Contemporary Art Museums and Youth - An Imperfect Genealogy of Youth Programmes at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New Museum, Tate, and Whitechapel Gallery

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Abstract

The unique feature of the youth groups formed in contemporary art museums is the wider ecology to which they are connected, meaning simultaneously the idiosyncrasies of each institution and their educational programmes, the people who plan and facilitate those initiatives, and the private or public funding schemes in the background that make them possible. In this paper I present the genealogies of the youth programmes of four contemporary art museums – two located in New York, USA: the Whitney Museum of American Art and New Museum, and two in London, UK: Tate, and Whitechapel Gallery. Together they make the intricacies, tensions, and potentialities of long-term programmes for youth in museums visible, while challenging the linearity of historical narratives and opening directions for the future.

Keywords: youth arts programmes, museum education, genealogy, archive, contemporary art museum

Introduction

I first came across programmes targeting young people (aged 15–25) as independent visitors to contemporary art museums when navigating the website of the Whitney Museum of American Art in the summer of 2012. On looking into their learning programme, I found the heading 'Teens', which I followed to *Youth Insights*. In my previous experience as an art museum educator in Lisbon, Portugal, the initiatives developed with this age group were mainly school visits, workshops, or daylong events. I was attracted to the Whitney's programme by its immersive dimension, by which I mean the way that young people were involved in long-term creative and collaborative projects. My curiosity led me to search further into their online archive in an attempt to understand who they were and what they did. From one link to the next, a hypertext gradually unfolded, along with two questions: when and why were these programmes created? And how did they evolve across time? These questions partially informed my PhD research on youth programmes in contemporary art museums (Silva 2017), with a focus on both their current and historical configurations in the UK and the USA. In this paper I discuss the turn to youth in four contemporary art museums: the Whitney Museum of American Art, New Museum, Tate, and Whitechapel Gallery, with an emphasis on the emergence of, and changes in, their respective youth forums, which include Youth Insights, The Experimental Study Programme, Tate Collective, and Duchamp & Sons. Drawing on a genealogical approach, as outlined below, I aim to unpack the intricacy of museum education histories in relation to youth participation in contemporary art museums specifically. Understanding the multiple forces – social, cultural, political, and/or institutional – that influence youth programming in museums is relevant firstly as a testimony to the chameleonic existence of museum education, and secondly as a way to see patterns in the challenges faced by youth programmes across time, thereby perhaps in turn leading to more sustainable, future-proof initiatives. Young people were long considered the untouchables of art museum audiences. The main reasons underlying museums' scepticism towards youth included preconceived ideas about the challenges of working with this age group, a lack of training for staff, and the

supplementary resources of space, time, and money needed to develop new programmes (LeBlanc 1993; Lemerise 1995; Selwood et al. 1995). The reasons why museums turned to youth and shifted them from the margins to the centre of their practices, cannot be mapped out in a linear way. However, the combination of a deeper awareness of, and concern about, the visibility of their social mission, and the visitor-centred ethos that emerged in the last decades of the twentieth century, has contributed to museums' growing investment in their younger audiences (Allard 1993; Lemerise 1999). In tandem with this epistemological turn, there has been a sociopolitical drive that pushed museums to justify their social role, as well as the funding they receive from public and/or private entities (Sandell 1998). The encounter between these forces has led to the emergence of various initiatives for youth involvement.

My decision to look at museums in the USA and the UK was influenced by the pioneering work that has taken place in these countries to test new ways to engage with youth outside of the school environment. The decision to focus on programmes based in New York and London was also linked to the possibility of visiting them, and having direct contact with their practices. From the wide variety of offers, it was important to select youth programmes that were at different stages, including long-established initiatives, such as those at the Whitney and Tate, which consolidated their work with youth in the mid-1990s, as well as more recent programmes like those of the New Museum and Whitechapel Gallery, which were established in the mid-2000s.

Youth programming in museums is multifaceted and can include both short-term and long-term initiatives such as events, workshops, or youth forums, each with its own goals and strategies (Xanthoudaki 1998). I use the term "youth programme" to designate the overall educational programming for young people in museums. This can include different programmes, activities, and projects for this age group. I use the term "youth forum" to refer to specific, long-term programmes that last three to twelve months, and which aim to build in-depth relationships with youth. The latter is not a universal designation, with museums also using "youth group" or "youth collective". The four genealogies presented in this paper show how different temporalities of participation were tested across time in each institution, and how they are now often combined, offering young people multiple points of entry into museums. In the USA, youth programmes in art museums unfolded in response to the commissions by the American Association of Museums such as *Museums for a New Century* (1984) and *Excellence and Equity: Education and the Public Dimension of Museums* (1992), which challenged museums to explore new ways to engage broader audiences, namely communities they had long neglected or misrepresented (Shelnut 1994).[1] In the UK, the report *Moving Culture: An Enquiry into the Cultural Activities of Young People* (Willis 1990) represented a key reference in museum programming for youth. By identifying the high level of exclusion encountered by this age group from cultural institutions, the report influenced the creation of funding schemes dedicated to youth art programmes, and propelled new research commissions on youth arts provision.[2] As shown by Sarah Selwood's research, "arts projects for young people [in cultural institutions] tend to be motivated by various political, moral, and economic imperatives" (1997: 336). This presents museums with a core challenge – to balance their self-interest, namely in audience development, with broader sociocultural and political agendas.

