekely, "Multiple Perspectives on the Recent Emergence of Teen-Centric Art Museum Programs: A Historical Reflection, Overview and Case Study", 11-12.

17 Barrett, *Museums and the Public Sphere*, 191, 173.

I. 1. The museum and its public: an appraisal through its history

The ICOM definition indicates the museum as an institution in the service of and open to a public. But as Jennifer Barrett deftly points out, such a term as “public” isn’t as innocent as it may seem. It has usually been used to refer to a general group of people that can be considered as an audience to the museum. An audience that is supposed to cover a heterogeneous collective, so to picture the museum as part of a democratic urban sphere in which everyone is welcome to learn and develop their knowledge on particular matters. However, the museum as was perceived back in the days is not the same as now. The symbolical idea of a bastion of knowledge for the public to learn about the historical achievements of a nation hasn’t prospered much to our days and it is questioned today. In effect, there’s an ongoing evaluation of museums as public institutions and their responsibility towards their audience that is today focused on matters of inclusivity and diversity as a multicultural society has highly emerged due to migration processes in the 20th century. And beyond this issue there is also the fact that nowadays there is a large and fast emergence of new sites in which cultural heritage can be presented, be it public cultural centres or even the Internet.¹⁸

Museums of modern and contemporary art are however thoroughly working on making their physical spaces available and open in the sense that Barrett views such institutions as potential critical spheres of public debate.¹⁹ In Chapter III, the programs developed through the youth peer education programs at the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Tate Modern or the Stedelijk Museums will explore particular examples that bring forward opportunities for events or workshops that can open up discussions ranging from art to politics through a museum’s collections and exhibitions. Our times are now defined by exchanges and collaborations, the museum as such is viewed as a crossroads of active relations between the institution and its public. Rhiannon Mason explains that the communicative factor in the museum can be found not only on the exhibitions but also in its physical space, be it the architecture or layout, the design of its displays, from the colours to the texts of labels and panels, or the museum staff. The implicitness or explicitness of how messages and ideas are conveyed to the public is a process of meaning-making created altogether by the confluence of agents that intervene in the museum experience.²⁰

18 Barrett, *Museums and the Public Sphere*, 1-2 .

19 Ibid.

20 Mason, “Museums, galleries and heritage,” 222.

Since the last decades, there has been a move towards a “museum experience” that isn’t exclusively about the visual but also about communication and collaboration. The changes of the museum model by introducing elements such as new technologies, artist residencies, satellite displays or events in general, enable the introduction of a diversity of perspectives, vouching for accessibility and inclusivity. This idea is fruit of the critiques of museum practice that originate from postmodern and postcolonial discourses, seeking to create possibilities for communities to work together with the cultural institutions and to create knowledge collaboratively. On that account, the question is not to envision the public as a homogenous collective but as audiences that are rich in its multiplicity of voices. Such a posture is observed through the Whitney, Tate or Stedelijk approaches towards its youth peer education programs that aim to include young people from different social, cultural and economic backgrounds. These voices can find museums as spaces that are accessible to all communities. The importance lays in the connections built with the public and the collaborative creation of meaning through arts and culture. Without a doubt, this matter at hand is not solely a concern that is happening now but will keep ongoing as part of the museum’s continuous task of evaluation, assessment and transformation.²¹

Peter Vergo’s new museology tackled the view of museums that were understood as restricted spaces for elite groups by avowing towards the importance of the audience and their visit experience, education and accessibility in museums. Barrett points out that Pierre Bourdieu’s sociological outlook on museums could be sensed among the writings of academics who followed the new museology. This also evidences the relevance of sociology as a discipline framing museological writings.²² Pierre Bourdieu’s research during the 1960s and 1970s brought to light how museums mirrored society, in terms that social classes and inequality also determined the visitors of a museum. As a result of this novel study by Bourdieu, there have been new practices developed that embrace diversity in narratives and collaboration with society in the devising of exhibitions, to break with the perceived immutable nature of the museum.²³

21 Barrett, *Museums and the Public Sphere*, 110-113.

22 *Ibid.*, 3-4.

23 *Ibid.*, 120-121.

In the 90s as well, Stephen E. Weil reflected on how the visiting experience shouldn't be simply controlled by the museum's discourse but should be considerate of neither being condescending or undermining of the visitors' knowledge. While also taking into account that communication happening at the institution doesn't only happen between the audiences and the museum but also between the visitors. This leads audiences towards a visit that is an affective experience.²⁴ For instance, the experiences created through interactions of the Blikopeners tour guides that encourage the audiences to not only express their ideas of the art on view with the youth peer educators but also with the other visitors.

To offer such an experience the museum must comprehend its audiences in all their complexities. Amalia Mesa-Bains pointed out the necessity of museums to reach out to embrace the cultural background of what they exhibit and the communities to whom they exhibit. She also acknowledges that it is a cultural-historical responsibility for these institutions to confront the Eurocentric model of traditional approaches and to implement communication or learning methods to reflect various perspectives for a diversified audience that could see their experiences reflected on various layers of meaning.²⁵ An example of representation and inclusion is the Whitney's collaboration of its program of YI Leaders with LGBTQ+ collectives to explore themes of identity and queerness through participative art workshops on an Andy Warhol exhibition.

It has been debated that the exclusion of marginalised groups from the social, political and economic spheres of society could be somehow observed too in museums' history, through the non-inclusion of a diversity of perspectives and representation of such groups through their collections. In spite of this, Richard Sandell also adds that nowadays in views of the political situations around the globe, museums have begun a tendency to involve social inclusion through arts and culture as an element to prioritise in their missions.²⁶ Polyvocality, as expressed by Rhiannon Mason, Christopher Whitehead and Helen Graham, has been a long-standing concern to resolve when addressing the contribution of communities as participative agents in the museum. This shift towards the restructuring of the relations between a museum and its public has also meant conflicting views on the maintenance of the museum's professional practices standards. Nevertheless, challenging the institutional voice by allowing visitors a public space (in

24 Weil, "Rethinking the Museum: An Emerging New Paradigm," 78-79.

25 Mesa-Bains, "The Real Multiculturalism: A Struggle for Authority and Power," 102-103.

26 Sandell, "Museums as Agents of Social Inclusion," 408, 412.

the cases in which the entrance is free) as a forum for their opinions and thoughts to be expressed can offer opportunities to further on the debates of inclusivity.²⁷ This brings us to the idea upheld by Elizabeth Crooke, of the museum as an entity in service of the public under the light of equality and democracy, as a space that invites to an active participation and expression of views.²⁸

What Vergo's new museology also gave place to is the understanding of the heterogeneity of its public, in terms of gender, age, ability, ethnicity and among many other social identification groups, to meet the demands and provide what its audience needs for its museum experience. A museum is not a parallel universe that is unaware about what is going on in its surroundings, but just as Bourdieu could see its mirroring of the society outside of its walls, it is a space that is continuously transformed by social, political and historical factors happening all around the world. Barrett discusses through her interdisciplinary approach, the possibility and capacity of museums to act as democratic public spaces,²⁹ which later will be observed as a core goal for the programs of the YI Leaders, the Tate Collective Producers and the Blikopeners. All of them aiming towards the creation of a space for young people to gain a sense of belonging, recognition for their opinions and platforms for vocalising current issues through collaborative initiatives between the arts institution and the young public.

Museums are well aware of how the vestiges of its past practices are hard to shake off but at the same time they continue to explore new venues to present themselves, appeal to a diverse public and introduce innovative forms of engagements such as new technologies. A significant aspect to point out on the history of the museum as a public institution is the general blurring between the notions of the state and the public that was conceded in Europe by the end of the eighteenth-century. There is the perception of an institution representative of the state and at the same time of the people, in other words, the public. This impression isn't exclusive to the past but has remained up to our present days. And although communities of people are often perceived as grappling against the slings and arrows of the establishment, in the guise of governments or the machinations of capitalism, Barrett argues that the museum can in turn be a place for public address and where a public discourse can happen.³⁰

27 Mason et al., "One Voice to Many Voices? Displaying Polyvocality in an Art Gallery," 163-165.

28 Crooke, *Museums and Community: Ideas, Issues and Challenges*, 26.

29 Barrett, *Museums and the Public Sphere*, 4-5.

30 *Ibid.*, 6-11.

In 1992, Eilean Hooper-Greenhill already pointed out how the museum's reality is that it cannot stay fixed on a model but has to change under society's social, economic and political context since it reflects its contemporary society and historiography. Therefore it is an institution that has much to do with the public sphere. A critical analysis of its workings is of necessity so to work in direction of a museum that addresses its social responsibility to its public on all levels.³¹

It is crucial to interrogate the space on which the museum acts. Barrett gathers Jürgen Habermas' definition of the public space as being an abstract but at the same time material concept, the public sphere comprising of the exchanges on public matters. Museums are perceived as public spaces in which public discourse can occur, exhibitions being developed in mind for the public on the basis that what is presented is of relevance for the public.³²

There is also the debate on the quality of a public space and how a space can enclose spheres of what is social, public and the state. Barrett references Tony Bennett's approach to Michel Foucault's reasoning of space as illustrated through the noted panopticon of social life, which can be applied to the museum's space. Space being an element that impacts people's lives daily everywhere in the world, even within a museum's walls.³³ The museum can be regarded as an influencing agent on social, political and cultural aspects of our lives, through its role of shaping of knowledge, a certain kind of reflective heterotopia of our social lives. Through this lens, Barrett notes how a public space placed in a disciplinary model of space shows how a public space can likewise be a site of surveillance (museum as a centre of regulated knowledge) and concede public discourse through a set of relations (audience participation and collaboration, through visits or involvement of activities).³⁴

31 Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge*, 1-3.

