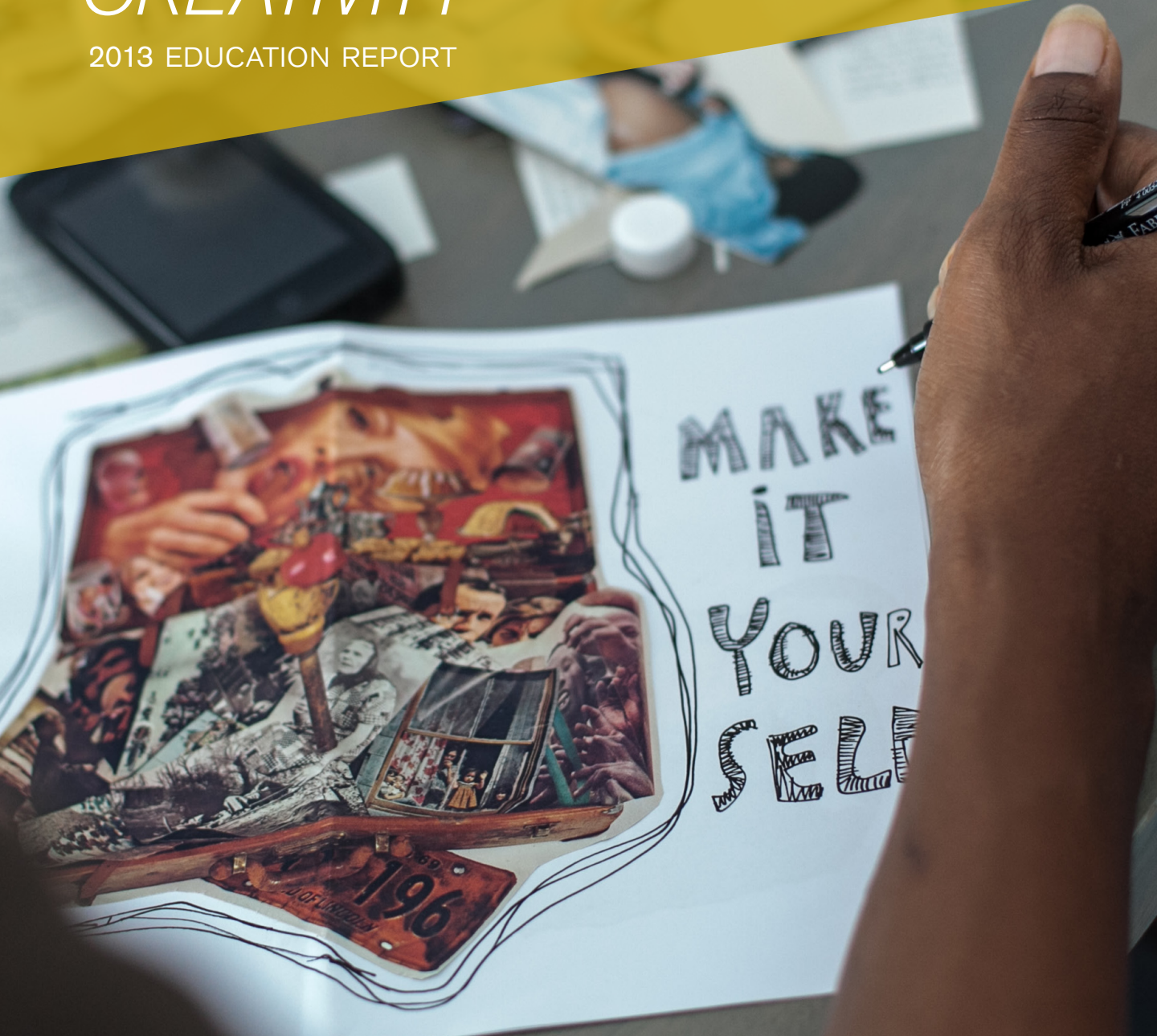


A NATIONAL CONVENING FOR TEENS IN THE ARTS

# CUSTOMIZE:

## MAKER CULTURE, YOUTH, CREATIVITY

2013 EDUCATION REPORT



THE INSTITUTE OF  
CONTEMPORARY ART/BOSTON  
ICABOSTON.ORG

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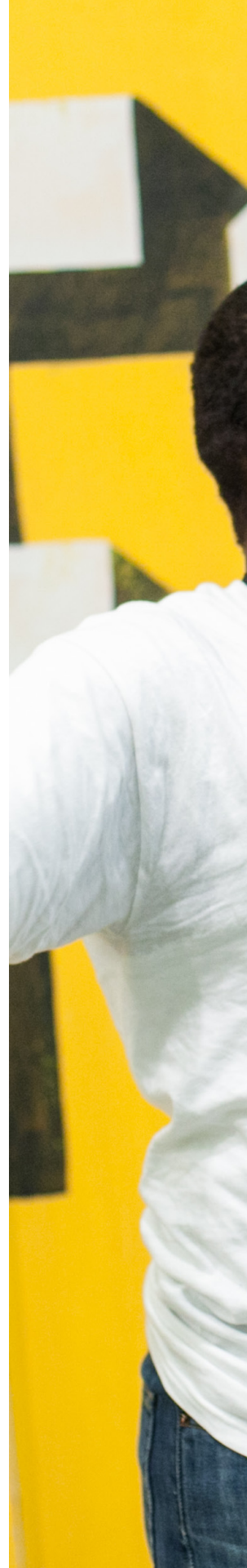
*Customize: Maker Culture, Youth, Creativity*, a National Convening for Teens in the Arts, was generously supported by



The John Hancock Teen Education Program is made possible by significant support from John Hancock Financial Services.



Additional support provided by the Bank of America Charitable Foundation; Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts; The Robert Lehman Foundation; the Thomas Anthony Pappas Charitable Foundation, Inc.; the Frank Reed & Margaret Jane Peters Memorial Fund I, Bank of America, N.A., Trustee; the Mabel Louise Riley Foundation; the Rowland Foundation, Inc.; the William E. Schrafft and Bertha E. Schrafft Charitable Trust; and the Surdna Foundation.










# INTRODUCTION







In August 2013, the ICA held its fifth annual National Convening for Teens in the Arts. First launched in 2009, the ICA's Teen Convening provides a unique opportunity for young people and educators to join together in a dialogue around teen engagement with contemporary art and museums. This past summer, students and educators from seven institutions across the country came together to create community around the roles art museums play in the lives of teenagers.

Entitled *Customize: Maker Culture, Youth, Creativity*, this year's Teen Convening explored teens' quests for art museum experiences that are customized, participatory, and experimental. An extension of DIY, "maker culture" engages young people who have an interest in applying everyday technology to art in new, innovative ways. Participants spent the weeks leading up to the Teen Convening conversing through a series of online forums, and this year's topics included: an exploration of the philosophies of maker culture practice; defining and discussing the concept of customization; the relationships between and lessons to be learned from a maker culture context and an art museum context; and the specific relevance of maker culture ideas and practice to a youth audience.

Each year, the ICA's Teen Convening presents learning opportunities for participants that are both intergenerational and multidisciplinary. Building off the success of project-based teams in 2012, we assigned teen/educator maker teams to work collaboratively on spot-welding, sewing, circuitry, woodworking, and crafting handmade 'zines. A roundtable discussion for educators complemented topic-focused professional development sessions, connecting theory to the day-to-day questions and issues raised by educational programming in museums.

Many passionate individuals and institutions share our conviction that strengthening and expanding creative opportunities for youth is of vital importance to our cultures and our communities. We offer great thanks to Converse for sponsoring the 2013 National Convening for Teens in the Arts, as well as John Hancock Financial Services and the ICA's other Teen Program funders for their financial support and commitment. Participating Artists-in-Residence Beatrix\*JAR (Bianca Pettis and Jacob Roske) were engaged and insightful collaborators at the conference, and we are indebted to them for their meaningful contributions. ICA Teen Arts Council alumni Xan Pemsler and Romario Accime, ICA Fast Forward alumnus Monty Alcott and Max Anthony, and ICA Teen Arts Council

members Olaide Junaid and Anthony Augustin dedicated their summer to this program, and we thank them for their time and enthusiasm. ICA Associate Director of Education Gabrielle Wyrick, Teen New Media Program Manager Joe Douillette, Education Assistant Leah Kandel, and Director of Education Monica Garza worked tirelessly to ensure the success of this year's Teen Convening. Finally, the Contemporary Art Museum Saint Louis; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City; the North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh; the Seattle Art Museum; and the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco each demonstrate unparalleled commitments to teen arts education. We thank them for their partnership and collaboration.