Overall, museums that have offered specific programmes for young people have launched their initiatives under a unique set of circumstances. These have consisted of responding to audiences that were not usually represented in their educational programmes, building future generations of visitors, and/or making their spaces more welcoming and trendier for youth (Arias and Gray 2007). However, regardless of their agendas, the success of museums' engagement with young people is intrinsically linked to the beliefs of those leading them. In other words, 'programmes formed in isolation within a particular department or programme area may achieve moderate success but, without strong institution commitment, may fail to achieve long-term goals', as Stacey L. Shelnut puts it (1994: 13). The four genealogies discussed in this paper further stress this view, by showing how it was only possible to establish thriving programmes by taking both a path of trial and error, and a gradual approach to programming *with* rather than *for* youth.

Imperfect Genealogies

Genealogy is often understood as the exploration of roots – for example the study of family ancestries, as well as the diagram resulting from that lineage. As a framework for critical thinking within the fields of cultural and historical study, genealogy can by contrast be understood as a 'historical perspective and investigative method, which offers an intrinsic critique of the present [while] analysing and uncovering the relationship between knowledge, power and the human subject' (Crowley 2009: 341). This approach might be said to originate in the work of German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, and the French philosopher Michel Foucault, for whom genealogy challenged teleological views of history. While questioning teleological foundations of knowledge, the genealogical approach implicitly refutes an understanding of history that values continuity, primordial truth, and objectivity. Instead, it reveals that social and cultural phenomena actually emerge from a more diverse and radial set of influences across time. Genealogy reveals the contingency and complexity of historical forms – that is to say, the varied discourses and practices that shape them – as it looks to expose a complex and messier picture of their conditions of formation. To quote Terry Zeller, 'one must look to the words and actions of directors and trustees as well as museum educators and curators in one's search for the philosophical foundations of museum education' (1989: 12). This is a perspective that exposes an intricate history or histories. However, this intricacy is at the heart of art museum education. As a transdisciplinary field, art museum education sits at the intersection of several discourses: aesthetics, art history, art practice, cultural studies, educational studies, psychology, philosophy, sociology, and other areas of scholarship. Art museum education belongs to none of these but is influenced by all of them. The use of the genealogy method to further map museum education histories, particularly the turn to youth in contemporary art museums, would appear to shed light on an unconventional, albeit extremely rich, field of practice.

A pivotal notion reinterpreted through genealogy is that of origin. Foucault (1994) goes so far as to say that a genealogical approach opposes itself to the search for origins, arguing that although used interchangeably, the terms "descent" and "emergence" are more precise than "origin" in describing the focus of genealogy. Performing what might appear as two contradictory movements – descent and emergence – the genealogist is committed to the study of flux rather than permanence. However, it is important to make clear that 'as it is wrong to search for descent in an uninterrupted continuity, we should avoid accounting for emergence by appeal to its final term' (Foucault 1994: 376). In this sense, historical and contemporary events, ideas, or practices represent neither origins nor destinations in a linear development, but contingent episodes within an unstable entanglement. For example, when I first asked, "why did museums turn to youth?", I was embedded in a kind of genealogical narcissism, entertaining the assumption that the answer was already there to be encountered at a specific moment in time and space, and that finding it would allow me to fully understand this phenomenon. Researching the *histories* rather than a *history* of museums' turn to youth has diluted this idea. Genealogy is not concerned with the production of knowledge, especially when understood as the discovery of truth, but with the generation of critique. In other words, one of the critical tasks of genealogy is to 'show how one and the same word, practice, or institution often serves successive and distinct, even opposed, forms of life and thereby takes on a new significance at every turn' (Evans 2008: 370). Awareness of the idiosyncrasies of each museum I chose to research – their unique ideologies, histories, and geographies – was particularly relevant when looking at how they engaged with youth. This is visible in their evolving mission statements, as well as in explicit or tacit definitions of education, which act as historical weights that are never fully detached from contemporary practices and discourses.

My first approach to each museum was through their website, which I navigated multiple times. This digital fieldwork involved entering the Learn/Education/Participation section and the Teens/Young People/Youth page, opening links to their past, present, and future activities, and exploring the social media pages of the youth forums on Facebook, Twitter, and Tumblr. Although informative, this never-ending journey gives only a partial insight into each programme, often told by an anonymous collective voice. In order to expand this perspective, digital sources were combined with three other, each with its own temporality. These included:

archive material, which gives a historical insight into museums' practices; publications, which entail a deeper study framed by a theoretical and/or evaluative lens; and interviews I carried out with the educators responsible for planning and delivering the youth programmes at the Whitney, New Museum, Tate, and Whitechapel Gallery. The latter included the coordinator of the Whitney's Teen Programs at the time, and the assistant to Teen Programs respectively; the manager of G: Class and Community Programs at the New Museum; the Tate Convenor Young People's Programme; and the curator of Youth Programmes at Whitechapel Gallery during this period. These semi-structured interviews mainly addressed the current configurations, in terms of goals, pedagogical strategies, and evaluation methodologies of the ongoing youth forums, as well as their alignment with each institution's overall education programme.[3] In this paper their reflections are included as a counterweight to the archival materials, and to historical narratives. Together they outline four imperfect genealogies.