32 Barrett, *Museums and the Public Sphere*, 85.

33 Bennett, "Interview with Tony Bennett," 105.

34 Barrett, *Museums and the Public Sphere*, 100-105.

The historical evolution of the museum as a haven of knowledge, treasures or works of art from Ancient Greece, passing by Florence's beaming Renaissance and arriving to the modern conception of museum as a site open not only to the aristocratic or royal circles but to the world of the nineteenth century is evidence of how social and political change exerted an influence on the notion of a museum as a political instrument in the formation towards that of a public institution. The museum and its collections in service and benefit not to an exclusive group of people but everyone at large is what is sustained as the basis for the emergence of what is called the public museum.³⁵

Nevertheless, this idea must be taken with a grain of salt as the museum with the purpose to educate the masses of the nineteenth century wasn't full-fledged whatsoever and was at times also to entertain or all together to push forward the formation of national identity.³⁶ With the proliferation of museums that followed up in the twentieth century, the colonial model of "civilizing" people went on to be reflected as well in the cultural sphere. Along with the notions of rationality stamped on the institution as a temple of truth, what Foucault reveals to be connected to the dynamics of domination and subjugations of power.³⁷

Museums acquired a sense of social power by presenting themselves as institutions for the people, albeit not of the people. At the same time that they aim to show a democratising space for all, there is however the fact of heterogeneity in terms of people's experiences. This is still a point of debate in our contemporary museums, because though museums might introduce themselves as an open space to anyone, and in a great number of cases free of entry, there is however a diverse society in existence and with people of all types of socio-cultural backgrounds that may not feel welcomed or show any appeal to visiting these cultural spaces, which is specially the case for museums of modern and contemporary art and its young audiences.³⁸ The programming behind the youth peer education programs led by the Whitney, Tate and Stedelijk work towards taking into account such factors, to provide their spaces as inviting and collaborative opportunities for young audiences to engage with modern and contemporary arts and culture.

35 Barrett, *Museums and the Public Sphere*, 46-47, 49.

36 Taylor, *Art for the Nation: Exhibitions and the London Public, 1747-2001*, 93-96.

37 Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge*, 9.

38 Barrett, *Museums and the Public Sphere*, 49-51.

I. 2. The museum during times of reinvention

The questioning of the museum as a cultural and educational institution has been quite a prominent process of the 21st century which has led to the consequent new devising of its working within itself and outside. The image of it as an elitist, untouchable and unapproachable world has been fading for some time giving place to an open dialogue with the public. It is a rearrangement from museums that were mostly driven from their collections to a shift of focus on to their visitors.³⁹ Museums of modern and contemporary art considered as being for the most part participants of the debates and conversations on the shift from a traditional to a reinvented and new museum discourse. The values of diversity, inclusivity and accessibility that have entered to be part of museums nowadays have considerably impacted on several layers of its comprising agents, as will be observed with the education department and its youth peer education programs later on.

There is no doubt that museums have been facing the great challenge of relevancy for many years and certainly it will be a task that will keep these institutions on its toes to work and strive for offering a programming to fit the public's demands, be it from accessibility for all types of abilities to presenting exhibiting discourses that shine a light on voices that have been mostly marginalised by the art historical canon. That's why it is significant for museums to keep up with the trends of our globalised world and seek for implementing inclusive practices. Theodore Low as a renowned museum educator of the Metropolitan Museum of Art stated back in 1942 that at its core a museum's role is educational and to contribute to society. To this day this notion can be found and is recognised in museums' missions all over the world.⁴⁰

Theodore Low already took into consideration how the changing world has a lot to do with how a museum changes. And yet he also revealed that the institution's departmental structure could also render it to be a static entity. A museum's primordial mission of obtaining, studying and caring of objects prioritises collecting over the duty of divulging knowledge to the people. By the time public education gained relevance in the museum, the department was at first not regarded as a counterpart of the likes of the curatorial department, but instead simply as a supplementary instrument for working on boosting audience attendance. This treatment of the

39 Anderson, *Reinventing the museum: historical and contemporary perspectives on the paradigm shift*, 1.

40 Ibid., 10-11.

educational resources of a museum is none other than a vestige of the age-old European custom of favouring scholarly collecting and studying in the early manifestations of museums.⁴¹

Such times are perceived as long gone now, though it hasn't been an easy way in for education to have a more present and consequential role in the museum and up until today it is undoubtedly still a constant fight. The struggle has principally been identified by the resistance and authoritative role of curators and their leading role as caretakers of what are considered as the main characters of the museum, its objects. Among their functions it would include the ways in how the objects are displayed through their permanent collections or exhibitions, resulting in managing as well the educational elements of presenting the artifacts to the public. On the other hand, directors would also maintain quite a traditional approach by prioritising the growth of collections and its study rather than investing in the educational feature of the museum so to withhold their position of esteemed scholarship. And finally, the trustees have also been somehow looked on to be reticent when it comes to innovations, remodelling and taking leaps of faith towards new and promising endeavours.⁴²

However, it is known that acquisition, research and public education are all components that are interlaced in a museum's institution and are compatible, even more so beneficial when they work together. Low encouraged for the education department to be more involved with the curatorial domain, as they do have a closer connection and understanding of their public. This reveals how the museum can benefit far more from joining forces within, to be of better service to its audiences.⁴³

Along these lines of reconsidering the roles of a museum, there is also the reality that this institution has moved on from simply collecting and displaying objects to being more of a cultural community hub, many museums being public institutions from which people's taxes are destined to. In the 1970s, Duncan F. Cameron's sharp discussion on this matter had been of much significance to understand the modifications of museum management towards an equality of cultural opportunity. Though museums could be engaged with as indisputable temples that guard objects of value for humanity, there is a need for a revision on its social role. It is the museum's social responsibility to show their collections contextualised through their social histories and to

41 Low, "What Is a Museum?," 30-32.

42 Ibid., 33-34.

43 Ibid., 38.

fit the realities of the diverse audience that it serves for. Cameron's avowal for the museum as a forum for the exchange of views, new ventures and dialogue, was not only intended for its exhibiting purposes but also for the creation of programs for the audience to participate and vocalise their opinions.⁴⁴

At present, the case of the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York is an example of reviewing its social responsibility on matters of the canon and diversity of discourses. The MoMA has now opened its doors after months of renovation and expansion during the Summer of 2019. What can be seen now is, by all means, a curatorial discourse that responds to social changes that can intervene and make its presence in the museum. They present themselves as a new MoMA that will show art in new ways so to hear voices and perspectives that haven't been displayed before.⁴⁵ The reopening brings what they call a reevaluation through a critical lens, a responsibility they see as to reimagine the collection in a continuous evolution that can reflect our constant transformative society.⁴⁶

But of course with change there also comes contested views. The art historian Maura Reilly points out how this revisionism still considers a Western, white and male-centered canon at its core which disregards collectives that have been largely marginalised, such as women and people of colour. However, Reilly does revere the artist Amy Sillman's "The Shape of Shape" exhibition (part of the "Artist's Choice" series) and her presentation that breaks with the traditional historical and hierarchical discourse, through an organisation that surpasses the labels of genres, genders or borders.⁴⁷ Differing views and perspectives can nonetheless give space for improvement and start a conversation with regards to the improvement of the museum's mission. This can be observed through the collaboration between contemporary artists and the Tate Collective Producers in the creation of spaces of discussion through free events at the museum to tackle topics on discrimination and oppression through creative talks or open mic sessions in dialogue with the museum's collections or exhibitions.

44 Cameron, "The Museum, a Temple or the Forum," 64, 69.

45 "A new MoMA," MoMA, accessed October 31, 2019, <https://www.moma.org/about/new-moma>.

46 "Episode One: "The Future, the Unknown"," MoMA, accessed October 31, 2019, <https://www.moma.org/magazine/articles/165>.

47 Maura Reilly, "MoMA's Revisionism Is Piecemeal and Problem-Filled: Feminist Art Historian Maura Reilly on the Museum's Rehang," *ARTnews*, 31 October 2019, accessed October 31, 2019, <http://www.artnews.com/2019/10/31/moma-rehang-art-historian-maura-reilly/>.

The evolution of the participatory educational methodology in today's museums has come into being as a result towards institutions paying more attention to collaborating with the public. Through the literature, the development of the museum space as a convergence of factors from a social to a cultural level can be observed throughout its evolution and reformulation. The three case studies of youth peer education programs in this thesis can open up the conversation of current methods being carried out and contribute to the academic literature that has mostly centred its attention on curatorial discourse than on education matters. The creation and developments of public projects and programs are fruit of a continued reinvention of the museum. The shift from a collection driven to an audience-focused museum has a lot to do with how the education department has been professionalised, evolved and changed as well. And by paying consideration to its audience not only does the museum comply with being an institution in service and of benefit to the public but such an insight can be constructive and helpful to keep developing better ways to engage with its visitors.