The ICA is committed to supporting the development of audiences, artists, and leaders of tomorrow. We believe that in connecting young people to bold art and ideas, we foster innovation, courage, and creativity in all areas of their lives, which will have a positive effect on the health and happiness of the next generation. Since the ICA's first National Convening for Teens in the Arts in 2009, the program has provided an important platform for building shared community and dialogue between teens and educators at museums across the country. This report outlines the dynamic and wide-ranging ideas that came out of the 2013 edition; and it is our hope that it also communicates the tremendous energy and spirit of the Teen Convening and serves as an inspiration for important ideas to come.

**Jill Medvedow**  
*Ellen Matilda Poss Director*


**Charles Rodgers**  
*ICA Board of Trustees  
Chairman, Education Committee*



# OVERVIEW







The fifth year of the ICA's National Convening for Teens in the Arts provides a valuable opportunity to reflect on its role in advancing the field of art museum education as well as its future impact. Since its launch in 2009, the Teen Convening has engaged participants from 22 arts organizations across the country. The Teen Convening's continued leadership within the professional development landscape, for youth and professionals alike, has brought teens and educators together in a cross-generational process that continues to shape the field of museum teen programs.

The ICA serves over 7,500 teens annually through a diverse spectrum of programs. Teen programs at the ICA are central to its fabric and heart: the institution is committed to teen audiences as they consider, challenge, and define themselves and the world around them through the exploration of contemporary art. The Teen Convening stands at the very center of that program lineup. First developed by the ICA in response to the lack of opportunity for youth to play a leadership role in the formation of the field, the Teen Convening has utilized a teen-driven format since its inception, providing an important forum for teens and educators to collaboratively discuss the issues, challenges, and possibilities of teens in museums.

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#### **Past Teen Convenings, 2009–2012:**

##### **2009, *Generation O***

For the first year of the Teen Convening, participating youth were inspired by the empowering feeling of optimism, activism, and change surrounding the 2008 presidential election.

Participating Organizations: ICA/Boston; Marwen, Chicago; Museum of Contemporary Art/North Miami; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis

Participating Artists: Mario Ybarra, Jr. and Karla Diaz, Slanguage, Los Angeles, California

##### **2010, *Art & Identity***

The theme for 2010 was inspired by an exhibition at the ICA of the artist Dr. Lakra, whose work explores issues of cultural and personal identity.

Participating Organizations: Bronx Museum of the Arts, New York; Contemporary Art Center, New Orleans; ICA/Boston; Marwen, Chicago; Seattle Art Museum; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Whitney

Museum of American Art, New York

Participating Artist: Raul Gonzalez, Boston, Massachusetts

##### **2011, *Real Life Remixed***

This Teen Convening considered the primary role that the art museum environment can play in the youth development of its program participants.

Participating Organizations: Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh; Arthouse, Austin; ICA/Boston; Marwen, Chicago; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York

Participating Artist: Dario Robleto, Houston, Texas

##### **2012, *State of the Art: Teens and Technology***

Participants tackled the wide-reaching subjects of youth, technology, and museums.

Participating Organizations: Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington D.C.; ICA/Boston; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Marwen, Chicago; Studio Museum in Harlem; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco

Participating Artist: Aaron Rose, Los Angeles, California

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For the 2013 National Convening for Teens in the Arts, *Customize: Maker Culture, Youth, Creativity*, participants considered the intersection and overlap between DIY/maker culture and youth, and the ongoing quest for an experience that is customized, participatory, and at its heart experimental. Seven institutions with exceptional teen programs were invited to participate: the Contemporary Art



Museum, Saint Louis; the Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City; the North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh; the Seattle Art Museum; and the Yerba-Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco. In the months prior to the in-person event, the ICA hosted a series of online forums with participating teens and educators, providing a valuable opportunity for geographically dispersed participants to become acquainted before the event and an important foundation for discussions during the convening.

Four key topics emerged from these online forums, forming the focus for the convening discussion sessions:

1. What are the main philosophies of a maker culture practice? Do you find those beneficial in your own life as young adults and how so?
2. Two major strands of maker culture are the customization of pre-made objects and the creation of objects in their entirety. What are the pros and cons of something totally unique, and what are the pros and cons of something that is modified from its original form?
3. What is the relationship between an art museum context and a maker culture context? Are there common goals? What can the two learn from each other?
4. How do maker culture ideas and practice relate to a youth audience? Are there lessons to be learned and applied in art museum teen programs?

The fifth annual National Convening for Teens in the Arts kicked off on August 7, 2013 with teens presenting their distinctive programs to a large audience in the ICA's Barbara Lee Family Foundation Theater. In the afternoon, participants enthusiastically embraced the hands-on theme of the event by working in small intergenerational and interorganizational maker groups. Led by instructors from the renowned Somerville-based maker space Artisan's Asylum, groups took on a range of projects such as 'zine-making, spot welding, soft-circuitry, and woodworking.

To mark the first day of the Teen Convening for the broader youth community, the ICA Teen Arts Council hosted an unforgettable Teen Night, welcoming over 600 Boston teens to the event. This event featured the first-ever ICA Teens Skill Share, at which teens from youth organizations from across the region (Zumix, Urbano, Sociedad Latina, Inquilinos Boricuas en Acción [IBA], New Urban Arts, YouthBuild, and the Boston Children's Museum) shared a range of skills with other youth. Skills ranged from beatmaking to building emergency shelters to Latin drumming to making cell

phone videos. In addition, the Converse design team partnered with the ICA Teen Arts Council to offer a sneaker-customizing workshop. There, teens learned tips and strategies on the fine art of sneaker customization from inventive teen sneaker customizers. The event also featured the ICA Teen DJ Collective, youth performances, and a special guest performance by artists-in-residence Beatrix\*JAR.

Excited and invigorated after an event-filled first day, participants used the second day to delve into smaller group discussions around the four focus topics outlined above. One participating teen stated that the small group discussions made them "even more comfortable contributing my thoughts/ideas with other people." They continued, "It gave me a really strong inclination to listen and learn from other people. I got to see how much everybody cares about their groups and how it's impacted their life to be part of an art group. I saw that we're all dealing with the same struggles and learned how we all deal with them differently. I took so much out of the discussions, not just to apply to my teen group, but to my life: How things don't have to be a certain way and if you want to change them, you can, and that applies to everything."

Prior to the intergenerational group discussions, educators spent their morning at a group roundtable to share common issues and strategies. And, to cap everyone's day with a maker culture experience, artists-in-residence Beatrix\*JAR led participants through a sonic adventure by means of a circuit-bending workshop.

On the third day of the convening, teens and educators met separately. ICA Teen Arts Council alumnus Xan Pemsler led a teen roundtable to dig in on important insights and topics that emerged from the previous days and to dialogue on key take-aways and action items. The educators convened for a timely professional development session on the topic of the intersection between maker spaces and museums. Moderated by Monica Garza, the ICA's director of education, this year's panel included Molly Rubenstein, executive director at Artisan's Asylum; Gui Cavalcanti, founder, Artisan's Asylum; Jacob Roske, Beatrix\*JAR; and Bianca Pettis, Beatrix\*JAR.

Throughout the five Teen Convenings hosted by the ICA, the museum has been honored to witness the captivating dynamism, creativity, and commitment in each and every participant. Each year brings new and crucial insights to the nascent field of teen education in museums and provides key contributions to the growing professional landscape.

**Gabrielle Wyrick**

*Associate Director of Education  
and Teen Convening Project Director*







# CONVENING PARTICIPANTS







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## The Contemporary Art Museum Saint Louis

CAM believes strongly in the power of art to change lives. That's why we are committed to offering a broad range of programs that bring the arts to hundreds of kids in our community each year.

### Youth & Teen Programs New Art in the Neighborhood

Since 1995 New Art in the Neighborhood has sought to nourish the creative minds of our city's talented young artists. Every Saturday during the school year, up to 20 teens selected through a competitive application process come to CAM for pre-professional-level art instruction with educational staff and visiting artists. This nationally acclaimed program engages students with the materials used at the forefront of art today, and it enables them to build a portfolio of work they can use to apply to college or employment.

### ArtReach

CAM brings contemporary art and ideas directly to St. Louis public middle and high school students through the ArtReach program. The program, which is tailored to meet the needs of individual schools and teachers, includes a curriculum-based program of museum tours, school visits, and workshops with artists-in-residence. ArtReach provides opportunities for raising student awareness of contemporary issues through an exploration of contemporary art.

### Teen Museum Studies

CAM offers an innovative way for teens to learn about museum careers with its Teen Museum Studies program. Held each summer, Teen Museum Studies offers a small group of teens the opportunity to learn from CAM staff members in all departments—from exhibitions to public relations to accounting. The program culminates in an exhibition planned from start to finish by the students.