Youth Insights – Whitney Museum of American Art

Founded in 1930 by Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, the Whitney opened in New York City in 1931 with a core commitment to twentieth- and twenty-first-century American art and artists. In 1966 the museum occupied a new Marcel Breuer-designed building in Manhattan's Upper West Side, a transition that coincided with the beginning of its Educational Department, led by Douglas O. Pederson. The growth of the educational programme was intertwined with the 1967 opening of the Arts Resource Centre (ARC), an off-site branch occupying an old warehouse in the Lower East Side – a deprived area of the city at the time. This followed the branch museum approach, which was seen as a way to reach new audiences beyond the museum walls (Heller 2015). It was within this framework that the Whitney created the Youth Program, a pioneering initiative that engaged young people aged 15–23 outside of the school environment. The programme's ethos was fully expressed in the first exhibition catalogue:

> The Youth Program is an experimental art workshop which provides an opportunity for a positive self-directed involvement in art by students of junior high and high school age. Each individual is encouraged to explore and question his own personal relationship to and conception of art through active and direct involvement in the creative process (Haur et al. 1969: 2).

The Youth Program ended in 1976 due to a funding cut. The reasons for this disinvestment are all too familiar in the context of the challenges faced in the current age by museums in navigating public and private funding policies: 'the numbers reached by ARC are small; the results are not highly visible; the project is expensive; support by the public school system is still inadequate; recruitment is difficult' (Ortner 1978: 435).[4] Following the end of this adventurous outreach programme, the Whitney's educational mission mainly targeted schools.[5] The major move back towards youth began in 1997 with the launch of Youth Insights: Building an Intergenerational Dialogue on American Art and Culture, a programme funded by a $500,000 challenge grant from the Pew Charitable Trust (Pitman and Hirzy 2004). Although it has evolved over the years, this is still the Whitney's core offer for youth.

When mapping the life cycle of *Youth Insights* (YI), Danielle Linzer and Mary Ellen Munley (2015) identified three key moments: intergenerational focus (1997–2007); streamlined structure (2007–2009); and tiered structure (2009–present). The first was based on an intergenerational approach that gave youth the role of mediators between seniors and contemporary art; the second included three strands, namely the Artist in Residency, the Contemporary Community, and the Advisory Board, each of which both tested different ways of engaging with young people in the museum, as well as with contemporary art and artists; and the last, whilst also offering different programming formats, including YI Artists, Leaders, and Summer Arts Careers, amongst others, has been organized in a way that gives young people tier-based opportunities, which they can choose to follow in a progressive way, to access and be involved in the museum.

This metamorphosis was shaped by ongoing evaluation, change in funding policies, and staff turnover. One of the underlying motivations for continuous engagement with young people at the Whitney has been an intrinsic awareness that these are their future audiences.

As the Whitney's Coordinator of Teen Programs, mentioned, 'it is very important to get them invested in institutions like the Whitney and caring about art and engaging with it and feeling that this is a space for them'.[6] Nowadays the youth programme includes two main strands: long-term initiatives – YI Artists and YI Leaders – and free drop-in events and activities, such as Open Studio for Teens. Their coexistence reveals the Whitney's commitment to youth, acknowledging their different needs and interests when encountering the museum. Focusing on the long-term initiatives, YI Artists is delivered every autumn and spring, engaging each time with two cohorts of 15 participants between grades 9 and 12 in practice-based projects with artists. As well as offering behind-the-scenes access to the museum, one of the goals of YI Artists is to give young people the opportunity to critically discuss art, think creatively, and make art. The outcome of this exchange is as important as the process, often leading to a public exhibition or presentation.[7] After completing the programme, young people are eligible to apply for YI Leaders, a yearlong, paid, after-school internship. The main goal of this programme is for young people to gain work experience in a museum, while being involved in programming for their peers. This tier-based structure echoes the typology of youth programmes that have been on offer in Science and Children's museums since the late 1960s, such as the Explainers and Museum Team, which have existed at the Exploratorium in San Francisco since 1969, and at the Brooklyn Children's Museum in New York since 1987 respectively (Baum et al. 2000; Librero 2005; Shelnut 1994). Influenced by a progressive ethos and a belief that these experiences will help young people make the transition to higher education and the world of work, the choice of a tier-based structure to engage this age group shows how educational programmes in museums are also devised in response to both specific epistemologies, and the ever-changing ecology surrounding each institution.

In May 2015 the Whitney relocated to a new building designed by Renzo Piano in the Meatpacking District of New York's West Side. This transition enabled the education team to devote time and resources to reflecting on its mission and practice, leading to a core commitment to the local community (Linzer 2014). Explicit reference is made to the influence of progressive philosopher and educator John Dewey, particularly his book *Art as Experience* (1934): 'we are inspired by Dewey's idea of "learning by doing" and his belief that the material process is integral to the development of each individual' (Whitney Museum of American Art 2016). The intertwining of a thoughtful dialogue with the artworks on display, and the participation in creative activities, are thus crucial to the new educational approach at the Whitney. This marks a return to a progressive and pragmatic approach, which sat at the heart of the first education programmes at the museum, namely the Youth Program. A pivotal novelty however was the way in which the programme was positioned at the centre of the institution, rather than as an off-site initiative. I think here of the new creative studio Hearst Artspace, situated in between exhibition floors at the new Whitney building. The Artspace is visible to all visitors, and used by the museum's various educational strands, including the youth programme.