Chapter II. The intersecting of museum education, young audiences and technology of the 21st century

The museum's constant effort to tailor itself to the needs of its heterogeneous audiences also goes on to apply to the education department. An interesting point regarded by Jocelyn Dodd is if whether museum education is at all related to teaching any more. It is not so much about the formal education but about reconsidering the whole function and value of the museum education, but about questioning whose museum and for whom it is. Though it seems as if museums nowadays aren't at large considered as exclusively highbrow sites, education programs have traditionally in part been directed to a distinct group, mainly children. Even so, the target should be with regards to a continuing process of learning that shouldn't be specifically emphasized only on kids but also along with teenagers and adults, as are the cases of the YI Leaders, the Tate Collective Producers and the Blikopeners. Yet again another aspect in which the significance of emphasising on adapting to the diversity of audiences of a museum can be seen.⁴⁸

Dodd remarks on the pertinence of museum education staff having now the ability and skill-set to address, manage, socialise and emotionally support diverse communities of people to promote a welcoming, inviting space of diversity and inclusivity. Involving, for example, communities of young people to take part in the creation of cultural projects in the museum through youth peer education programs. It is much work related to building confidence and trust with audiences and letting them know that museums do have a place in everyone's life. The fact of emphasising an open access can set off a course of action with socio-political consequences where people may not only engage passively but actively by putting in question said institutions. By having people asking how and why they operate in the ways they do can put in perspective how museums present their collections.⁴⁹ An approach of such being the collaboration between YI Leaders, Tate Collective Producers or Blikopeners with the museum staff and contemporary artists, to create engaging activities that young audiences can find of particular interest, for instance, uncovering queer or feminist discourses through interactive tour guides and workshops.

48 Dodd, "Whose museum is it anyway? Museum education and the community," 131.

49 Ibid., 132-133.

The displays have to take into account how and to whom they are being displayed. Within the museum's institution there should also be an encouragement of cooperation of its departments. Museum education has often been noted as its own entity but there is much to be accomplished by joining the efforts with curators so to provide a fair and fulfilling visit experience to everyone. This undertaking can only be achieved through a work of collaboration within the museum and with its public in order to realistically portray the richness of views of our lives.⁵⁰

II. 1. Youth peer education programs

So far it has been quite evident how the museum has been a contested institution, always questioned to justify its relevance and also stay relevant to its public. It is a constant hurdle characterised by reinvention to encompass and fit the multifaceted aspects of audiences of its present but also its future. Eilean Hooper-Greenhill observed the role of education of a museum to go beyond the generally known sessions and tours with children and adults, but a work that would trespass the education room and into the museum in its entirety, concerning the education role's with cultural politics. This is what she would call a critical museum pedagogy, which would allow the chances to review the democratisation process of the museum by reworking the discourses narratives of voices that are portrayed. The analysis of the visitors' perspective of the museum experience presents us with information on the uniqueness of interpretive processes that come from personal interpretations (prior knowledge) and social connections (relationships within society), which illustrates the dimension of politics of culture that is a great part of museums.⁵¹

Museums are presented as institutions in which to encounter material that is generally been interpreted and sometimes shown as objects that can speak for themselves as well, but in any case, it is also known that the "truth" that is displayed can be relative. Beliefs and values, be it from the institution or the audience, construct a meaning that is subsequently attached to the interpretation of the material culture exhibited. Having audiences that come from interpretive communities that are different means that museums must strive to provide strategies of intelligibility so that everyone can make sense of what they see. Among the learning strategies

50 Dodd, "Whose museum is it anyway? Museum education and the community," 132-133.

51 Hooper-Greenhill, *The Educational Role of the Museum.*, 3-4, 11-12.

that it can provide, besides conceptual facts, there are also experiences on a social level that the public can acquire on their museum visit and it is usually this social aspect of the experience that visitors will take back and remember most.⁵² An experience of this impact could happen by discussing with the Blikopeners through an exhibition visit on the narratives omitted or marginalised through art history, as the production of artworks by women or people of colour. This interaction with youth peer educators can lead audiences to critically approach the discourses and layouts of other museum exhibitions from on.

In the case of a visit to a museum of art, and that of modern and contemporary art, it can pose a challenge to its audiences when having to face a work that may not be recognisable. If the public is not able to connect with it the chances of them giving up from trying to engage and create a meaning-making process are quite high.⁵³ For this reason, it is of utmost importance to take into account the nature of our modern society that is formed by people of diverse backgrounds and with different needs.⁵⁴

One of the ways to confront this is by rearranging a museum's mission that of prioritising the audience. As William Hennessey and Anne Corso ascertain being the listening of one's audience, by opening up a two-way communication with its visitors to aim for the construction of an accessible space.⁵⁵ Nina Jensen remarks on how listening and understanding better the audience helps a museum to develop programs that can be of familiarity and engaging to people's experiences.⁵⁶

Through studies on demographic groups of ages, Jensen has observed that teenagers are less likely to visit museums than children, since they are mostly introduced by teachers and parents. What has been revealed is that the teenage years are defined by a period of development and non-conformity. They are still forming themselves as independent individuals of society. But a large aspect of their lives also is related to socialising with groups of friends. Museums can offer a space for setting opportunities of socialisation for young people. Making them a place for imagination, creation and connection to social values through art, a productive outlet to convey

52 Hooper-Greenhill, *The Educational Role of the Museum.*,11-14, 21.

53 Ibid., 45-46.

54 Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and Their Visitors*, 100.

55 Hennessey et al., "Listening to Our Audiences," 17-18.

56 Jensen, "Children, teenagers and adults in museums: a developmental perspective," 110.

thoughts and ideas ranging from those of power and conflict to artistry. It should be a safe space for young minds to be able to express themselves, be heard and respected.⁵⁷

The 21st century, however, has been regarded as the times in which museums are far more engaged in researching and working to include teenagers and young adults as part of the institutions' communities, by creating programs that go beyond the usual interaction of museum and audience. Young people are now being encouraged to take part in the museum experience not simply as a public but as working agents employed by the institutions, to completely involve themselves in the inner workings. Stemming from the research and conception of adolescence in the 1960s, this young demographic is seen as their own social space in which personal growth means constant change and learning. Museums have to restructure their educational programs to dedicate certain and particular attention to the youths in their teens and young adulthood, as they present specific needs. And by including them in the conversation, they can bring a lot to learn per part of the institution on how to broaden their engagement with young audiences.⁵⁸

Although youth peer education programs can vary depending on where they are developed, there are however main points that seem to be covered in general. They are referred to as intentional engagement strategies: peer diversity, sustained engagement with peers, staff and the museum, authentic work, interaction with art and supportive staff mentors.⁵⁹

The young participants that form part of these programs are valued in their diversity, a process of selection is based on what each person can add and contribute, and not so much on their accomplishments as students or artists. A broad and far-reaching perspective is commonly adopted so to take on heterogeneous groups of people. Continued and fully engaged participation from the young peer educators and staff within the museum is carried during periods that last around a year, usually through encounters after their academic duties, on afternoons and weekends. Museums move then from being regarded as exclusive spaces for a reduced and select group of people, to an inclusive sphere in which teens and young adults can attest that they also

57 Jensen, "Children, teenagers and adults in museums: a developmental perspective," 112-113.

58 Szekely, "Multiple Perspectives on the Recent Emergence of Teen-Centric Art Museum Programs: A Historical Reflection, Overview and Case Study," 23-24.

59 "Room To Rise. The Lasting Impact of Intensive Teen Programs in Art Museums," Whitney Museum of American Art, accessed October 5, 2019, <https://whitney.org/education/teens/RoomToRise>.

can be part of such institutions. The collaboration that is carried with the young participants and the museums' staff goes on to create projects of exhibitions, events or public programs.⁶⁰

The youths' contributions are valued and taken seriously, they are respected as fellow staff employees. While art allows the young minds to welcome experimentation and the posing of questions through creativity. The artistic outlet is an eye-opening experience for them to talk not only about art itself but also about social and personal issues of their lives. Furthermore, the intensive involvement of the staff along with the young people means the creation of a safe space for personal development and trust building with the adult world. The main results are young people gaining confidence in themselves and understanding their potential, an increased and enduring participation with the arts and culture in their lives, the acquiring of leadership skills, broadening of cultural and artistic knowledge as well as critical thinking and the establishment of enduring social networks and communities. These are qualities gained through an educational environment that combines art and collaboration with museum staff and between the peer-educators, who are active participants of decision-making and creators of projects.⁶¹

Museums can become welcoming spaces for young people to participate and interact. Another factor that should also be taken into consideration nowadays is that technology more than ever has taken a centre-front place in most of our lives. Specially in the lives of those who have been born and raised as native technological people. Young people are more than comfortable managing technological appliances, the Internet and social media platforms.⁶² The social sphere of the museum has now been expanded into the Internet, which can also be viewed as a step on to the democratisation of the public space, as digital access is now available to large portions of people worldwide. The conceptualisation of the post-museum that emphasises on aspects as accessibility is what brings us to a museum that is not limited by its walls and can go well beyond them with the aid of technologies and access to the Internet. And by having young people of diverse backgrounds as part of the museum, the engagement with its heterogeneous audience can be stretched out and enriched.⁶³

60 "Room To Rise. The Lasting Impact of Intensive Teen Programs in Art Museums," Whitney Museum of American Art, accessed October 5, 2019, <https://whitney.org/education/teens/RoomToRise>.

61 Ibid.

62 Szekely, "Multiple Perspectives on the Recent Emergence of Teen-Centric Art Museum Programs: A Historical Reflection, Overview and Case Study," 25.

63 Barrett, *Museums and the Public Sphere*, 109- 111.

Digital and social media's presence on our lives has been ever-increasing, with young people being one of the largest communities to take part in the online community and setting it as one of their main spheres of interaction with peers and the vast World Wide Web. Art museums can extend their spaces into the virtual sphere where young people can participate and produce content for the institution and share it with their peers and even international audiences.

II. 2. Audience engagement through social media

On the inclusion of electronic communication networks, Duncan F. Cameron already made the case of its value to museums, as it also contributes to amplifying the institution's social responsibility on the democratisation of culture.⁶⁴ Such a potential on the new technologies is now unchallenged as they are certainly one of the most popular and prevailing forms of drawing in audiences intrigue through platforms of social media. Digital platforms allow for a type of engagement with an ever-growing public of backgrounds of all kinds, which serves for the museum's aim to create a more equitable opportunity to cultural and artistic access.