### LEAP Middle School Intensive

CAM's newest education program, the LEAP Middle School Intensive, launched in fall 2012. Designed for the young artist interested in an in-depth exploration of contemporary art practices and mediums, this eight-week-long after-school program gives students the opportunity to work closely with St. Louis-based artists and educators in an atmosphere of focused attention and mentorship.

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## The Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston

The Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston (ICA) has an unwavering institutional commitment to teens, recognizing that adolescents are our future artists, audiences, and leaders. Teens face key issues such as shifts in personal identity—themes often explored by contemporary artists—and are often interested in social change, innovation, and digital media. The ICA's Teen Programs utilize the museum's physical and artistic resources to improve equity and opportunity for Boston youth and range from introductory to immersive programs and encounters with contemporary art and artists. Out-of-school programs include Teen New Media Workshops, Teen Arts Council, Fast Forward, and Teen Nights. In addition, the ICA runs WallTalk, an extended in-school program for high school students that explores contemporary art through the creation of writing, visual art, and spoken word. All programs offer opportunities for arts education, leadership, artistic advancement, and connections to artists and mentors, as well as marketable 21st-century skills.

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## The Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago

The Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA) Chicago's teen program, Teen Creative Agency (TCA), forwards the MCA Vision to be a top 21st-century contemporary art museum that is artist-activated and audience-engaged. Each week, TCA explores ideas of social engagement, with the teens considering how to be a good host of someone's experience with contemporary art. Linked to this, the teens explore themes of social practice (co-creat-ing something with an audience and/or proposing a social intervention). All of this is rooted in contemporary critical thinking and cultural practice.

TCA has completed its second year, and the inaugural group of teens has now segued into program alumni. TCA members commit to meeting weekly at the museum over two years. Guided by two local artists who facilitate the weekly sessions, TCA members explore contemporary art trends, peer programs, artist spaces, and Chicago neighborhoods, and work alongside MCA staff and artists on projects that fall in line with the program's goals:



- Support teens in being active civic leaders and interpreters of contemporary culture
- Forward the contemporary museum as a place to engage and excite people, have urgent conversations, and be a necessary place for teens and for everybody
- Expand the stories visitors hear when they come to MCA Chicago through the perspectives of young people

TCA members also lead two MCA programs—the Living Room (couches and chairs are set up in MCA galleries, where the teens facilitate expansive and casual conversations and activities—like one might have in their own living room—with MCA visitors), and 21Minus (a day of teen-led interactive experiences at the museum)—both of which turn the teens' investigations of social practice into true contributions to MCA Chicago. The values and objectives of sociability, audience-engagement, curiosity, and discussion are paramount to everything TCA delivers.

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## The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art

Since its founding almost a century ago, the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art's most fundamental commitment has been to the community of Kansas City. The museum began as a convergence of two visions: founder William Rockhill Nelson's aspiration "to purchase fine works of art...for the enjoyment of the public generally" and schoolteacher Mary McAfee Atkins's "for the creation of a building to be maintained and used as a museum of fine arts for the use and benefit of the public." Today, the Nelson-Atkins is a vital part of the city's cultural life and maintains this public-centered commitment to nurturing excellence, inspiring creativity, and building community through the power of art.

The Nelson-Atkins is devoted to catalyzing connections with teens and young adults. Teen Programming finds its home within the Public Programs Department, where our aim is to build a sense of belonging by providing free-choice learning opportunities that connect visitors' interests and experiences to the world of art and ideas. Participation, interaction, and engagement are encouraged through a variety of programs ranging from campus-wide festivals to in-depth courses, from intimate cultural experiences to large-scale presentations.

For teens and young adults, strategies for engagement include providing teens with both introductory and advanced opportunities to engage in exploratory art and cultural experiences based on their needs, interests, and lifestyle. Teen Programs

create a safe place for teens from across the Kansas City metropolitan area to informally gather, create, and connect utilizing programming and systems that integrate youth/peer culture, utilize positive youth-development practices, are culturally competent and sensitive to diversity, are interest-driven and youth-directed, and infuse the arts and other disciplines.

The Teen Advisory Group (TAG), founded in 2012, is responsible for guiding, shaping, and creating programs for teens at the Museum. In essence, TAG customizes experiences and programming at the museum for young audiences. Just wrapping up its inaugural year, the 15-member Nelson-Atkins TAG hosted nine events that connected teens to exhibits, artists, and a new community of young art enthusiasts. As it embarks on its second year, TAG hopes to grow and strengthen connections between teens and the museum through relevant, responsive, and customizable programming.

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## The North Carolina Museum of Art

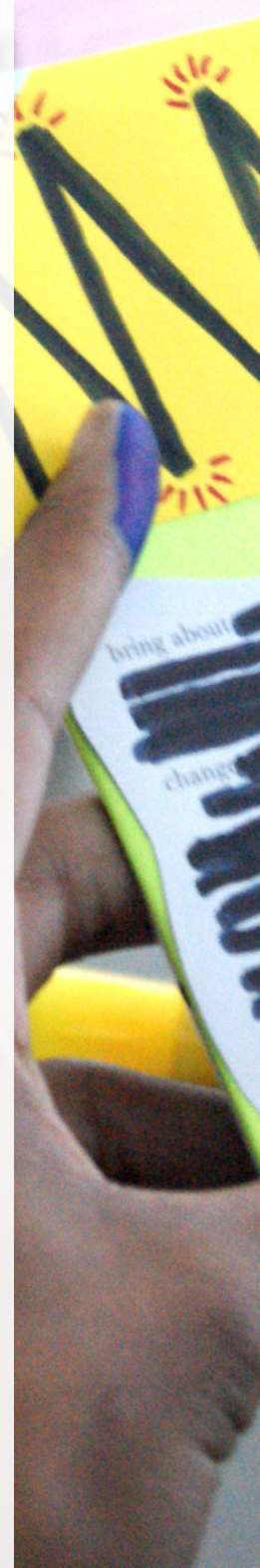
The newest education frontier at the North Carolina Museum of Art is its Teen Programs, which have reached more than 2,000 young people in their first two years. The Museum is engaged in a unique partnership with the North Carolina Virtual Public School program, providing a series of online, for-credit courses to North Carolina high school students. At the core of these broad-reaching teen programs is our Teen Arts Council, which includes a group of high school students committed to transforming the museum into a lively teen atmosphere. The Teen Arts Council writes blog posts for the "Teens, Inspired" Tumblr blog and plans a culminating spring teen event called Art Scene.

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## Seattle Art Museum

Launched in 2007, SAM's afterschool Teen Programs serve between 800 and 1,000 high-school-aged teens from the Seattle area and are led by SAM Deputy Director for Education and Public

Programs/Adjunct Curator Sandra Jackson-Dumont, who has extensive experience developing model youth programs. Sandra has youth development training from Educators for Social Responsibility, Partnership for After-School Education, and the Center for Arts Education. SAM's Teen Programs are run by Sarah Bloom, manager of teen, family, and community engagement programs, and Lindsay Huse, assistant museum educator.



crackles the magnified sample of granite, above.





SAM's out-of-school Teen Programs are free and provide teens with opportunities for creative expression through various artistic media, interaction with artists and creative professionals, exploration of global cultures through world-class art, and development of leadership skills such as event planning, working collaboratively, and public speaking. SAM's Teen Programs offer three different levels of involvement and commitment: Teen Night Out, Teen Workshops, and Teen Arts Group (TAG)

Teen Night Out is held twice a year on a Friday evening, when 400-plus teens take over the entire museum building for this just-for-teens event that showcases art from around the world alongside incredible DJs, music, spoken word, performances, artist- and teen-led tours, and art-making activities. Having the Teen Arts Group (a group of 25 visionary high-school-aged teens invested in transforming the museum into a welcoming and relevant space for teens) plan and implement the entire evening ensures that the activities connect the art to themes and ideas that are relevant to young people. With the right balance of artistic programming and social activities, Teen Night Out is a great exposure experience for teens whether they are artistically inclined or not, and especially those who have never or rarely visited a museum due to social or economic barriers.

Teen Workshops provide youth with opportunities to think critically and dialogue with their peers about works on view in the galleries. Their responses and ideas are expressed through studio-art projects led by teaching artists.

Teen Arts Group (TAG) is designed to cultivate the voice and leadership of diverse young people. TAG meets weekly from September to June and requires a high level of commitment from participants who are selected through a rigorous interview process based on their passion for the arts and their desire

to be change agents for their generation. Returning alumni act as peer mentors for new members as they plan and implement Teen Night Out, meet with artists and creative professionals, and participate in behind-the-scenes experiences and studio-art projects. In the past, TAG has worked with Seattle printmaker Romson Bustillo, internationally acclaimed artist Nick Cave, and Seattle photographer Alice Wheeler.