Experimental Study Program – New Museum

The New Museum project emerged from the desire of Marcia Tucker, a former curator at the Whitney and MoMA, to create an institution devoted to presenting and studying the work of emerging contemporary artists. It opened in New York City in January 1977. The New Museum provides an important example of 'museums becoming presentist' (Bishop 2013: 15), mainly due to its semi-permanent collection. Guided by the question: 'could a collection of contemporary art remain contemporary?' (Tucker 1995: 6), and faced with the challenges posed by the ephemeral, performative, and conceptual dimension of contemporary art, the New Museum defined a more fluid collecting policy. This meant that works would be deaccessioned ten years after being bought, thus creating space for new acquisitions. The matching of their exhibition and collection visions stressed the museum's commitment to contemporaneity.

In nearly forty years of existence, the New Museum has moved twice. First in 1983 and more recently in 2007, to a new Kazuyo Sejima and Ryue Nishizawa/SANAA-designed building on Bowery Street, in mid-town Manhattan. These changes coincided with the affirmation and rethinking of the museum's educational mission and practice, through the High

School Art Program (HSAP), and later through the Global Classroom (G:Class) respectively. Drawing on the success of a pilot project developed in 1981 by Ed Jones, the first Director of the Education Program, which focused on outreach to inner-city schools, the museum launched the pioneering HSPA with the intention of '[creating] a model for the investigation of contemporary art in the high school' (New Museum 1988: 7). In response to the decline in funding for art education in public schools in the USA during the 1980s, this initiative was developed further. It was later renamed as the Visible Knowledge Program (Cahan and Zocur 1996), offering an interdisciplinary schools programme engaging artists, teachers, students, and the museum in semester-long collaborations. Following the move to the Bowery building the programme was re-launched as G:Class.

As a way of expanding their strong commitment to high school students, the New Museum also explored initiatives to engage young people outside of the school environment, namely through outreach projects, internships, and events. Examples included the Student Anti-Violence Project (1999), an after-school programme for at-risk students, the Youth Council Program (2005), which involved young people in three-month collaborative projects with artists at the museum, and the High School Students Internship (2013), through which participants could collaborate with the museum in order to gain work experience and explore contemporary art.[8] Until 2018 a version of the latter was offered as the *Teen Apprentice Program*, a six-week paid summer internship for 14–19 year-olds. In collaboration with the Museum Teen Summit, since 2012 the New Museum has also organized a yearly Teen Night, an event that includes live performances, gallery talks, and practice-based activities for young people. In the autumn of 2013, under the supervision of a new Director and Curator of Education, Johanna Burton, the New Museum launched the Research and Development (R & D) Seasons. This seasonal approach, which focused on a different theme twice a year, allowed 'artists and audiences to engage through research-based speculation around objects, ideas, and artistic practices across multiple initiatives'.[9] As part of the R & D Seasons, the New Museum created the Experimental Study Program (ESP), a nine-week, application-based initiative for young people aged 15–20. As described online, the programme offers 'twelve participants the chance to work closely with artists, engage in critical discussions around contemporary art and culture, and contribute directly to the New Museum Education Department's ongoing commitment to social analysis and change',[10] and ran twice a year. What was unique about the ESP was its integration within a broader curatorial initiative. In this sense the museum's experimental collaboration with artists was paired with a similar engagement with young people. On the one hand, the ESP framed the conversations that unfolded with participants, and on the other hand, it determined the artists available to collaborate with the group, as they were already engaged in the museum's seasonal public programme. In the words of the Manager of G:Class and Community Programs, the approach artists have used within the group 'is very much embedded in their own concerns and their own outreach or strategies of social engagement'.[11] However, although the ESP was conceptually intertwined with the R & D Seasons programme, at the time its profile within the institution was still being tested. For the Manager of G:Class and Community Programs, this has meant continually negotiating the expectations of what the relationship between a museum and young people is, and what it is supposed to be.[12] The ESP programme was replaced in 2020 by Youth Spectrum Arts, currently called NEUMU Teens, which focuses on gender, sexuality, and the queer and trans community.

Tate Collective – Tate

The National Gallery of British Art was created in 1897 and has since grown into a multi-site institution that holds the national collection of British art, as well as international modern and contemporary art. It was renamed the Tate Gallery in 1932 after Henry Tate, an industrialist who donated his private art collection to the nation, which was housed in a new, purpose-design building in Millbank, London (Spalding 1998). Currently known as Tate Britain, it is now part of a family of four galleries – the others are Tate Liverpool, Tate St Ives, and Tate Modern, inaugurated in 1988, 1993, and 2000 respectively. The role of education at Tate grew in tandem with the latter's physical expansion, and was crafted to suit the ecology of