The matters of media and message are also of relevance in Eilean Hooper-Greenhill's investigation of museum studies. The idea of a museum as a medium of communication is held as a premise that must be worked on as it is a growing area, specially due to the incorporation of new technologies. The theory and practice of such an area are being complemented by each other as the newly incorporated methodologies are assessed continuously through their use.⁶⁵

Anne Fahry argues that having access to the information developed by museums' through the internet gives space for audiences to interact with the vast collections of the institution on their own time and as extensively as they want. Of course, this also means virtually opening up the doors to international audiences and other museums, granting access to all kinds of content that range from audiovisual support on exhibitions or high definition images of objects. These new instruments aid to the principles of museums being hubs of knowledge to be shared, its outreach expanded through the creation of digital content by museum staff covering information of their collections and exhibitions.⁶⁶

64 Cameron, "The Museum, a Temple or the Forum," 72.

65 Hooper-Greenhill, *Museum, Media, Message*, 10.

66 Fahry, "New technologies for museum communication," 82, 86-88.

Ana Luisa Sánchez Laws' venture on museum websites and social media has been able to make evident that what we've been witnessing in our contemporary times, and already since the 2000s, is the emergence of novel functions of new technologies and the internet being used in the museum. The digital world has provided a platform for museums to share knowledge but for marketing as well. It is a sphere for promoting activities of a social scope and dialogue, greater access to databases and a contribution to the ongoing discussions on museums per part of the public. It has been notably seen as an encouragement to an inclusive model of communication in which anyone can join the conversation and participate in the museum's public sphere.⁶⁷

Yet again this hasn't been only a positive aspect for the public to gain a more democratised access to museums' digital spheres but also for the institutions to hear and interact with their audiences. What these online narratives provide is an aspect of active participation in contributing to the construction of multi-discourses. Social media is revered as a tool of great significance as it brings closer together the relationships between the public and the institution. SNS platforms can encourage audiences to interact directly with museum staff and contribute with their thoughts, ideas and indeed their knowledge. It can also be a window through which to see and observe audience engagement, in particular through the avid use of social media by young people.⁶⁸

The Internet can be a beneficial asset for the accomplishment of the social mission regarding the democratisation of the museum. Opening up the venue of social media for public engagement and participation means, for instance, allowing the audiences to be part of processes on a decision-making level. It is an access to the institutions' digital sphere that opens up opportunities to provide not only educational resources to anyone but at the same time listen and incorporate the diversity of views and needs of its public. Whilst exchange is of necessity to further the democratising values, the processing and incorporation of information are what include the audiences as part of the decision-making aspect of a museum. This latter matter is what is addressed as the user-generated content, in which users contribute largely to discussions that are appraised as relevant to the online public engagement of the museums' virtual community.⁶⁹

67 Sánchez Laws, *Museum, Websites and Social Media*, 2

68 *Ibid.*, 2-3.

69 *Ibid.*, 4-6.

Social interactive platforms from the guises of Facebook or Twitter are part of a virtual community culture in which users feel relatively free to express and engage in their thoughts, share their creative visions, feel as their opinions are of importance and experience a sense of connection with other groups of people. Museums can benefit from these attitudes that people adopt towards cooperation and participation.⁷⁰

To better grasp the range of engagement of social media, Sánchez Laws highlights a classification that takes on different aspects of online public engagement: access, communication and consultation, reflection and provision, and structural involvement. The availability of online collections or glimpses of the inner-workings of a museum can be understood as the access. The blogs where to promote specialised knowledge from the staff or new temporary exhibitions can prompt feedback from the public and be viewed as the communication and consultation. Digital platforms where audiences can share their own textual or audio-visual content and then be shared and integrated as part of the museum's social media spheres can be regarded as the reflection and provision. And social and online methods in which the public is invited to actively participate in decisions by voting or commenting on features to be implemented on exhibitions can be deemed as the structural involvement. Although some consider such new ways of engagement challenging and a subversion of traditional hierarchy and authority of the museum, they are at the same time innovations that can be seen to provide a step forward to breaking barriers of the institution.⁷¹

70 Sánchez Laws, *Museum, Websites and Social Media*, 6.

71 *Ibid.*, 7-9.

Chapter III. A comparative analysis of three case studies of youth peer education programs in modern and contemporary art museums: Youth Insight Leaders, Tate Collective Producers and Blikopeners

The Youth Insight Leaders at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, the Tate Collective Producers at the Tate Modern in London and the Blikopeners at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam are youth peer education programs in modern and contemporary art museums with a pioneering and consolidated history behind them. They are also examples of locations nowadays considered as leading cultural hubs. With great affluence of international visits and the place of residence of a diversified population, factors that fully affect the museum's inner workings and the audiences' experience. By the end of the twentieth century, museums in great part strived to meet with the variety of perspectives and needs of the international visiting public but also its neighbouring communities, reimagining its organisation to present the plurality of discourses of their collections and to enhance their engagement with their audiences.⁷²

Ilona Szekely⁷³ research on art museum's programs that are centred on teenagers, states that with the change on museum's missions from collections to the engagement with their audiences, the educational component is a prominent feature included in such a shift. Education has mainly concerned itself with children, and young people around their teens have been perceived as great challenges to face in terms of drawing in their interest and creating an enduring, lasting bond through the arts. But some have seen the possibilities of young people as part of the institution, in the many ways that they can add and enrich the museum's strategies of outreach. In particular with the expertise of the youth on the use of technologies and management of trending pop culture as social cues.⁷⁴

By giving teenagers and young adults space for them to contribute and voice their opinions freely, a stronger bond can be created in which young people may become more at ease to interact with the arts and the institutions behind them. This also helps to connect with young audiences that are unfamiliar and reticent about, in this case, modern and contemporary art, by having young educators approach such artistic creations in amenable and entertaining ways. Although multi-generational engagements with the museum's diverse public can also aid the

⁷² Barrett, *Museums and the Public Sphere*, 55, 110.

⁷³ Ilona Szekely, *Multiple Perspectives on the Recent Emergence of Teen-Centric Art Museum Programs: A Historical Reflection, Overview and Case Study*, PhD diss., University of Kentucky, 2012.

⁷⁴ Barrett, *Museums and the Public Sphere*, 55, 110.

target of improving audience engagement. Besides this, the young peer-educators that participated in such programs at museums will, later on, carry such learnings after their participation within the institutions.⁷⁵

These youth peer education programs originated under different circumstances and therefore employ methodologies with young participants that vary. In the case of the Whitney, New York presents boroughs with diverse cultural and socio-economic settings that has led the museum to work profoundly with a group of mainly high school students that come from all types of backgrounds. While the Tate in London, as in its other geographical locations of the United Kingdom, has also focused on working with its communities that surround them, although strengthening more its links with already formed local young artists and educators that are associated with organisations. The Stedelijk in Amsterdam brings together the approach of working with teenagers and young adults from all areas of its city along with some collaboration with external organisations. These differences can be observed as well on their use and promotion of their programs on SNS, which also connotes the sense of agency that is given to the young participants of the programs.

A quite remarkable point of these programs is how they seem to find the chance to not only present arts and culture to young people in approachable ways but also introduce social debates and narratives on LGBTQ+ collective, intersectionality and even politics, to discuss through activities, workshops and events in the context of modern and contemporary art.

A series of parameters have been established for the comparative analysis to ascertain the similarities, differences and particular features of the youth peer education programs and assess the effects on the participants. Firstly, the programs' conception, evolution and original goals will be addressed.⁷⁶ Secondly, an overview of their current aims and practices. Finally, a survey will account for their present use of online social networking platforms.

75 Szekely, "Multiple Perspectives on the Recent Emergence of Teen-Centric Art Museum Programs: A Historical Reflection, Overview and Case Study," 2-4.

76 Carolina Carvalho Palma da Silva's dissertation on *Youth Forums in Contemporary Art: Mapping Untimely Entanglements* has been consulted to pinpoint the events of relevance to the origination of the programs of the Youth Insight Leaders and the Tate Collective Producers. While for the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, Robin Vermeulen's *Contested Exchange: A Practice-based Exploration of Museum Learning Communities* thesis investigation has been of aid on material about the formation of the Blikopeners.

III. 1. Development of the programs and initial objectives

The Whitney Museum of American Art in New York had its education department beginnings in 1967, through the development of three test programs that were aimed at high school students during a summer High School Seminar, a training Institute project of two months for art teachers of public schools and an Independent Study Programme (ISP) of three months geared to college art students. The evolution and progress of these programs influenced majorly the formation in November of 1967 of the Art Resources Centre (ARC). Its location on the Lower East Side of Manhattan was not by chance but thought to bring the activities of the institution to areas in which people didn't have much access to the cultural environment of the city. This idea went along with Hanna Heller's view of branch museum model, which saw opportunities of new and broader outreach of communities through off-site programming to better connect with a diverse neighbourhood.⁷⁷

Besides the ISP the ARC went on to include the Youth Program (YP), presented itself as an art workshop of experimental character that offers the chance for autonomous participation of art students (junior high and high school levels) that are prompted to their personal exploration and investigation through artistic processes. This program, revered for its pioneering initiative of an open, dynamic and lasting engagement with youths of in between 15 and 23-years-old, who could freely access to a studio space and materials as well as the guidance of artists.⁷⁸

Unfortunately due to funding issues, the program came to a halt in 1976. The comeback of the program in 1997 was thanks to a well-endowed grant that allowed for the program to re-emerge as the Youth Insights: Building an Intergenerational Dialogue on American Art and Culture. It was at first conceived as an intergenerational approach to gather audiences together, every year focusing on groups of around fifteen to twenty high school students to create activities for young people, families and even seniors. The purpose then would be for the students to learn to communicate critical thinking of American art. Although this enterprise has transformed, it is still the prevailing project aimed at young collectives. An evolution that has been marked by a continuous evaluation process, funding schemes and the changing staff.⁷⁹