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## The Yerba Buena Center for the Arts

The YBCA Young Artists at Work Program is a paid, multidisciplinary art-as-activism residency for teens at the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts. During the Summer, up to 30 Bay Area high school youth spend a month immersed in contemporary art and ideas at YBCA, learning from contemporary artists who make project-based social justice works of art. Then, the Young Artists at Work spend the year designing and producing their own original community-based art projects under the guidance of YBCA artist mentors. Within the residency model, YBCA provides resources, space, aesthetic inspiration and collaborative community to support young people who self-identify as artists and activists to develop and realize their creative visions. The Young Artists at Work are proud to be the next generation of creative thinkers and social changemakers.

YBCA is an integrated site of creative endeavor: a unique fusion of art, innovation, and ideas in a social environment. It serves as a curated platform for the dynamic convergence of artists, inventors, producers, thinkers, and community to sustain multiple levels of participation, propel short- and long-term social change, and ensure that live arts and living artists are vital to society.



# TOPIC-BASED DISCUSSIONS

On the second day of the Teen Convening, participants discussed four key topics. Teens and educators alike shared their unique perspectives.

1. The main philosophies of a maker culture practice
2. Something totally unique vs. something that is modified from its original form
3. The relationships between an art museum context and a maker culture context
4. How maker culture ideas and practice relate to a youth audience





# 1. What are the main philosophies of a maker culture practice? Do you find those beneficial in your own life as a young adult, and how so?

ELI ADAMS  
MCA Chicago

*In maker culture, you can take something and make it your own. This relates to us becoming adults one day—if we don't like something that's been handed down to us, we have the ability to change the world.*

ALEXANDRIA CLAY  
North Carolina Museum of Art

*If everything is just given to you, you might feel like you can't figure out who you are and what you actually want. But if you're making things and failing, growing from the process... that's how you become the person you want to be.*

SABRINA PASTARD  
CAM St. Louis

*Maker culture teaches you to fail. Everyone is afraid to fail, but when you're in a community of makers and people who are open-minded, they know what it's like and they will help you. And so you find independence and connection with others.*

MICHELLE LU  
Nelson-Atkins

*I find the camaraderie of maker culture so touching. It's because we have something in common that connects us. I wish we could apply it to everyday life somehow.*

Teen participants enthusiastically brainstormed a range of philosophies embodied by maker culture, and most saw the practical and emotional benefits of applying these philosophies to everyday life. A majority agreed that the very nature of maker culture—customizing and creating objects—taps into and inspires an “individuality” that enables you to “stand out in the world,” “gain ownership,” and “establish who you are.” It also promotes an “independence” that provides the opportunity to “make free choices” and acquire the “knowledge” and “skills” to “wrest power” and “control” back from the standardized corporate values of the “industrialized world.”

At the same time, most participants acknowledged that maker culture's emphasis on “figuring things out on your own” is rooted within a context of community that “helps you build the confidence to fail.” Participants felt that this permission to fail contributes an invaluable ability to be “open-minded” in broader aspects of life: “value process,” “see your way through,” “not give up,” “make the best of what you have,” and “learn from your mistakes.” As Annie from Yerba Buena noted, “The empowerment you get from making something yourself is really good for young people... maker culture makes it okay not to worry about failing, just try things and see where they end up.”

Many participants also agreed that the very “doable” and “accessible” nature of maker culture, and the philosophy of valuing process over “product as goal,” empowers young people to problem-solve in positive ways. As Matthew from Nelson Atkins said, “Maker culture demands that you do something about the problems you're facing and come up with the solution yourself—calling for you to take action and improve your situation.” The process of making things in a “hands-on” way, outside of the “critical frameworks that shape art practices,” also helps you get into the “zone,” get “off the wheel,” and “follow your inner voice,” something particularly essential to carving out an inner space amidst all the “structure” (via school, for instance) imposed on teens today.

But, some participants felt that maker culture is at risk of falling into class constructs that clash with the notion of its blanket accessibility. For instance, some makers are entrepreneurs driven by the impulse to create “social change,” while others are from the upper middle class who view creativity as a “leisure” pursuit. And, some felt a conflict existed in the economic structure of maker culture. For instance, Matthew from Nelson-Atkins noted that some people turn to maker culture because they can't afford to buy something in a store, whereas others may customize their own objects because they *can* afford to spend money on materials. And, to add yet another perspective, as expressed by Mary Susan Albrecht, an educator at Nelson-Atkins, “If you're focused on survival, you don't have the time to sew sequins onto clothes.”



## 2. Two major strands of maker culture are the customization of pre-made objects and the creation of objects in their entirety. What are the pros and cons of something totally unique, and what are the pros and cons of something that is modified from its original form?

SHIVANI VYAS  
Seattle Art Museum

*It's satisfying to create something of your own. Even if you're modifying it, you're still adding your own touch to it. You still have made something that is you.*

IAN GWIN  
Seattle Art Museum

*There are no real creators—there are just people mashing things together. Even if you create an object autonomously, you are still dependent on the factors that led to its creation. If you're making a chair, you're referencing the tradition of making chairs. They're different aspects of the same activity.*

ANNIE YU  
Yerba Buena

*Does it matter if it's customized or totally unique? You made it and you should be proud of it. There shouldn't be a hierarchy.*

In a reflective discussion that encompassed varied aspects of maker culture, including food, music, and architecture, participants explored the nuances inherent in the question and wrestled with its meaning. Indeed, many felt the question posed a misleading dichotomy, because customizing pre-made objects and creating something totally unique are part of the same process. As Marissa Macias from MCA Chicago said, "One begets the other. Everything is a remix."

Nevertheless, many participants were quick to differentiate the two strands of maker culture. Teens felt that creating a unique object is "one of the most fulfilling things you can do," especially given that some schools don't teach kids to make things anymore. They remarked that when you make something "from scratch," you feel "proud" and "successful" because "no one else has what you have." The act of making something unique can even elicit a more intense kind of energy, because you "really want it to exist."

At the same time, some felt creating an object in its entirety can be "hard" and "scary," in that "you don't know when or where you're going to mess up... or how you're going to do it." It's easy to be "overwhelmed" by all the "possibilities," and even "disheartening" for someone new to maker culture. Some noted the excessive time required to create something new, when time itself is a "limited currency." Others wondered whether making something unique is just an exercise in narcissism: what's the value of original creation if others aren't able to "relate" to what you've made?

Groups felt very differently about the pros of customizing an object, reflecting their appreciation of the "accessibility" of the process rather than the feelings evoked from the end result. Some felt customization provided an easier entrée into maker culture because it is "applicable to more people," "easier to do," and it doesn't require a certain "skill" level. Others mentioned the environmentally "responsible" aspect of customization that comes from "repurposing" everyday or "found" objects and recycling existing materials. There was general consensus that modifying objects allows you to "embrace the skill level you're at." No cons were expressed.

But in drilling down into the meaning of the question, groups wondered whether it was indeed possible to make anything truly unique. In the end, many participants posited, creation is just a form of customization and vice versa. Even the iPhone is a customization of the telephone, remarked one group. Indeed, many celebrated the creative value inherent in each strand of maker culture, both in the objects themselves and the inspiration it provides to try new classes, learn new skills, instill a sense of "responsibility," and put "control in your hands." As Sabrina Pastard from CAM St. Louis said, "Maker culture is like our own little renaissance. We're rediscovering what it's like to learn new skills and make something at the same time."









### 3. What are the relationships between an art museum context and a maker culture context? Are there common goals? What can they learn from each other?

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MARISSA MACIAS  
MCA Chicago

*At first I thought maker culture was more inviting, but now I think it's museums, because the art is there for everyone to look at. Even though being in both can make you feel uncomfortable, in maker culture you feel like you need a certain skill level to participate.*

IAN GWIN  
Seattle Museum of Art

*I think of museum art the same way I think of the zoo—as animals are in cages. Museums present the final product, but there's a whole series of events left out that reflects how the art came to be. Museums need to include the maker culture context so we can understand the creative process more.*

MATTHEW GUTIERREZ  
Nelson-Atkins

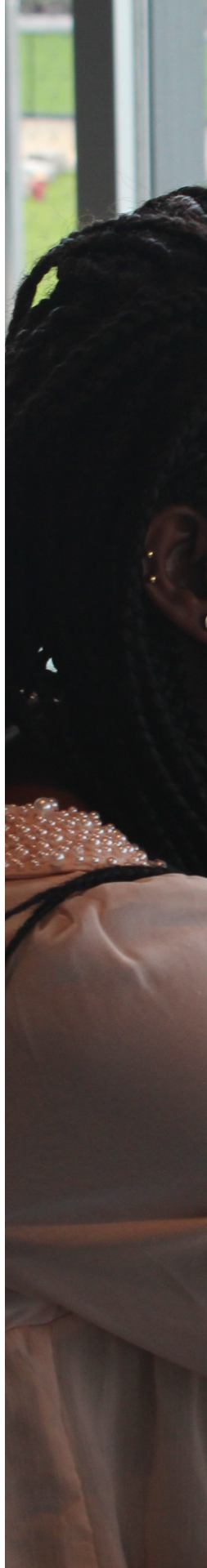
*Museums show off art, whereas maker culture is about actually doing it. We need to reach a point where museums are embracing the finished product but also embracing the process and creativity in whatever stage it's reached.*

Participants tackled this question with gusto, contributing their direct experience of art museums and maker culture to a lively debate. Both educators and teens agreed that a gulf exists between the museum context and the maker culture context, and some wondered whether the divide could even be bridged.