each gallery. In response to the post-industrial and socio-demographic characteristics of the city, Tate Liverpool created a unique outreach route, including a pioneer programme for young people aged 14–25 (Ganga 2009). Under the supervision of Toby Jackson, Head of Education between 1988 and 1999, when he moved to Tate Modern, the education team combined efforts to plan and deliver activities in dialogue with the exhibitions, as well as work outside the gallery to reach their non-visitors. What started as the Mobile Art Programme in 1989 – a series of one-off workshops that was intended to establish connections between youth culture and the exhibitions on display at the gallery – evolved into Tate's first youth forum – Young Tate, created in 1994. The publication *Testing the Water: Young People and Galleries* (2000), edited by Naomi Horlock, Young Tate Co-ordinator between 1988 and 2007, gives an insightful understanding of the different lives of the programme. Envisioned as an advisory group whose primary role was to inform the gallery about how to make their collection more appealing to young visitors, the group's ethos gradually changed. Following a pilot year, and in response to participant feedback, there was a shift from the initial advisory focus towards a more inclusive engagement in planning and delivering different activities for their peers, namely workshops with artists, events, or gallery talks. The peer-led approach was gradually tested, and by the end of its third year Young Tate was 'firmly centred on the continued development of peer-led work, and in professionalizing the Gallery's approach to training and raising the quality of young people's experiences' (Horlock 2000: 125). The programme created a specific profile for its members – peer-leader – which to a certain extent still informs the Tate's youth forums today.

Raw Canvas was established at Tate Modern in 1999. Although influenced by the structure, working methods, and values of Young Tate, this youth forum was developed to respond to the local audience, and therefore established its own identity (Sayers 2011). Overall its goals were 'to create young cultural consumers from diverse backgrounds and in so doing to foster a lifelong interest in art in order to change the demographic of adult gallery visitors in the future' (Sayers 2011: 410). The unique feature of Raw Canvas is that it started before the gallery was opened to the public, and thus responded simultaneously to a strategy of outreach, audience development, and marketing. Framed around an inclusive institutional and political agenda, the programme was designed for and by young people aged 15–23, who could participate in large-scale events, workshops, and other activities delivered by the group peer-leaders (Sayers 2014).[13] In 2002 on the other bank of the Thames, a few kilometres away, Tate Britain initiated their peer-led youth group, Tate Forum, and in 2006 Young Tate St Ives was established in Cornwall.

Informed in part by the demographic of each gallery, in 2006 Tate's youth curators devised a set of parameters, based on their local experiences and future plans, that were to be shared between sites:

> Aim one: to provide long-term benefits for young people who are already committed to visual culture; to draw in those who are not, and to enhance the lives and career potential of all Young Tate participants through deeper and more varied involvement in Tate and their local galleries.

> Aim two: to create a space for the exchange of new ideas in which young people are consulted, given opportunities to participate in Tate's cultural process, and can take control of their learning.

> Aim three : to be inclusive and diverse both in programme content and in the young people who participate in these programmes (Sinker 2008: para. 5).

This confluence was further consolidated in 2010 when Raw Canvas and Tate Forum converged into one youth group, Tate Collective, a name later adopted by the other two Tate galleries, Tate Liverpool and Tate St Ives. According to the Tate Convenor Young People's Programme, and former Curator Young People's Programme Tate Britain, the role has changed massively in the past few years, both within and outside the institution, 'accompanied by the political landscape'.[14] This shows how programming for young people (and other audiences) always follows bigger forces, especially in an institution with Tate's size and visibility. Between 2013

and 2017, all Tate Collectives were part of Circuit, a four-year national programme funded by a £5 million grant from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation. Driven by a will for institutional change, the programme involved seven other art galleries and unfolded around four main strands – festival, partnership, peer-led, and digital (Miller et al. 2019). The ambitious scale of Circuit explored new possibilities for youth programmes in contemporary art museums, with an emphasis on the role of cross-institutional and cross-sector partnerships in further promoting youth cultural participation (Sim 2019).

Although the first initiatives for youth at Tate were influenced by a social responsibility agenda concerned with groups that are misrepresented in museums, the journey undertaken over the last thirty years has been one of autonomy (Silva 2021). Today the youth programme has a central profile, not only within the institution, but also nationally and internationally. Its sustainability is grounded in a practice-led research approach that is central to Tate's education programme, and ultimately allows the voices of the museum and its interlocutors – young people, educators, and partner institutions – to influence cultural practices and policies.

Duchamp & Sons – Whitechapel Gallery

Founded in the impoverished East End of London in 1901, the Whitechapel Gallery was imbued with a social and educational ethos from day one. Notwithstanding all the changes to leadership, public policies, and the funding landscape through the years, this is a mission the gallery still tries to translate to the twenty-first century. For Iwona Blazwick, the Whitechapel Gallery's Director from 2001 to 2022, 'free of the imperative to sell or to instruct, the public gallery can become "the uterus", nurturing embryonic life – a work of art – and the rebirth of the viewer as participant' (2012: 8). This statement entails a reciprocal movement between the gallery and its audiences. Pivotal to this encounter is an active engagement with contemporary artists through collaborative projects. Drawing on the successful methodology of the programme Artists in Schools, launched in 1980, and led by Jenni Lomax who was the Whitechapel Community Education Organiser between 1979 and 1989, and offered residencies for artists in schools as a way to further develop the gallery's engagement with the local community, collaboration has always been at the heart of the Whitechapel Gallery's educational programme (Graham-Dixon 1989). The latter was paired with on-site activities that were also led by artists, and was planned in response to the exhibitions on display.