77 Silva, *Youth Forums in Contemporary Art Museums: Mapping Untimely Entanglements*, 97.

78 Ibid.

79 Ibid., 98.

The Youth Insights program opens during the fall and spring seasons and every year it is estimated that sixty students between 14 and 18-years-old are chosen from an application process to participate in the YI Artists, a program of projects of artistic exchanges between teens and contemporary artists.⁸⁰ At first, the target of young people was thought to be those that were considered as at-risk but it evolved to include a broader social and economic spectrum of background. This initiative is considered to give access to teenagers to the institutional workings of a museum and to connect creatively young minds with contemporary artists' projects. Besides it being a program with its interest in the exchange between teens and artists with art, the aftermath of such encounters are also valued and displayed through a public presentation. Once the young participants graduate from this program they can be eligible to apply to be part of the YI Leaders, an after- school internship that is paid and with a duration of a year that offers the opportunity of work experience and participation of programming at a museum.⁸¹

A project as this enables to establish a long-lasting engagement with the young audiences that will, after all, become the future public of the institution. The modern building of Renzo Piano in which the museum relocated in 2015, gave place to the creation of the Laurie M. Tisch Education Centre. There are continuous implementations of youth-oriented programs that aim towards inclusivity and offer a more relaxed approach to art, such as the Open Studio (OS) program, which opens up a space for young people to freely experiment through the creation of art. Educational initiatives as the ones mentioned show us the driving force of the Whitney Museum of American Art to become more implicated in creating meaningful relations with a young public and live up to their particular and changing needs.⁸²

In the United Kingdom, the Tate's Education and Exhibition Department that opened in 1970 was the first educational undertaking of the institution and its purpose was to survey the most suitable practices to fulfill the needs of the audiences, depending on their age, educational background or level of interest in the arts. From the donation of the industrialist Henry Tate's personal collection of art, the Tate had been inaugurated in 1897 and nowadays the national collection that ranges from British to international modern and contemporary art can be found in a series of different galleries, the Tate Britain (1897), Tate Liverpool (1988), Tate St. Ives (1993)

80 "Teens Get Involved", Whitney Museum of American Art, accessed October 5, 2019, <https://whitney.org/education/teens/GetInvolved>.

81 Silva, *Youth Forums in Contemporary Art Museums: Mapping Untimely Entanglements*, 98-99.

82 Ibid., 99.

and the Tate Modern (2000). By 1980 the Education Department would be instituted to work on its own mission, which also determined the creation of a department for educational purposes at Tate Liverpool. However, Liverpool's characteristics of being a post-industrial city with a particular social demography, it aimed at the formation of an outreach program for encouraging engagement with arts for its local youth.⁸³

Toby Jackson, as the Head Education from 1988 and 1999, would be of much noteworthiness as it supervised the scheme brought upon by the education team to present activities that would be linked to the exhibitions and with an outdoors reach to potential visitors. An element that was implemented as part of their strategies of engagement would be a marketing approach that targeted particular collectives with a series of events and it would be coordinated by an Education Curator with a marketing strategy, learning resources and methodologies. With this implementation, the Mobile Art Programme (MAP) was launched in 1989 with the purposes of it being an outreach project for people from 14 to 25-years-old.⁸⁴

From the critical debates that emerged from the workshops of the MAP, they were able to attest to the potential of connecting young people with arts and culture through dynamic educational approaches. This was also possible thanks to the collaborative effort along with youth organisations outside the museum's institution as well as the uninterrupted feedback that was being received by the young people that participated. Because this initiative also posed some limitations on the extension of outreach and programming that could be offered, during the summer event of Youth Arts Weekend of 1993 the institution understood that there was an interest by the young people to engage further with the museum.⁸⁵

The Young Tate (YT) would be created in 1994, a long-term undertaking that had its target on the youth to work to a greater degree with the museums' curatorial practices and exhibitions. This initiative was at first regarded as an Advisory Group that had its primordial task of providing information on how to present the collections in a more attractive way to a young public. Seeing that it was a well-received project with positive feedback, the first year of advising moved on to including the group to plan and execute activities for young people through artist-led workshops, events and talks. This is how such a peer-led program was proven

83 Silva, *Youth Forums in Contemporary Art Museums: Mapping Untimely Entanglements*, 107

84 Ibid., 108.

85 Ibid., 109.

to be a viable and effective approach to introducing youths into the professional world and enhancing the cultural sphere of the institution. An online project, whilst the Tate Liverpool was under renovation from 1997 until 1998, produced what would be the YT website. After the reopening, there was a course developed by youth organisations along with previous YT participants and staff that would bring into existence the figures of the YT peer-leaders.⁸⁶

At the Tate Modern in 1999 a local forum for young people was dedicated through the Raw Canvas (RC) project, which continued with a similar methodology as the YT. But in this project, the mission was to target young people from different backgrounds and to cultivate a long-lasting relationship with the arts. This initiative, however, began before the opening of the Tate Modern and it was devised as an outreach program of activities put together by young RC peer-leaders and for a group of people that were as well from ages of 15 up to 23. In 2006 the Tate youth collaborators of all the sites came together to set out a series of parameters that would be applied to all of the galleries. Their responsibilities would include to offer and promote an enduring relation to groups of young people with artistic culture and the opportunity for greater involvement of youths with the institution. But also build an environment where young people could take part in making decisions about their learning process within the museum. As well as present a diversified and inclusive outlook that can interest young participants. In 2010 the Tate Collective (TC) came forward as a youth group that would be present at all of Tate's galleries.⁸⁷

The TC groups are each a world of their own depending on which gallery of the Tate they work. But they all engage to the same degree in the development of youth peer-led and organised activities that are usually linked to the exhibitions of the various locations. In 2014 they also entered the framework of the Circuit program, aimed to bring people aged 15 to 25-years-old and the arts together through cultural enterprises that focused on festivals, partnerships, peer-led and digital initiatives.⁸⁸

86 Silva, *Youth Forums in Contemporary Art Museums: Mapping Untimely Entanglements*, 109.

87 Ibid., 110.

88 Ibid., 111.

The Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam saw during Willem Sanberg's tenure as director of the museum, from 1945 to 1963, the introduction of the first education program through his vision of art as an element that should partake in people's daily lives. His mission was to portray and present the museum as an inviting and accessible space, by implementing, for instance, the first audio tours developed collaboratively with Phillips in 1952.⁸⁹ The Stedelijk Museum founding stems back to 1874, a private initiative of citizens of the city through donations of art collections and funds for the establishment of a museum of modern art in the capital of the Netherlands. C. P. van Eeghen headed this enterprise and it began at the Rijksmuseum but later moved to the newly designed building by A. W. Weissman in 1895. At first, the collection featured largely works by contemporary Dutch and French artists. By 1920 the museum's collection went on to focus more on modern and contemporary art, even drawing attention to design and photography, now housing around 90.000 objects from 1850 to our days.⁹⁰

Education has yet remained as a priority of the museum and one of its primordial objectives, with its department striving to close gaps between the public and the art through an evenly matched exchange with the audiences. Informal approaches that can establish a lifelong connection and learning development is what characterises the museum's emblematic Blikopeners program. In 2007 the program came together through Marlous van Gastel and the social-creative projects agency of Diversion in Amsterdam. Van Gastel interest on new methodologies, such as the peer-to-peer education, already stemmed from her thesis on the interconnections of museums, audiences and society. The Youth Insights program at the Whitney Museum of American Art also played a great part in shaping van Gastel's envisioning of a youth peer education program, as she was able to witness such an initiative through an internship at the institution in New York in 2004.⁹¹

This is how the first peer education program by young people of Amsterdam between 15 and 19-years-old was introduced at a museum in the Netherlands. Starting as a pilot program for two years with its basis on working for a better engagement of the museum with youths. Primarily focusing on the inclusion of their opinions as part of the decision-making processes of the museum. And their participation as employees to devise peer-to-peer outreach methods to a

89 Vermeulen. *Contested Exchange: A Practice-based Exploration of Museum Learning Communities*, 23.

90 "History," Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, accessed October 5, 2019, <https://www.stedelijk.nl/en/museum/history>.

91 Vermeulen. *Contested Exchange: A Practice-based Exploration of Museum Learning Communities*, 24.

primarily young audience. What characterises this methodology is the core notions of intergenerational and informal settings of learning, which comes from theories belonging to social work that deal with the spreading of awareness of various socially relevant topics. The Blikopeners present and connect through the arts and culture linked to the museum with a younger or similar-aged audience and adult audiences. These peer-to-peer and intergenerational connections not only happen with audiences but with the museum's staff as well. Although it is a learning process that happens besides a formal education environment, the informal characteristic of it doesn't undermine the fact that young people can gain insight on the professional responsibilities of holding a job and the creation of networks in a serious work environment. Then again the teenagers and young adults that participate aren't the only ones to obtain benefits from this initiative but also the museum, by allowing the entrance and contribution of young and innovative minds' ideas.⁹²

The Blikopeners main form of working on its core aims and objectives is through their presentation as gallery hosts and guided tours of the museum's collections and exhibitions. Van Gastel expresses the significance of such a program as a turning point of revamping the museum through a young peer-oriented perspective, which can aid the institution to understand a potential audience from the inside and generate attractive ways to engage with art.⁹³

On October of 2010, the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam organised the "International Blikopeners/Eye-Openers Symposium: Connecting Young People and Cultural Institutions" where the topics on museums and young people were addressed through the presentation of youth education initiatives led by museums in the United States of America as well as in Europe. Included in this event were the projects of the YI at the Whitney Museum of American Art and the TC at the Tate Modern.⁹⁴

92 Vermeulen. *Contested Exchange: A Practice-based Exploration of Museum Learning Communities*, 22, 25.

93 Ibid., 26-27.

94 Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam. *International Blikopeners / Eye-Openers Symposium: Connecting Young People and Cultural Institutions. October 14-15, 2010*, 1-2.