While many felt that both art museums and maker culture contexts can be intimidating, requiring an “intellectual framework” and a “skill-based framework” respectively, the perceived differences between an art museum context and a maker culture context were stark. Whereas maker culture was pegged as “active,” “productive,” and “physical,” art museums could be “passive,” “conceptual,” and missing the “human story.” In maker culture, participants said they felt free to get “dirty,” and in the act of the “pleasure of making,” they could “liberate” themselves from the “culture of consumerism.” In museums, on the other hand, participants feel they “can’t make a mess”; instead of encouraging creativity, museums are “interpreters” with critiques that emphasize “right versus wrong.”

Amidst the split, participants pulled out some common goals. For instance, some thought both museums and a maker culture context could be “elitist,” while others felt both strive to “bust out of ordinariness” and “evoke emotion.” But while a few thought maker culture can learn “polish” from museums, the majority strongly agreed that museums have more to gain from integrating core aspects of maker culture.

Many believed museums can benefit from making art and the museum experience more “accessible,” “experiential,” and “interactive,” harnessing teens’ natural curiosity and desire to figure things out for themselves. Ideas included offering participatory activities where teens can respond to the art on display by creating more art themselves, and demystifying the process behind the art by inviting artists in to explain their process. All agree this would add a human element to museums and help dispel the notion of museums as sacred space.









#### 4. How do you think maker culture ideas and practice relate to a youth audience? Are there lessons to be learned and applied in art museum teen programs?

MATTHEW GUTIERREZ  
Nelson-Atkins

*One of the best things we can take from maker culture is humility. If our museums could embrace a more humble sense of everything, we'd have more dialect with a youth audience. We very much appreciate someone who started at the bottom, and I think museums can really embrace that culture: that the artists on display learned their craft just like anyone else would.*

MAX ANTHONY  
ICA/Boston

*It would be great to see more of our museums serve as a "third" space—a space for teens outside of their homes and schools to be a catchall for whatever art form they need to express themselves.*

MARISSA MACIAS  
MCA Chicago

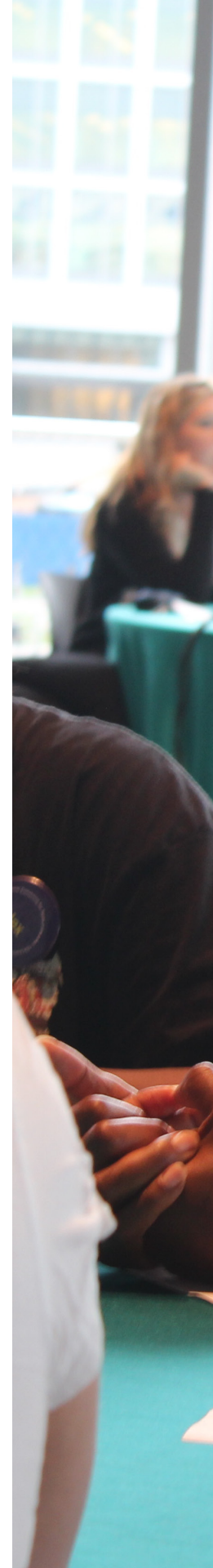
*I think maker culture is pure, because I feel like all the pressures of school and success and your parents or your family or admissions counselor go away. You're just doing what you love without any expectation. You don't have to please anybody.*

Participants engaged in a passionate discussion that touched upon their intense need for and desire to hold on to the unique sense of possibility and creativity embodied by maker culture. Reflecting ideas raised in other discussions, teens said they relate to maker culture's "flexibility," "accessibility," its "acceptance of failure," the ability to "learn by doing," and the lack of "limitations" placed on creativity. They are inspired by the culture of making things that have "purpose" and are "useful," but also appreciate the ability to "spend time with an idea and let it flourish." Again, teens noted that maker culture gives them the "control" to actively "use physical materials" to "make new things" and live life not just as a "passive consumer."

The admiration many teens have for maker culture and the collective aspiration to be makers provides a sharp contrast to their experience of the "cookie cutter" school environment. Being in school is "like wearing a straight jacket," one participant said: "There's so much pressure and so much expectation that's not even you." In contrast, maker culture is "cool" because "you're not supposed to be anything else, you're just doing you." Many participants' perception of living in today's world in general was no better. In life, many felt, everything is "standardized" and "generic": there's no "face" to it anymore. Further, life can "take away" the artistic desire to create, whereas maker culture taps into that time when "there were no limitations and you were only held back by your own imagination."

There was widespread consensus that teen programs can learn from and integrate multiple facets of maker culture. For instance, many felt that embracing the idea of failure in teen programs can help counter the societal pressure to succeed, exposing teens to "process," being a "beginner," and "taking a chance at failing." Similarly, participants felt that teen programs can further the sense of democratic, hands-on learning that already exists, helping teens to break down their "self-imposed limitations" and "intimidation" both to create and critique art.

Participants came up with a range of concrete ideas art museum programs can adopt to make the museum space more "relevant" and "productive," from linking art exhibitions to specific "instructables" teens can create, to deconstructing the creative process behind each exhibit in order to "embrace new creators" and "demystify" how established artists got their start. To harness teens' innate "curiosity" and "limitless creativity," participants recommended creating the same kind of community spaces found in maker culture. Participants saw great value in the kind of "collective individuality" they saw at Artisan's Asylum, for instance: an "open," "non-competitive" space where "everyone can bounce ideas off each other" and help one another "be better at what they do." As Olaide from the ICA/Boston said: "We need to start building as a community. Because that's the only way we're going to take over the world."









# EDUCATOR ROUNDTABLE

Museum educators seized the opportunity to talk about their professional passions and struggles as well as how to raise the visibility of teen programs within their museums, balance their administrative and creative roles, and empower teens to take ownership of both their successes and failures.

Participants shared their strategies for how to keep teen programs visible and integrated into the overall vision of their institution. Experiences ranged from piloting staff engagement projects to inviting teens to present at staff meetings to creating opportunities for youth to formally interview staff. Many agreed that creating a specific structure within which museum staff and youth can engage—providing topic questions, for example—is critical to promoting dialogue. But many felt this was hard to achieve. As Elena Goetz from MCA Chicago said, “We continue to grapple with how to create authentic engagement and a space for leaders to hear from youth.”

As educators rise through their organizations and take on more administrative responsibilities, they struggle to “maintain relationships” with and “mentor” their teens. Some expressed a need to delegate more, while others have insisted on retaining a teaching role. Many said if they are not able to continue establishing concrete relationships with teens, their jobs lose their meaning. As Tuan Nguyen from CAM St. Louis said, “If I’m not connecting to teens, I lose connection to what I’m administering and advocating for.”

All agreed that fostering a sense of independence in teen participants—providing opportunities for youth to “drive the agenda” and gain “empowerment”—is key. Some educators encourage this

by creating safe spaces for teens to dialogue and brainstorm ideas. Others act as programmatic “scribes,” reflecting back to teens and guiding the process but allowing teens to ultimately make their own decisions. Many agreed on the importance of letting teens “fail” and not “swooping in to fix things up,” though some grappled with the desire to make sure their teens have a “positive experience.” There was widespread agreement that “helping teens prioritize” and playing “devil’s advocate” to help them realize when they need “external help” can help them grow in confidence.

The conversation concluded with a look to the future: how to stay connected to teen alumni and create opportunities for alumni to be part of the ongoing institutional life of their museum. While some had grappled with poorly attended reunions, others mentioned that teens often stay connected to their institution when they become artists or professionals themselves, and come back to teach or “share their skills” in other ways. Creating “tangible benefits” for alumni to “showcase” their work and contribute to the ongoing life of the institution may help.