The first initiatives for young people outside the school environment were developed in 1994 through a series of artist-led workshops and career seminars. In the autumn of 1996, a three-year plan was launched, *Working with young people at Whitechapel Art Gallery* (Eslea 1996), with the aim of deepening previous initiatives and further expanding the offer for young people. Asked 'why should the Whitechapel Gallery continue to develop its work with young people?', the plan reports seven points, four of which I highlight here as they illustrate the politics involved in decision making:

1. The gallery represents an important resource in a borough which has the youngest population in the country within the 15–24 age range projected to increase in the next century.

5. There is currently a high profile interest in youth issues, and the gallery can benefit from working within a network of exciting and innovative youth projects, both locally and nationally.

6. Youth work is an area which has the potential to attract funding and sponsorship.

7. Investing in young people will allow the Whitechapel Gallery to develop its local audience, and potential employees, who will support the gallery in the future (2).

Despite its success, a funding cut led to the end of the programme, and an eight-year hiatus in the Whitechapel Gallery programming for this age group. In 2006, a pilot programme for young people aged 16–19 at risk of social exclusion – Talent Club – was piloted. Following the youth council approach, which places young people at the centre of programming, it sought to give youth 'the opportunity to explore possible careers in the creative industries, gain a qualification in arts leadership whilst having fun and meeting new people, create their

own artwork and programme events for their peers' (Hart 2006: 1). This initiative grew into an established youth forum in 2009 – Young Curators, which was later renamed Duchamp & Sons.[15] Presented as a collaborative, peer-led programme for young people aged 15–21 with an interest in the visual arts, the youth forum is now at the heart of the Whitechapel Gallery's Youth Programme. Each year new participants are recruited to the forum through partnerships with schools and youth service providers. The programme targets young people from communities with low levels of cultural engagement and educational attainment, but any young person living in London can join the group.

Duchamp & Sons develops different activities such as collaborative and practice-based projects with artists, community events, and other contributions to the gallery's public programme. Projects sometimes link to the exhibitions on display in the gallery, or take their starting point from interests that are pertinent to young people. This means participants are directly responsible for decisions at every stage of the projects, from planning to delivery. The youth forum aims to introduce new skills, practical experiences, and a behind-the-scenes insight into the world of a contemporary art gallery (Crook et al. 2015). Throughout the year they meet with staff from across the gallery, calling on specific areas of expertise to help and inspire their own projects. Equally, these encounters offer core staff a chance to meet an underrepresented group within the gallery's audience. Researching and visiting other galleries and museums is also integral to the programme, often forming dialogues with other youth forums across London and the UK.

Due to its open-ended and long-term flow, which allows participants to engage with the group at their own pace, a sense of belonging – of being a part of Duchamp & Son – emerges. This shared ethos is expressed in their Manifesto (2017):

We are Duchamp & Sons

We meet, we talk, we eat

We ask questions

We are an open group

What connects us are the interests we share and the projects we do

Being part of Duchamp & Sons gives you a key into the arts

We are the past, we are the present, we are the future.

Every year the group integrates around thirty young people, a combination of old and new participants, who together form a youth collective that operates in similar ways to an artists' collective.

Connections

When mapping the emergence of youth programmes, and of youth forums, at the Whitney, New Museum, Tate, and Whitechapel Gallery, it became clear that they never follow a predictable path. Instead, they expand and contract in response to a myriad of epistemological, sociocultural, political, and/or institutional forces. That is to say, they are a living form, which makes any comparison a complex task when searching differences, similarities, and relations. All these programmes, which grew from pilot projects, share both the influence of the changes in art practices, namely the community arts movement in the 1970s, which influenced the first off-site initiatives for youth at the Whitney and Tate Liverpool, and the return to socially-engaged practices in contemporary art in the 1990s, which are still pivotal for the collaborative art projects developed with youth at the New Museum and Whitechapel Gallery.

Collaborative practices are not new to either artists or museum education. Focusing on the latter, particularly within art museums, one example comes to mind – the Artists in

Schools scheme launched at the Whitechapel Gallery in 1980. Inspired by similar initiatives undertaken in the US since the early 1960s, the Whitechapel Gallery education team created residencies for artists in schools to further develop the gallery's engagement with the local communities (Lomax 1989; Mörsch 2004). My interest in this reference is twofold. On the one hand it speaks to the turn towards collaborative practices in museums across the UK and the US, which can be linked to the work developed with youth, and on the other hand it exposes the politics involved in these movements. The projects that influenced the Whitechapel Gallery can be seen as an example of the arts-in-education movement that originated in the US. This in turn emerged in response to political movements relating to civil rights, women's liberation, and the Vietnam War (Efland 1990). Driven by a strong social agenda, the arts-in-education approach privileged practice-based projects, often led by artists and developed through partnerships between schools, museums, and arts councils. For its advocates, 'art was not a discipline. Rather it was "an experience", to be had by participating in the artistic process' (Efland 1990: 245). A progressive echo becomes apparent in this view, as it resonates with John Dewey's experimental and pragmatic approach to learning and its democratic potential (Hein 2004, 2012). As noted by George Hein, 'periods of progressive museum education were closely allied with surges in progressive education in schools and, in turn, paralleled active periods of progressivism in the larger political arena' (2012: 13). These entanglements also determined museums' turn to youth outside the school environment in the US, and explain the emphasis on practice-based and artist-led initiatives. Another particularity of the arts-in-education movement is that it 'originated in the world of federal agencies and private foundations' (Efland 1990: 247), meaning that it was linked to volatile funding opportunities, a problem that also haunts educational initiatives in museums, particularly when they are committed to a rhetoric of social activism. Focusing on the British context, the turn to youth and the decision to opt for collaborative practices followed similar paths.