By 2014, on the Blikopeners program's fifth birthday, the Five Years of Blikopeners report presented a weighing of questions, among them about the learned experiences of the young participants, the impact on their personal growth and the museum. The researcher Eva Klooster worked with those involved in the project, specifically thirty alumni, eleven parents and teachers related to the Blikopeners and twelve museum employees.⁹⁵

Self-confidence was remarked by the Blikopeners as being a major gain, as their participation meant that they were part of the institution as paid employees and their advice taken seriously. While at school they are students that must pay attention to what is said to them, at the museum they are part of something larger and where they can voice their opinions to make a difference. And their responsibility behind managing social media or organising workshops, symposia, openings and other events, provide ambitious proposals that contribute to the development of the museum. Another element is that the diversity in backgrounds of the Blikopeners is also a factor that adds to the creation of new connections and points of view. Through dialogue and organisational tasks, the young peer-educators learn skills that improve their team working practices and communicational abilities. And although not all of the participants must have an affinity to the arts, by the end of their experiences as Blikopeners they all do take in to appreciate art in new and different ways. On a personal level for the participants, the program also seems to offer some kind of influence on their own future career prospectives, granting them clarity on what they would like to do once their studies are over.⁹⁶

The peer-to-peer education methodology also provides a place in which young people can develop their communication skills through guided tours. And slowly build up the confidence to present art to other people, even to groups of teens and young adults. On the other side of the Blikopeners, the young public also can feel more comfortable with peers that resemble them than adult tour guides or teachers. There seems to be an inviting and confidence-boosting element as well for the young audiences that engage with the Blikopeners as they can see themselves reflected in them. Interaction is the key, as they propose to their audiences questions and perspectives that aren't the usual.⁹⁷

95 "Five Years of Blikopeners," Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, accessed October 5, 2019, <https://www.stedelijk.nl/en/digdeeper/five-years-blikopeners>.

96 Ibid.

97 Ibid.

III. 2. Current aims and methods

Nowadays the Whitney's YI Leaders are presented as organisers of public programs, events and interactive tour guides focused towards a young audience, who also assist educators in other programs such as the Family or Community programs, and write for the museum's Teen blog. They are New York City high school students (between grades 11-12) and graduates of the YI Artists, Introductions and Arts Careers programs, that take part in a yearlong and paid after-school internship, working around 3 to 10 hours per week.⁹⁸

The webpage of the museum provides a short introduction to a few programs and events organised by them since 2009, as well as brief presentations of the members. As for the most recent Leaders from 2018 until 2019, among these young people there is a diversity in cultural backgrounds, as some are from New York and its neighbouring boroughs, but also coming from other countries around the world such as Uzbekistan, Colombia or Egypt. They are juniors and seniors from a variety of high schools or homeschooled. For many of them, art is a way or form to express and connect with society or even a safe haven in which to take refuge during trying times. Some are still figuring out what it means to them and others want to be able to grow up to make art through music or animation. Although some also aim towards careers that do not have much to do with art, such as the medical field, engineering or marketing. They might be young minds but they profoundly share some poignant hopes for their futures, as aiming for lives where they can help, inspire and motivate others, bring about political changes and strive for making the world a peaceful and better place.⁹⁹

A few highlighted activities ran by this group can be discovered through hyperlinks on their webpage. The programming and events from and for the YI Leaders and teens are free and largely take place at the museum's Laurie M. Tisch Education Center. In 2018 they were host to the first ever Art College Night, to learn about tips on college essay writing, scholarships or meet with people representing colleges with programs ranging from Studio Art, Art History and Art Education.¹⁰⁰

98 "Teens Get Involved," Whitney Museum of American Art, accessed October 5, 2019, <https://whitney.org/education/teens/GetInvolved>.

99 "Youth Insights Leaders," Whitney Museum of American Art, accessed October 15, 2019, <https://whitney.org/education/teens/participants/52>.

100 "Art College Night," Whitney Museum of American Art, accessed October 15, 2019, <https://whitney.org/events/art-college-night>.

Their Halloween Teen Night was devised and inspired by the museum's exhibition "Programmed: Rules, Codes, and Choreographies in Art, 1965-2018". The Leaders also participated in the CPU Dumpling Workshop by the artist Taeyoon Choi (in line as well with the exhibition previously mentioned), so to take into fundamentals of computation through a cooking class. And they also prepared a workshop called Go Figure!, this time inspired by their exhibition "Andy Warhol—From A to B and Back Again", to explore and experiment with Warhol's various mediums of portraiture, be it printmaking, collage, drawing or photography.¹⁰¹

On the museum's Youth Insights Blog webpage, a more extensive approach to activities and events is presented. The latest being the blog entry "Speak Up, Speak Out! A Whitney Teen Summit" in 2018. This was a teen summit hosted by the YI Leaders and open to New York teens, an opportunity to discuss their stances and thoughts on political and social justice matters but also to participate in creative workshops and tours of the museum. This event stemmed from the concept of the history of activism that was presented at the museum's exhibition "An Incomplete History of Protest: Selection from the Whitney's Collection, 1940-2017". It also included a performance workshop by the artist and educator Shaun Leonardo, which touched upon memory, trauma and connectivity. A community partner of the Whitney, The Door, provided an interactive workshop on immigration rights. Whilst a guided meditation and discussion on self-care was led by the founder of the meditation centre My Inner Glow, Kyle Somersall. The Coordinator of Teen Programs, Dyeemah Simmons, stated that such an event "pushed the boundaries of what a teen event at an art museum can and should look like."¹⁰²

A large part of the Youth Insights program also has to do with their Artist In Residence project that brings collaborations with current working artists with teens, and with the Youth Insight Leaders as well.¹⁰³ In 2019 the Leaders collaborated with choreographer and director Raja Feather Kelly, founder of the dance-theatre-media company the feath3r theory. Along also with young people from The LGBT Center they created a performance for the Warhol Queer Teen Night, an Andy Warhol celebration event open to LGBTQ+ youth and allies. The event featured artistically creative activities with Raja Feather Kelly and tours of the "Andy Warhol—From A to

101 "Go Figure! Warhol," Whitney Museum of American Art, accessed October 15, 2019, <https://whitney.org/events/teens-go-figure-warhol>.

102 "Speak Up, Speak Out! A Whitney Teen Summit", Whitney Museum of American Art, accessed October 15, 2019, <https://whitney.org/Education/Teens/TeensBlog/TeenSummit>.

103 "Youth Insights Artists in Residence," Whitney Museum of American Art, accessed October 15, 2019, <https://whitney.org/education/teens/artists>.

B and Back Again” exhibition.¹⁰⁴ And with Maia Ruth Lee, an artist participant of the 2019 Biennial of the museum, the Leaders organised a workshop during the Biennial Teen Night for teens to create talismans based on the artist’s work. Throughout this event, the Leaders also led interactive activities, discussions and creative projects related to the Biennial.¹⁰⁵

As for the Tate Collective Producers in the United Kingdom, they are still introduced as groups of 15 to 25-year-olds, hired from youth and education organisations in London, Liverpool and St. Ives. With their objective being the collaborative development of their ideas and knowledge on art, culture and creativity, also working together with artists, designers, musicians or curators. The main mission of them being able to allow young people to create, experiment and engage with the Tate’s collection and exhibitions not only at their sites but also online. For every site of the Tate, there are groups dedicated to develop and organise distinct events, projects and programs to fit the characteristics of the spaces.¹⁰⁶ The Producers target the so-called Tate Collective, a free and open virtual community for people aged between 16 and 25-years-old, that by registering online keeps the youth updated on exhibitions, provides discounts and the latest on free cultural events at the Tate’s different sites.¹⁰⁷

When on the Tate Collective webpage, it offers the possibility to register for free or log in to one’s account, and hyperlinks on further information about £5 exhibition tickets, discounts and events. There is also a space dedicated to “Things to do and see for free” which presents workshops, tours and late evening events at all of Tate’s galleries. And a “Get inspired” block that displays podcasts, quizzes and lists of bibliography on art connected to the museum. There is as well a section that takes you to the museum’s online shop where members of the Tate Collective can use their exclusive discount.

A “Student resources” hyperlink takes you to explore careers advice in the art world, behind the scenes of people working at Tate, thematic entries on art and artists, or the possibility to present and share your art portfolio on the Tate Collective: Showcase online platform. Lastly, there are also their Twitter, Instagram and Facebook feeds embedded, which allows for a quick

104 “Warhol Queer Teen Night: For LGBTQ+ Youth and Allies,” Whitney Museum of American Art, accessed October 15, 2019, <https://whitney.org/events/queer-teen-night-march-2019>

105 “Biennial Teen Night,” Whitney Museum of American Art, accessed October 15, 2019, <https://whitney.org/events/biennial-teen-night>.

106 “Tate Collective Producers,” Tate, accessed October 15, 2019, <https://www.tate.org.uk/tate-collective/producers>.

107 “Tate Collective FAQs,” Tate, accessed October 15, 2019, <https://www.tate.org.uk/tate-collective/faqs>.

look at their latest social media updates. It is certainly evident to see that what is offered on the webpage is a content that is highly geared towards the curiosities of younger generations.