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## LAUREL BUTLER

YERBA BUENA

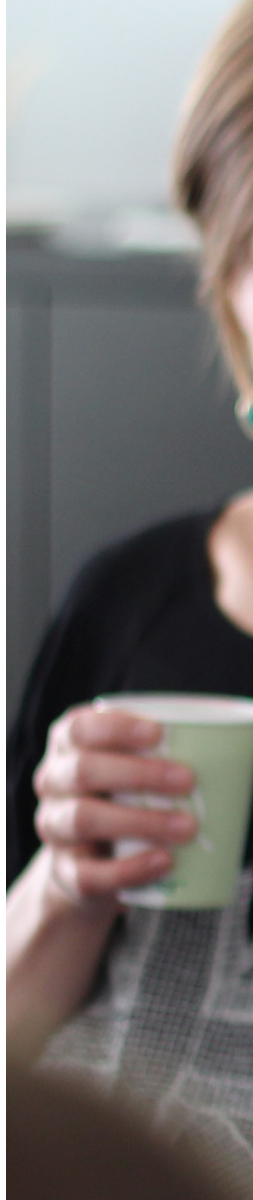
“Teaching feeds me. How can we structure things so teaching remains central as our programs grow and as we grow in our careers?”

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## MARY SUSAN ALBRECHT

NELSON-ATKINS

“Creating balance starts with relationship and a sense of trust. We communicate a faith in our teens’ abilities but are observant about the clues they give us that they’re struggling. We gently offer suggestions, ask for what they think; plant a seed to help them go in another direction. But none of that can happen without the foundation of a relationship.”









# LESSONS LEARNED





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## The Contemporary Art Museum Saint Louis

**TUAN NGUYEN**

Director of Education

As a representative of the Contemporary Art Museum (CAM) Saint Louis, I was incredibly honored to participate in the 2013 Teen Convening. Our expectations were more than met during the whirlwind week of excitement and activity. We could have stayed for another couple of weeks just to expand upon the countless ideas brought up during the convening.

As an educator, one of the main reasons I was excited to attend was to connect and share ideas with other professionals working in the same field. The convening showed me that we share common goals and obstacles. It also brought up a lot of questions, both practical and lofty. What is the role of the museum? How can we better identify our needs and work to achieve our goals? How can non-traditional methodologies flourish within museum education? The ideas of play and failure kept recurring. Can a museum provide students with the space to experiment without pressure? A space to fail without dire consequences? A space to learn and create from those failures?

But the best part of the convening was witnessing the positive transformation in CAM's student participants, Sabrina and Alex. I was proud to see them rising to all the challenges that came with representing St. Louis. They returned more confident and have taken on a natural "elder" role in our teen programs. The change has been both dramatic and heartwarming.

The convening was affirming on many levels. To see all the students bond so quickly and create so easily together made me feel that teens don't really need that much: just a space and a place to feel safe to play and discover. It was nice to step back and witness this on a grand scale. Thank you ICA/Boston for making this all possible!

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## The Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston

**JOE DOUILLETTE**

Teen New Media Program Manager

I watched Ian build his wire sculpture piece by piece. He was as mesmerized by the spot welder that our instructor Ecco had brought to the ICA's Paul and Phyllis Fireman Family Digital Studio as I was by his process. Ian's sculpture, a small

Buckminster Fuller-like geo-skeleton—grew quickly to what looked like the frame of Where's Waldo's hat. I turned my head for a moment to watch another student become more fluent with the pressure and flash of the spot welder, small wisps of smoke floating in the air. When I turned back to Ian, he had crushed his sculpture into a tangled ball of wire and welds.

Because DIY (Do It Yourself) was a term I had heard so much about and that seemed so obvious, it had become something I felt I did not need to consider. But in preparing for this year's convening, as a staff we realized that we had yet to fully understand the history, philosophy, and practice of the maker movement. DIY settings like the Artisan's Asylum and experiences like a Maker Faire take great pains to demonstrate the process, the guts of the materials, the sweat of the producer. Labor is celebrated, as well as the fruit of that labor.

Museums, for the most part, invest intense resources to ensure that their presentation of work is of the highest caliber: the work itself is fully refined; the galleries are exquisitely arranged; and the lighting, sound, and air are perfect for experiencing the work. The fruits of labor are most celebrated.

An essential question for all of us to consider is how the nature of the environment affects the intent of the work. As educators in museum settings, we are immersed in the messiness of learning about contemporary art, about enticing youth to come to settings that may seem too formal to them, about presenting them the opportunity to begin their creative pursuits while showing them the work of artists who are already considered worthy of international recognition.

Does this formality intimidate or inspire?

I donated my singing electronic fish toy to Beatrix\*JAR's circuit-bending workshop during the convening. Participants took electronic toys apart, made new circuits, and repurposed the existing sounds to make new instruments. Tuan and a couple of students, sitting on the ICA's State Street Corporation Lobby floor, had "gutted" the fish and tried to get the "Gimme That Fish" song to speed up and slow down by making new wired connections on the previously hidden circuit panel. Random ICA patrons were intrigued, as the lobby had become part teen lab and part electronics seafood market. I smiled as I witnessed the usual serenity of a museum lobby collide with the excited, dynamic desire to experiment and learn.

Working with teens, it is not surprising to see them be themselves in whatever setting they find themselves. They do not question the purpose, the



place or the time. It is a chance to be creative and the location does not matter to them. What I was discovering, as I witnessed the Artisan's Asylum and Beatrix\*JAR activate all of our spaces, is that prescribed activities have an importance, but pure experimentation with raw materials is an essential part of the creative process and one that is not offered enough to our students. Students will find the intuitive nature of the process and create unique pieces characteristic of their personality, albeit often in a crude way because of their newness to the medium. One of the most important elements for the learner is their lack of inhibition, because there is truly no right or wrong. It is very often a process the student has never even heard of, so they bring nothing to it except their own raw creative selves.

Students love the messiness of the process, they appreciate the perfection of a gallery show, and they are excited to discover their own path that flows between the two. As a museum educator, I need to ensure that this path is kept clear.

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## The Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago

**ELENA GOETZ**

Manager of Youth and Family Programs

Eli Adams, one of MCA Chicago's Teen Creative Agency (TCA) members, summed up the 2013 Teen Convening by saying, "It was an experience I didn't know I needed, but I did need it." I think Eli's reflection is spot-on. The questions we grappled with during this professional development opportunity—particularly on engaging teens with contemporary art—were not so different than those driving TCA's week-to-week work back in Chicago. But in Boston, Eli, fellow TCA member, Marissa Macias, and I spent three days exploring this topic with the benefit of new perspectives in the room: specifically those from people in maker culture. The premise of our discussions revolved around the ICA/Boston's hypothesis: that the do-it-yourself approach of maker culture connects strongly to how teens learn in our contemporary society, and in art spaces specifically. Like Eli, I didn't know MCA Chicago's teen programming needed to look at maker culture as part of its professional development, but I see now the great value in doing so.

We learned that maker culture is ultimately focused on participation. The culture's ethos seems to be "join in and let's do some serious or playful work together." With MCA Chicago's vision to be an artist-activated, audience-engaged platform, TCA is always thinking about the qualities of a partici-

patory experience; both TCA members and our museum focus on MCA Chicago as a generous place in which teens and the broad population can participate. Marissa, Eli, and I left the convening thinking about how we can continue to learn from maker culture. We also wonder what other emerging or established cultures might spark more ideas for understanding participation and generosity—and how those values and objectives factor into museum engagement.

The convening also provided a model for what teen professional development can look like. Just as with any business trip, the teens were charged with representing MCA Chicago, networking with peers, and discussing both theory and practice. Reflecting on their experiences, Marissa and Eli said they were surprised that in this professional forum, neither educators nor teens were ever competitive or protective when sharing ideas and plans, but instead were transparent about what has and has not worked well in engaging teens. The supportive exchange that happened at the ICA/Boston mirrors the maker movement and DIY culture, which prioritizes sharing knowledge with the community so that others can learn and achieve. Marissa and Eli experienced true professional development, as they saw that pooling shared knowledge allows professional expansion. They bring that lesson back to Chicago, sharing with their 23 fellow TCA members that the power of community can foster critical thinking, personal expression, and action.

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## The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art

**MARY SUSAN ALBRECHT**

Manager of Teen Programs

**MATTHEW GUTIERREZ**

Teen Advisory Group Member

**MICHELLE LU**

Teen Advisory Group Member

Attending the ICA's 2013 National Convening for Teens in the Arts provided our institution with an invaluable and timely opportunity. Over the past year, teen programs at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art have set in motion new initiatives and strategies to reach this important and dynamic audience. Our experience at *Customize: Maker Culture, Youth, and Creativity* equipped us with knowledge, enthusiasm, and direction that will impact our delivery of programs to teens.