In her insightful work *Situating Gallery Education*, Felicity Allen discusses how since the mid-1970s gallery education in the UK 'has been both a distinct and overlapping artistic strategy which is integrally connected to radical art practices linked to values aired and explored in the liberation movements of the 1960s and 70s' (2008: 2). The emphasis on community-based practices that were emerging in the art world at the time gradually permeated museums and their educational programmes. This encounter also responded to cultural policies and art policies that stressed the social role of art and museums (Selwood 1997). As summarised in the report *Arts in their view: A study of youth participation in the arts* (Harland 1995), youth arts initiatives outside of school 'grew out of three traditions: theatre, community arts and the youth service' (Harland et al. 1995: 12). Implicit in all of them has been an emphasis on participation as the preferred mode of address for engaging with this age group. Nowadays the participatory impetus is widely established within museums' practices in relation to both youth and other community groups, especially in the case of contemporary art museums. This commitment can be associated with the concomitant growth of participatory practices within contemporary art (Bishop 2006). However, as Felicity Allen asserts, drawing on Declan McGonagle (2007), although there are similarities between contemporary participatory art practices and the community arts movement of the 1970s, 'contemporary process-based art has *negotiation* at its centre, in contrast to issues of representation' (2008: 9, my emphasis), which were at the heart of the former. François Matarasso (2013) puts forward a similar argument in his essay '"All in this together": The depoliticisation of community art in Britain, 1970–2011'. He also highlights the journey from "community arts" – a term coined in the 1970s – to the "participatory arts" associated with the 1990s – a journey that describes 'a transition from the politicised and collectivist action of the seventies towards the depoliticised, individual-focused arts programmes supported by public funds in Britain today' (Matarasso 2013: 216). These distinctions rarely unfold in a clear-cut way, but are often blurred in practice, particularly when expanded to educational practices in museums. Following a connective impulse, I stress how the commitment to contemporary art practices at the New Museum and the Whitechapel Gallery – both non-collecting institutions – has informed their initiatives for young people, specifically through an emphasis on collaborative art projects. The Experimental Study Programme and Duchamp & Sons operate almost as art collectives, which means young people are involved in the artistic and curatorial aspects of the programme as co-creators. On the other hand,

prompted by the scale of the institutions, the long-term initiatives available for young people at the Whitney and the Tate echo the rhetoric of professionalization. Following a return to a progressive philosophy, Youth Insights offers a tier-based programme that leads to paid internships at the museum, whereas at the heart of Tate Collective is the figure of the peer-leader and, more recently, the cultural producer, as it involves young people in planning and delivering activities for their peers.

Although linked to a museum in both practical and conceptual terms – meaning space, funding and staff, as well as mission, vision and philosophy – youth forums follow their own tempo. Considering the genealogies of these groups at the Whitney, New Museum, Tate, and Whitechapel Gallery, implicit in their ethos is a permanent negotiation of what they are and what they can become. From pilot projects to long-term initiatives, the motive force is reinvention – a chameleonic impulse that is both a weakness and a strength. If on the one hand the need to constantly justify their relevance places youth forums at the edge of museums, which means that their continuation is never guaranteed, on the other hand the fact that they unfold at the interstice of museums' existence means the encounters they potentiate between young people, artists, and the museum enable new modes of working and being together. Looking at the internal dialogue with the institutions in which they operate, it became clear that there is a constant negotiation of their place and function in the four genealogies I have mapped in this article. This is illustrated by the different lives that initiatives for young people have led in each museum, which has been expressed, for example, in their successive renaming – from Talent Club to Young Curators to Duchamp & Sons at the Whitechapel Gallery, or from Young Tate to Raw Canvas to Tate Collective at Tate. On the other hand, because they exist in museums, youth forums have a unique ethos, which distinguishes them from other cultural, social, and educational spaces. Unlike the school-based programmes on offer in museums, the initiatives for young people as independent visitors transgress the imperatives of formal education. Although today the participation of young people represents an autonomous strand of the educational programmes of these and other contemporary art museums, youth forums still operate – physically and/or conceptually – as satellite spaces.

Albeit only briefly mapped, the history of each museum, in particular the moments of their physical change – expansion and/or a new, purpose-designed building – has also led to torsions in their curatorial and educational practices. This is the case in the multi-site proliferation of Tate, the renowned purpose-designed buildings of the New Museum and the Whitney, and the locally constrained expansion of the Whitechapel Gallery. Included in these metamorphoses is the creation of spaces dedicated to education, namely creative studios where different activities can be delivered. This signifies more than an architectural surplus, and is intrinsically linked to a repositioning of education within each institution.