In 2018 a project presented by a video titled “We Are The Future: Tate Collective” brought together collaborators and Tate Collective Producers to look back and discuss their reflections about art and their thoughts on emerging artists. In this introductory film, there is a fast-paced approach to the notions of art, the museum and Tate Collective, which ultimately shows the multiplicity and ever-changing natures of such concepts. Ranging from the institutional and academic view of the cultural galleries, to a space of socialisation and connection with communities of people. A sphere that encloses the past, present and future. Art as a healing process, a platform to protest or a means to be free.¹⁰⁸

This project resulted in a series of short films titled “Artist Meets” that shows the conversation that arises between the artists and Producers. Essentially it brings out ideas on making accessible art through, for instance, music festivals that take place in museums’ spaces which can spark interest on young audiences. But also the invaluable power of the internet and social media to connect the youth with art that is available at a relatively close reach, discover new perspectives on art and provide an opportunity towards more democratic access no matter one’s upbringing. Along these lines, there is also the struggle but continuous challenging of institutional spaces being inclusive, for example, with people of colour, those who identify as queer or other intersecting identities. Not only by creating a handful of events or occasions for artistic engagement but more of a cultural mindset shift towards different collectives being able to feel some sort of ownership and comfort, freedom to express and see themselves in a museum’s space and its everyday programming.¹⁰⁹

Some of these aspirations by artists and Producers that have collaborated with Tate can already be reflected in the numerous events that happen daily and weekly in their institutions. Through a glimpse of the most recent free activities at the Tate Modern in 2019, a series of workshops titled “Black creativity & technology: With a Vibe Called Tech” delved into the exploration of technology as a tool not only for empowerment but also oppression and its

108 “We Are The Future – In the Gallery,” Tate, accessed October 15, 2019, <https://www.tate.org.uk/tate-collective/we-are-the-future>.

109 Ibid.

relationship with race and impact on creative expressions.¹¹⁰ Or the “Build, break or recreate?: with TENT and Tate’s Young People’s programme” series of workshops that brought together the producers behind Rotterdam’s TENT and London’s Tate Young People’s platforms together to talk about issues on power. On reclaiming problematic and exclusive institutional spaces, breaking down power structures and rebuilding new equal and balanced ones. Dealing with issues of domination, marginalised voices, personal and spatial power structures through evenings filled with music, photography, film, poetry and visual arts.¹¹¹ Along these lines, through a personal visit to the Tate Britain’s Late at Tate Britain event developed by Tate Collective Producers during September of 2019, it was evidenced as well the relevance of opening up the institution’s physical space without any constraints for establishing workshops, scholarly debates or even protests by the hand of art school students, on matters involving social justice.

Amsterdam’s Blikopeners are introduced on the Stedelijk museum’s webpage as a program bringing young open-minded people to not only the visitors but also the staff. With their aim to spur an interest in the arts and culture of their friends and young peers by sharing different perspectives and ideas of their own through programs, exhibitions, tours, workshops and events in the museum’s space.¹¹² The webpage also offers the opportunity to view the first Blikopeners from 2008 up to the current young peer educators.¹¹³ One of their most renowned projects is the Blikopeners in BASE, which provides the opportunity for visitors to interact with the young peer educators every Saturday through free interactive guided tours of the museum’s permanent collection, where spontaneity and an unrestrained demeanour is encouraged when discussing the art and artists on view.

Through personal visits to the museum, it was highly remarked the fact that the tours are offered in Dutch and English, opening up to an even wider and international public. And an audio tour featuring interesting facts and approaches from the Blikopeners’ favourite pieces can

110 “Black creativity & technology: with A Vibe Called Tech – Workshop at Tate Modern,” Tate, accessed October 15, 2019, <https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/tate-exchange/workshop/black-creativity-technology>.

111 “Build, break or recreate?: with TENT and Tate’s Young People’s programme – Workshop at Tate Modern,” Tate, accessed October 15, 2019, <https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/tate-exchange/workshop/build-break-or-recreate>.

112 “Blikopeners,” Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, accessed October 15, 2019, <https://www.stedelijk.nl/en/museum/blikopeners>.

113 “Wie zijn ze?,” Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, accessed October 15, 2019, <https://www.stedelijk.nl/nl/museum/blikopeners/wie-zijn-ze>.

also be accessed at any time, generating as well thought-provoking questions on the art being viewed by the visitors.

This stimulating kind of encounter is also developed through speedtours of temporary exhibitions, such as the “Blikopener Speedtour: Migrant Artists in Paris” that is available on Friday evenings at the “Chagall, Picasso, Mondrian and Others: Migrant Artists in Paris” exhibition that opened in September 2019 and will be open until February 2020.¹¹⁴ A speedtour of such grants insight into the young peer educators research and personal views on a selection of pieces that are of interest for them and open up discussions of various kinds with their public. During a visit to the exhibition and participation of a speedtour, one can observe how such a venture catches the attention of a young audience.

Firstly the Blikopeners (some of them already Alumni of the program but still involved) that will be the guides, present themselves and provide some personal background ranging from their studies to their particular artistic interests. They lead what tends to be a handful but intimate group of mostly young people, towards the exhibition’s highlights of their choice. Narratives that aren’t explicitly presented on the information panels or audio tours are brought forward through the questioning of the young peer educators, such as the vestiges of colonialism depicted on art, visibility of women and people of colour artists, fun anecdotes behind artworks and fleshing out a more three-dimensional understanding of an artist’s life and work.

This is achieved also through the conversations that arise between the young peer educators and the audience, by allowing space for intersecting perspectives that show the diversity and richness of views. In this exhibition’s case, there was also the opportunity for some critical discussions, for example, on the predominantly male-oriented canonical narrative that already stems from its title. As well as the chance to open a dialogue on the meaning of identity, how artists portray it and where the audiences stand on such matters. What these types of interactive guided tours bring in essence to its audience is not only new artistic knowledge but also a sense of reassurance to share their personal reflections on the art that is being experienced collectively.

114 “BLIKOPENERS SPEEDTOUR,” Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, accessed October 15, 2019, <https://www.stedelijk.nl/en/events/blikopeners-speedtour-8nov-2019-ENG>.

III. 3. Online presence and use of social media platforms

Although the YI Leaders do not have exclusive SNS platforms, the Youth Insights program does have a certain presence on social media. They have a Facebook page, Youth Insights at the Whitney Museum,¹¹⁵ that mostly presents some of the activities that they program, allowing for young people to keep track of the events by marking their interest or their assistance. However, not all of the events are featured or updated often. Their Twitter¹¹⁶, Tumblr¹¹⁷ and Instagram¹¹⁸ platforms are under the Whitney Museum's name and offer general news on the art world, their exhibitions and collections. On Twitter the Youth Insights various activities are rarely promoted. And their Tumblr has been inactive since 2018, featuring a couple of posts on Youth Insights teen programs. While their Instagram has an increased activity, it doesn't present many posts on the Youth Insights programs. It offers a look at the updated weekly activities on their Stories Highlights, among them those targeted to teens. Overall the Whitney Museum of American Art seems to highly rely on their webpage to present the most extensive information and up-to-date activities on the Youth Insights programs and the YI Leaders developments, as well as their Instagram Stories updates on the latest available from events to exhibitions.

The fact that the YI Leaders program doesn't have a presence as an autonomous collective on SNS is indicative of the Whitney developing a methodology that is oriented towards a work that takes place focused in the physical space of the museum. Reinforcing more in the cultural and social meaning-making that is created with the collaborative programming of the participant teenagers with the artists or educators and the teenage audience that attend the events organised by the Leaders.

The Tate Collective does keep up-to-date its Facebook¹¹⁹ page on its numerous activities, making it easy to keep track of its events and to be informed by thematic artistic news shared on the platform. Their Twitter¹²⁰ also follows a similar strategy as their Facebook page, but with a more avid presence by re-sharing through retweets artistic-oriented content by other accounts on

115 "Youth Insights at the Whitney Museum," Facebook, accessed October 15, 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/youthinsights/>.

116 "Whitney Museum," Twitter, accessed October 15, 2019, <https://twitter.com/whitneymuseum>.

117 "Whitney Museum of American Art," Tumblr, accessed October 15, 2019, <https://whitneymuseum.tumblr.com/>.

118 "Whitney Museum of American Art," Instagram, accessed October 15, 2019, <https://www.instagram.com/whitneymuseum/>.

119 "Tate Collective," Facebook, accessed October 15, 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/tatecollective/>.

120 "Tate Collective," Twitter, accessed October 15, 2019, <https://twitter.com/TateCollective>.

the platform. On their Tumblr¹²¹ their latest activity had been during August of 2019, although after a long hiatus since November of 2018. They do however present an interesting option for people to submit posts that can be featured and they tend to share the content of other accounts by reblogging them to their page.

Their Instagram¹²² account seems to be the one to take the lead on their social media activity, presenting not only all about their exhibitions and galleries, but an extended exposure on their events and activities through posts and Stories. Through their posts and Stories, they usually also offer occasions to engage with its audience by sharing pictures taken by the public, polls or open questions where everyone can join into the conversation on topics related to their programs. They also present Stories Highlights on events, first looks, horoscopes, art chats, career tips, wallpapers and collaborations, which reveals their platform not only as an informative one but also an entertaining one that is informed of current popular trends on social media. Though their webpage does present a complete presentation on their program, their Instagram platform offers a dynamic view of what they have to offer as well as a channel in which to interact with the Producers and other audiences.

The Tate Collective's grand presentation on SNS platforms, particularly Twitter and Instagram, also can indicate the fact that members of the youth peer education program have an artistic or professional background, therefore already having an awareness of the power of such platforms. Not only do they fully understand current popular culture among the youth, but they convene content through such a lens making arts and culture approachable to a young audience. Besides this, the participants also have a presence on SNS through their personal accounts that are often presented as well on the Tate Collective's social media platforms, which provides visibility on the people behind the youth peer education program.