Offerings for teen engagement at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art are driven by the Teen Advisory





Group (TAG) and range from small-scale artist talks to larger theme-based Teen Nights. TAG's goal is to strengthen and diversify teen connections to the museum and its collections. Many of our public events for teens are created with the intention of appealing to a broad audience and with the hopes of increasing accessibility for teens from underrepresented communities. Often, TAG events serve as "entry points" through which many young participants venture in to the museum for the first time by choice. TAG's efforts then focus on building this relationship and sense of belonging to extend to other engagement opportunities.

Gleaning a better understanding of the philosophy and practice of maker culture during this year's convening will certainly aid in our ability to attract and sustain new audiences. Maker culture challenges the traditional ways museum space is utilized and how visitors behave within that space. Conventional behavioral norms for museums are upended: makers are encouraged to be messy, to try and to fail, and to connect divergent ideas and materials. The key elements of maker culture—personalization, experimentation, and participation—will undoubtedly help us reach teens who are seeking opportunities to explore their abilities and expand their peer community.

In addition to experiencing an unparalleled leadership opportunity, our two participating TAG members, Michelle and Matthew, returned with valuable insights and an eagerness to utilize maker culture as a way to connect with a broader community of teens. They resonated with and reflected on the analogy between maker culture and young people's roles within museums (and oftentimes the greater community): a culture that takes them off the perimeter as passive observers and puts them in the middle of the process, giving them a voice and allowing them to create. Michelle said, "The highlight of my experience was ICA's Teen Night. I think it should be a model event TAG should strive to host because it successfully [blended] art and maker culture in a museum space while appealing to teens."

Her comments reflect both her maturity and her sense of responsibility to our encyclopedic institution.

We are sincerely grateful to the ICA and its partners for extending us this opportunity to learn and connect with other institutions. We look forward to continuing the dialogue and exploring the impact maker culture can have on communities like ours.



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## The North Carolina Museum of Art

**MICHELLE H. HARRELL**

Coordinator of Teen and College Programs

Participating in the ICA Teen Convening sparked a fire both in our teen participants and in me: to create positive change in our museum and impact the statewide community we serve.

Nurturing young adults as leaders and makers, the convening developed teens' self-confidence and stretched their comfort zones. Initially, both my teens felt a bit uncomfortable presenting to adults and teens about our museum. But, as Alex said, "There was no reason to be nervous. I was vibing off everyone's positive feelings. We, as representatives of our museums, all share a common goal. Being surrounded by people with the same goal is uplifting and makes you feel amazing."

Teens engaged with sophisticated art forms they had never been exposed to before the convening, such as spot welding and circuit bending. Belle said these art forms "were far out of my comfort zone" and she was "a little hesitant at first." But, she went on to say, "because of the convening, I'll always keep in mind to try new things and not to give up on new things too quickly."

By interacting with teen groups from across the country, our group reconsidered our own geographic barriers. As a statewide institution, we strive to create an inclusive community across the entire state by hosting residencies and symposia for teens from across North Carolina. As an educator, I learned a great deal how to empower our local teens to run these statewide programs from observing the Boston teens facilitate each aspect of the program. Our favorite aspect of the convening was connecting with other teens with a shared passion for art and museums. Alex reflected how amazing it was that "conclusions can be reached among teens when we are given the opportunity to discuss without being judged."

My teens returned inspired to present to their peers and lead gallery discussions at our spring teen event. We hope to ignite our own creative spark in teens across North Carolina by engaging in the same kind of thoughtful discussions and rich artistic experiences that we enjoyed at the ICA Teen Convening.







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## Seattle Art Museum

### SARAH BLOOM

Manager of Teen, Family and  
Community Engagement

The Seattle Art Museum (SAM) was thrilled to participate in the ICA's 2013 Teen Convening. We found the conference to be inspiring, engaging, and reenergizing. All of us came away with new ideas and a deeper commitment to what we do. The ICA did a masterful job of creating a program that was not only engrossing and jam-packed but also consistently driven by collaboration and genuine discussion across generational and institutional divides. It was refreshing to hear each institution present on their program.

The focus on maker culture was an ingenious way of provoking discussion about the role of the museum and its obligation to its surrounding communities. We were struck by the many ways in which the tenets of maker culture can be applied to our own programs and can also serve as a model for museums in the future.

The Professional Development Session for Educators sparked many "light bulb" moments as the connections between maker culture and creating community came to the foreground. While SAM's teens are often busy planning and curating Teen Night Out and learning how to give tours of a special exhibition, the idea of teens coming together to create and form community was not something we've explored as deeply. As a result, SAM is planning on instituting drop-in workshops for teens based on the maker model for collaboration. We hope to offer these monthly drop-in workshops on a Free Thursday for Teens and provide a consistent opportunity for teens to come together and make art. Drop-in workshops will also provide an added layer of leadership for TAG teens, who will help lead portions of these workshops and welcome new teens to the museum community.

In addition to connecting with educators, the roundtable discussions between teens and educators were particularly enriching. Ian Gwin, one of SAM's teen participants, was inspired by "some great discussions on the topic of museum processes and public relations, like the roles taken (or not) by the visitor within the museum." Perhaps most inspirational was seeing the institutional and community support behind both the convening and ICA teen programs as a whole. Ian was impressed with "the ICA's philosophy of establishing exciting connections with younger audiences, as well as taking

advantage of that relationship over time." As educators, we were struck by the teens' high level of responsibility, leadership, and ownership. It reaffirmed our dedication to continue to strive for increased proprietorship and higher youth representation and voice in our own programs.

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## The Yerba Buena Center for the Arts

### LAUREL BUTLER

Youth Arts Manager/Education  
and Engagement Specialist

We were humbled and excited to return to the ICA's National Teens in the Arts Convening for a second year. In preparing to fly across the country (a first for Annie and Ronniesha!) I rallied our enthusiasm by describing all the dynamic experiences from the 2012 convening: magical group travels throughout the Boston metro area, creative workshops with master artists, meaningful relationship-building with youth and educators from across the country, big-picture ideas about the role of teen programs in the arts, and practical programming ideas to take home and adapt for the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts Young Artists at Work (YAAW) Program.

Once again, our expectations were met and surpassed by each of these aspects of the convening. We spent our days diving deep into the creative community that only a special experience like the convening can truly cultivate. Five days later, we flew back to San Francisco both exhausted and reinvigorated to invest in the integrity of teen programs as a vital part of YBCA. And, we were armed with a ton of new programming ideas (Multiple curriculum tracks! Teen art pop-up sales! Ficto-criticism gallery tours!), administrative visions (Media campaigns! Teen performance festivals! Perhaps most important: Organizing art supplies!), and new friends from coast to coast.

But I had also forgotten about one of the most salient takeaways from last year's conference: how valuable it is to take a full four days to step away from the things we always think about in our work—youth development, arts education, and budget spreadsheets—to engage in profound extended conversations about the cultural movements informing our work at this particular historical moment. It's always important to zoom out and think about the broader social and philosophical implications of what we do. Framing this conference from the perspective of maker culture was a truly inspired and responsive move on from the ICA. It built upon



last year's discourse around technology and located our teen programs inside a movement working to bridge the gaps between digital practices, real-life identities, arts institutions and the age-old human impulse to "do it yourself."

(And what a pleasure to work with Beatrix\*JAR as the Artists-in-Residence for the convening! We couldn't imagine artists whose work is better situated at the intersection of maker culture, institutional art, education, and just plain fun.)

I was again so impressed by the casual-yet-rigorous tone of the convening: definitely a result of the youth-led format! There was a wonderful fluidity in both structured and informal conversations, moving from pop culture and social media, to our own arts practices and negotiating the complexities of institutionality. Teens from other programs gave candid, genuine insights into their experiences, helping us reconceive of how to best serve the youth in our own program. It was hugely important for both Ronniesha and Annie to test out what it felt like to re-establish their social identity in a new place and with a new peer group as they prepare for a similar experience starting college. They were empowered to make really authentic connections and let the best parts of themselves shine.

The professional development opportunities available to educators at this year's convening were thoroughly thought out and generously implemented. Every participating educator walked away feeling a heightened sense of clarity and purpose with regards to our work. Not only were we able to dig into our shared challenges around capacity, complexity, engagement, and institutional visibility, but we were also able to broaden our perspectives about the future of our field. The deft facilitation by ICA staff and experts from maker culture was so useful, especially in helping us think through what kind of scaffolding our youth and our teaching artists need in order to create meaningful experiences and creative spaces.