Conclusion

When I began to navigate the literature on museums and youth participation, the territory that emerged was sparse and fragmentary. This has changed in the last decade, with a growing investment in research and evaluation studies on youth cultural participation internationally (Crabbe et al. 2022; Lin et al. 2024; Mroczkowski et al. 2021; Sim 2018). A gap also opened up between the written records – publications, online contents, and archive material – and the pulse I could sense in practice through both my participation in youth forums and the interviews with educators leading them. These encounters allowed me to understand the fragility, and to a certain extent the impossibility, of the idea of origin. In an attempt to overcome the linearity and univocal focus of historical narratives, the genealogies presented in this paper considered multiple vectors of force – epistemological, sociocultural, and political – which echo through museums' practices with young people, and which speak to their transience rather than their fixity. The imperfect genealogies of Youth Insights, the Experimental Study Programme, Tate Collective, and Duchamp & Sons, revealed how each youth forum unfolds with and within a unique ecology.

Youth forums operate during a time in which they are simultaneously connected to, and isolated from, their participants' contemporary experience. Drawing on the genealogies mapped in this paper, three main features contribute to the unique temporality of these

programmes: their long-term duration, their non-formal approach, and their emphasis on collaborative practices. Long-term duration is specific to this age group and expands the typical one-off activities in an attempt to promote a deeper engagement between museums and young people. A non-formal approach is what in part distances these spaces from the school-based programmes on offer in museums, which act as an extension of the school curriculum. An emphasis on collaborative practices is informed by processes of making and thinking associated with contemporary art, within which participatory practices are a returning rhetoric, along with the belief that young people respond positively to working with and for their peers.

As Danielle Linzer and Mary Ellen Munley concluded in their longitudinal study of four long-term programmes for youth in American art museums, 'each programme varied in design, and each had changed organically over time as staff came and went, funding landscapes shifted, and contemporary art and youth culture evolved' (2015: 9). I am interested in the politics of these movements, by which I mean in the ways that youth forums can act as liminal and living spaces that can potentiate epistemic, ontological, and axiological discontinuities within museums and between museums and other spaces. The questions and challenges that haunt museums and their youth programmes return, as society itself returns, to similar questions and challenges. The international scope of the overview I have provided shows how the life of a youth programme is shaped less by the geography of each institution – the country and or city where the museums are based – than by its idiosyncrasies, that is to say its curatorial and educational vision, as well as the vision of those leading the programmes.

In response to new funding opportunities, the demand for audience development, and/or a more acute social awareness, each year new programmes for young people outside of the school environment are launched in contemporary art museums. This means that new initiatives emerge and existing programmes are reinvented. In this sense, youth programmes in contemporary art museums, namely youth forums, open the discussion on engagement with this age group to a time and place to come, which is to say young people are actively involved in shaping future programming that targets them and their peers. The pedagogical and creative strategies of youth programmes, and often their institutional strategies too, are co-developed with young people through a continuous dialogue between former, current, and prospective participants, as well as with the educators leading them. Genealogy can help map these relational processes and make fluid and dynamic connections – in this case between museums, education, and youth – visible. In other words, it is not a matter of judging the past from the certainty of the present, but of finding out what it contains that still has the dynamic potential to move us into an unknown future.

Notes

[1]   Another crucial development for youth programmes in the US was YouthALIVE, a partnership launched by the Association of Science and Technology Centers in 1991, which sought to involve young people aged 10–17 in long-term relationships with science museums (LeBlanc 1993; Baum et al. 2000). YouthALIVE aimed to improve the transition from childhood to adulthood for young people with lower levels of socioeconomic support by providing them with career-driven opportunities.

[2]   In the UK, key decisions that were made relating to youth cultural policies can be linked to social events such as the 1990 street riots on the Meadow Well Estate in Tyneside (Harland, Kinder and Hartley 1995), and more recently the London riots in 2011 (Big Lottery Fund 2012).

[3]   As a participant researcher, I collaborated for two years with the Whitechapel Gallery's youth forum, Duchamp & Sons (2013–2015), for five months with the youth groups at the Whitney, YI Artists, and with the New Museum's Experimental Study Program (2015–2016).

[4]   This refers to the American school system in which a public school is a school without tuition feeds.

[5]   Based on *The Whitney Review* (1966–1977), the *Bulletin of the Whitney Museum of American Art* (1978–1994), and the *Whitney Museum of American Art annual report* (2001).

[6]   Coordinator of the Whitney's Teen Programs, interview by author, digital recording, 21 January 2016, New York.

[7]   Ibid.

[8]   Based on the *New Museum Annual Reports* (1981–1994), *New Museum News* (1979–2005), and *New Museum Paper* (2006–ongoing).

[9]   New Museum, 'New Museum Seminars' n.d. http://www.newmuseum.org/pages/view/seminars, accessed 12 June 2015.

[10]   New Museum, 'Experimental Study Program' 2013. https://www.e-flux.com/announcements/31996/r-d-season-archives/, accessed 8 May 2015.

[11]   New Museum Manager of G: Class and Community Programs, interview by author, digital recording, 13 January 2016, New York.

[12]   Ibid.

[13]   The participation of young people is unpaid.

[14]   Tate Convenor Young People's Programme, interview by author, digital recording, 6 July 2015, London.

[15]   In the summer of 2010 the group worked on The Naming Project with artist Lady Lucy. Together they explored ideas around naming and identity to generate a new name for the group. The result was Duchamp & Sons, a name that combines a reference to artist Marcel Duchamp, and a local reference to the shop Albert & Son on Whitechapel High Street.

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