The Blikopeners webpage (available in Dutch and English) presents through a hyperlink a few of their upcoming events and the option to search and view the activities of any date. And there is also an embedded video that shows some Blikopeners that identify themselves as curious, woke, unique, calm, radical, understanding and honest young individuals that are part of a family.¹²³ They also have hyperlinks to some of their social media platforms. Their Facebook

121 "Tate Collective," Tumblr, accessed October 15, 2019, <https://tatecollective.tumblr.com/>.

122 "Tate Collective," Instagram, accessed October 15, 2019, <https://www.instagram.com/tatecollective/>.

123 "Blikopeners," Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, accessed October 15, 2019, <https://www.stedelijk.nl/en/museum/blikopeners>.

page¹²⁴ keeps an updated feed of activities and events along with interesting news about the art world. While the museum's general Twitter¹²⁵ also relays some information on the Blikopeners.

The Blikopeners, however, have a Tumblr¹²⁶ (available in Dutch) that is continuously being updated with original content every month and an almost weekly post. It presents posts with textual and audiovisual (pictures, GIFs and videos) content under different sections that can range from furthering your art knowledge through fun internet culture to informative notices on social awareness celebrations or art-related events around the Netherlands. But their presence on Instagram¹²⁷ is unparalleled to their other platforms. Besides presenting their events and activities they also share art-related content from the museum and beyond through their posts and Stories, with a long collection of Stories Highlights to view from their past endeavours. There is also a more personal view into the behind the scenes of the Blikopeners program, which grants access to the ongoing processes and development of their projects.

Because the social media platforms of the Blikopeners all show a lot of visibility on their management, through their Instagram Stories or posts and original posts on Tumblr, it can allow young audiences to connect easily to them as they can see content created on their feed that follows the codes and jargon of their fellow peers. Young visitors can be notified on their Instagram account on the upcoming free Speedtours at the museums and even see the behind the scenes of future projects that are being developed. The natural and spontaneous nature conveyed on social media is the same as the one that young audiences can sense when talking about actual social issues that can be reflected through modern art of the 20th century during a Blikopeners tour.

124 "Blikopeners," Facebook, accessed October 15, 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/stedelijkblikopeners/>.

125 "Stedelijk Museum," Twitter, accessed October 15, 2019, <https://twitter.com/Stedelijk>.

126 "BLIKOPENERS – Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam," Tumblr, accessed October 15, 2019, <https://blikopenerssma.tumblr.com/>.

127 "BLIKOPENERS | Stedelijk Museum," Instagram, accessed October 15, 2019, <https://www.instagram.com/blikopeners/>.

Conclusion

If a museum doesn't radiate a sense of ownership for someone then the odds of them to approach such a place by their own will are low. Projects as the youth peer education programs are one way to effectively tackle this predicament of audience engagement with a public that isn't familiar with, for instance, the likes of modern and contemporary art. Not taking it too seriously and unpacking all of the seemingly complicated layers of understanding that pose artworks of these periods of time in an amenable and informal approach can create a sense of familiarity in an inviting way. By offering an educative avenue by the hands of young people there is also a sense of mutual learning and accessibility. In particular, to a public of children, teenagers and young adults, as they might feel more at ease to connect with modern and contemporary art through people that they can see as fellow peers of the same or approximate generation. In this case, there is also the fact that people of the same generation can understand a string of popular socio-cultural codes that can be translated when helping audiences to understand and take pleasure in art.

The three cases of peer education programs that have been touched upon showcase a variety of unique approaches to their methodology in museums of modern and contemporary art. Observing the different ways how they develop some of their programs can provide an interesting insight into the benefits of the particular projects and introduce actual educational methods that have yet to be investigated further by academic literature. And it brings also the opportunity to shed a light on aspects that can be improved, such as the degree of agency and decision-making processes designated to the young participants. The Whitney Museum of American Art orients its work towards a younger public, mainly teenagers, during a limited time of time. In this program, the agency of the young participants seems to be set mostly by the artists and the museum's educators. The factor of having young people in their teens makes it logical for them to be guided through the development of their programming. In any case, the Leaders still have the agency to speak up and contribute to the collaborative process of creating the activities assigned to them. As for their use of social media, the Whitney doesn't seem to grant much access to the participants to use SNS and are mainly circumscribed for the use of the museum's webpage, such as their Teen blog.

The case of the Tate brings about the multi-faceted nature of the Tate Collective Producers that acts in sub-groups around the different locations of the galleries, with participants collaborating for many years. Because they do range in age from teens up to young adults, there is a larger presence on decision-making processes by the more experienced Producers. Among them, there are as well young artists and educators, and although they do take up more agency they seem to gear towards collaborations with other collectives and groups outside the museums. This brings into the institutions the intersectional social reality outside the walls into their spaces, where young people can socialise and at the same time connect with other people and art. Bringing the variety of identifying realities as part of the museum programming allows for audiences to feel represented and invited to participate. The Tate Collective does have a great presence and impact on social media, especially on Instagram, and the Producers do intervene largely in creating and curating the content that is displayed on them. The fact that these young educators and creators are behind the devising of the management of the youth peer education programs makes it much more approachable for young people to dip into the art world and take a stance by engaging with them through the web.

While the Blikopeners also have teenage participants they also include young adults, expanding the pool of opportunities for the peer educators to connect among them and the young audiences. Even though the program also runs during a limited time for the participants, some interested Blikopeners Alumni still do have a presence in the programs that are run by the museum, making the engagement of the youths a long-lasting one even after their participation on the program. They do have guidance from the museum's educators but are also invited more towards a collaborative effort in the creation of the programming of events and activities. Although the spontaneity of the peer educators that arise when interacting with its young audiences during guided tours certainly shows the freedom in which they move and act when presenting their ideas and perspectives of the artworks on view. Their presence on social media is quite unparalleled, as is the cases of their Instagram and Tumblr platforms, which are kept highly up-to-date and they make it clear that they are in charge of managing the content that is featured. A sense of making modern and contemporary art even more approachable is gained by being able to identify and connect to and with the Blikopeners participants that appear on the programs' SNS.

On the other hand, it must be taken into account that these programs take place in a physical space as well as conceptual one that has been charged with numerous ideas, connotations and expectations throughout the history. Still, they are values that might reside in between their walls, if not much more persistent in the minds of society and the people working in museums. In spite of this, these institutions have significantly evolved in their missions' priorities, which in turn have affected their inner workings and their methods of educative purposes. The museum of the 21st century as a public space is at large yet a contested space of politics on to whom it belongs and who can express themselves in it. But what young peer education programs, such as the ones presented, can bring into the museum space is a sense of ownership and encouragement for the youth to have a say in them.

Even more so in museums of modern and contemporary art that bring collections that tend to break the mould of traditional artistic academicism and classic approach of the "high and low arts". These artworks belong to periods in which transformation, change and innovation brought upon new artistic practices and the revaluing of arts that might have previously have been considered as minor. Young people are after all a collective that is in continuous self-discovery and questioning of all aspects of life. Through encounters with art in events, activities or workshops, not only can they attain learnings on what could have seemed at first seemingly complex and abstract conceptualisations of artworks but also process their growth as people by reflecting on art. The particular cultural spaces that cater modern and contemporary art not only present a body of work that per se could also be considered as pieces that could deal with issues of the public sphere and project public debate discourses through artistic processes, but they can also house events and happenings in which people voice their concerns and critique on matters that can range from cultural, social or even political issues. Now more than ever collectives of young people with intersecting identities are entering in full-force the museums' spaces and projecting their voices through the activities, events or workshops that are organised in great numbers by young peer education programs.

Social media, on the other hand, brings the art world closer to the young community as their avid consumption of the internet makes way for them to be easily connected with museums' online platforms. This opens the door to viewing modern and contemporary art as an affair that can occur daily simply by following accounts on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or Tumblr. Being aware of the youth's presence on the social media community online has urged museums to provide not only informational material but also engaging content through the guises of the current internet popular culture and actively promote visiting their spaces. Distancing themselves from a formal presentation of a museum website, the institutions can show themselves as approachable and on-trend with a more relaxed display through social network services. And even actively engage with their audiences through the numerous possibilities that these platforms offer, after all, they are services used for social networking. Certainly, it can be said that social media forwards the conversation on museums being public spaces not only in its physical sense but also beyond that and into the virtual world of our digital era. Internet being also an instrument of great relevancy on the matter of democratising spaces, even the ever-expanding space of the World Wide Web.

The meaning-making potential of peer education programs led by young educators of today's museums of modern and contemporary art is not only on a cultural level but on a social one too. It highly affects on a personal level to the young participants, the artists and educators involved but also the audiences. Whilst also benefiting the self-growth of the young peer educators, providing exclusive insights into the needs and opinions of a particular group of potential audiences for the museum and offering an approachable and jovial image to a young public. These programs aren't simply tackling the content of artistic production of the modern and contemporary periods for purposes of instilling facts and details on young minds. But creating experiences in which young people can pick up knowledge of modern and contemporary artworks through social encounters and create meanings that resonate with their identities. At the same time that the young educators learn about art under the guidance of artists and museum staff or even among their peers, they are also establishing social connections that aid them in developing the confidence to put out into the world their own perceptions.

This learning process is translated into their encounters with the public, greatly so with those among their own generation. The fact also that these peer education programs usually present young people from a diversity of backgrounds and identities, also promotes young audiences to feel identified by seeing themselves reflected in the educators. The social nature of human beings draw them towards wanting to feel understood, and in the case of young people there is an empathic, open and inviting quality of seeing people with whom they can identify with. Ultimately, these programs provide opportunities for museums to form an approachable image not only for the young public but also with them.

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