The ICA Teen Convening serves a vital function in allowing youth and educators to see and understand that their work is located in a national context. This both broadens the horizon of possibility as youth begin to think about moving to other parts of the country to pursue higher education and career goals, and also unifies us as a (relatively young) field so that we can advocate for our work both internally and externally. It also fosters a cross-pollination of ideas with a breadth that wouldn't be found at just a local or regional event. We are so grateful to the ICA, and to all of the participating museums, for helping inspire us to see all that youth arts in a museum can be!









# PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Monica Garza, ICA director of education, moderated a dynamic exploration of maker culture values, spaces, and philosophies, featuring Molly Rubenstein and Gui Cavalcanti, Artisan's Asylum's executive director and founder respectively, and Bianca Pettis and Jacob Aaron Roske, founders of Beatrix\*JAR.

Molly and Gui described how Artisan's Asylum grew organically into a thriving community where people come to make things, become friends, and build "social networks." "Space," "tools," and "education" combine with "interdisciplinary artists" to create a "third space" where people who don't always think of themselves as creative or don't have time to be creative "get to make something cool."

Classes are offered at different levels of expertise: connecting people who "want tools" with people who "know tools." Being open every night of the week encourages people to drop in and explore. And, for people who aren't "comfortable" in social situations, volunteer activities—including helping to run the space in exchange for taking classes—provide an entry point to making.

Beatrix\*JAR offers a different model of community, as the artists bring their unique take on "jamming" and creating "audio playgrounds" into existent community spaces, as through their recent residency at the ICA. By creating an "open experimental studio" using circuit-bending, for instance, Jacob and Bianca seek to "break down barriers" between people and music, inspiring people and building communities through engaging with and making sound.

Educators brainstormed a range of ideas regarding how to adapt maker culture models to their programs. From "advancing community and classes in response to teens' interests, not our preconceived notions" to "creating open spaces to hang out" and "embracing collaboration," the desire to integrate maker culture's unique model of engagement into teen programs was palpable. But many participants grappled with how to integrate these tenets of maker culture into a museum space, which can tend to be "passive" and "limited" and where teens may feel they're "supposed to be silent" or afraid to "do something wrong." In contrast, the energy and excitement represented by maker culture lies, in part, in the fact that maker culture's physical spaces are not "valuable." As Molly said of Artisan's Asylum, "There's no chrome and glass ... and very little in the building that you feel like you might scratch."

Participants also wrestled with how to deepen teens' engagement in the arts and in investing in their self-identity as artists. The idea of allowing teens to exhibit their work in their museum to advance a sense of "taking art seriously" contrasted with ideas of less result-driven "creative rituals" such as integrating more theater games to "shift creativity from a competitive ethos" to just "developing creative thinking skills." Other ideas included offering open classes curated by the community and encouraging teens to lead art tours based on imaginary narratives. In the end, many agreed that encouraging artists to "share their unique process" can help demystify what it means to be an artist.

Participants concluded the discussion with thoughts on how to integrate key elements of maker culture back into their education programs. From giving teens more opportunities to "experiment" to "making space available as a site for making" and incorporating more "whimsy" and "play" into the gallery spaces themselves, educators left buzzing with new ideas. Mary Susan Albrecht from the Nelson-Atkins Museum seemed to capture the mood of the group when she said she was left with a deeper sense of "play, process, and personalization. We need to not be so goal-directed, take a step back, and have more fun. That's how we'll build community."





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## MOLLY RUBENSTEIN

"The standard is to consume art and entertainment. We're not expected to create anymore unless we're professionals. Don't you want to do something that's creative and fun?"

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## GUI CALVACANTI

"There's home, there's work, and there used to be a third space you could go to that was a community space. We've created community by saying 'We have the tools, and by the way, there are 300 other people here with whom you can become friends.'"

---

## JACOB AARON ROSKE

"Our work is about breaking down barriers with people. By taking away the inhibition of being by a grand piano, you can help people lose their inhibition and explore what sound can be."



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Teen Creative Agency

### MARISSA MACIAS

Teen Creative Agency

## Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City

### MARY SUSAN ALBRECHT

Manager of Teen Programs

### MATTHEW GUTIERREZ

Teen Advisory Group

### MICHELLE LU

Teen Advisory Group

## North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh

### MICHELLE HARRELL

Coordinator of Teen and College Programs

### ALEXANDRIA CLAY

Teen Arts Council

### ISABELLE HAMA WILLIAMS

Teen Arts Council

*\*Professional titles reflect positions held by participants  
at the time of the conference*



## Seattle Art Museum

### SARAH BLOOM

Manager of Teen, Family, and  
Community Engagement

### LINDSAY HUSE

Assistant Museum Educator for Teen,  
Family, and Community Engagement

### IAN GWIN

Teen Arts Group

### SHIVANI VYAS

Teen Arts Group

## Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco

### LAUREL BUTLER

Youth Arts Manager/Education and  
Engagement Specialist

### RONNIESHA FORD-SPEARS

Young Artists at Work

### ANNIE YU

Young Artists at Work

## Artists-in-Residence

### BEATRIX\*JAR

(**BIANCA PETTIS** and **JACOB ROSKE**)  
Minneapolis, Minnesota

## 2013 Professional Development Panelists and Discussion Moderators

### ANTHONY BARROWS

Child Welfare Professional and  
ICA Teen Programs Educator

### GUI CAVALCANTI

Founder, Artisan's Asylum

### MONICA GARZA

Director of Education, ICA/Boston

### XAN PEMSLER

Teen Arts Council Alumnus

### MOLLY RUBENSTEIN

Executive Director, Artisan's Asylum

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# CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

## Customize: Maker Culture, Youth, Creativity

A National Convening for Teens in the Arts

ICA/Boston, August 7–9, 2013

### DAY 1: WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 7

8:45 am	Registration and Breakfast
9:30 am	Introductions and Icebreaker
10:10 am	Kick-Off Monica Garza, Director of Education, ICA/Boston Gabrielle Wyrick, Associate Director of Education, ICA/Boston
10:20 am	Presentation #1: ICA/Boston Speakers: Gabrielle Wyrick, Max Anthony, and Olaide Junaid (Special Guest: Shaquille Alberts, Teen Arts Council)
10:32 am	Presentation #2: CAM St. Louis Speakers: Tuan Nguyen, Sabrina Pastard, and Alex Williford
10:44 am	Presentation #3: North Carolina Museum of Art Speakers: Michelle Harrell, Isabelle Hama Williams, and Alexandria Clay
10:56 am	Presentation #4: Yerba Buena Center for the Arts Speakers: Laurel Butler, Annie Yu, and Ronniesha Ford-Spears
11:08 am	Presentation #5: MCA Chicago Speakers: Elena Goetz, Elizabeth Adams, and Marissa Macias
11:20 am	Break
11:35 am	Presentation #6: Nelson-Atkins Museum Speakers: Mary Susan Albrecht, Matthew Gutierrez, and Michelle Lu
11:47 am	Presentation #7: Seattle Art Museum Speakers: Sarah Bloom, Ian Gwin, and Shivani Vyas
12:00 pm	Questions and Discussion
12:15 pm	Lunch Gallery tours led by ICA Teen Arts Council
1:30 pm	Maker Teams: Group Work Partnership with Artisan's Asylum
4:00 pm	Group Debrief and Wrap
6–9:00 pm	Teen Night!!!!!!!!!!!!

## **DAY 2: THURSDAY, AUGUST 8**

- 8:30 am** Educator Roundtable  
Moderator: Anthony Barrows, Child Welfare Professional and ICA Teen Programs Educator
- 9:30 am** Breakfast for Teens
- 10:00 am** Share Back Maker Team Projects
- 10:30 am** Discussion: Sessions 1 and 2
- 12 pm** Lunch  
Gallery tours led by ICA Teen Arts Council
- 1 pm** Discussion Sessions 3 and 4
- 2:30 pm** Break
- 3–5:00 pm** Artmaking with Beatrix\*JAR

## **DAY 3: FRIDAY, AUGUST 9**

- 9:30 am** Breakfast and Group Wrap Session
- 10–12:00 pm** Educators' Professional Development Session:  
What Can We Learn from Maker Culture?  
Moderator: Monica Garza, Director of Education, ICA/Boston  
Panelists: Molly Rubenstein, Executive Director, Artisan's Asylum  
Gui Cavalcanti, Founder, Artisan's Asylum
- 12–1:30 pm** Educators' Lunch
- 10–11:30 am** Teen Debrief Session  
Bank of America Art Lab  
Moderator: Xan Pemsler, Teen Arts Council Alumnus
- 12:15–1:45 am** Teen Lunch
- 2:15–4:30 pm** Afternoon at Converse, The Full Sneaker Experience
- 4:30 pm** Convening Concludes





**ICA**