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The educational impact of participatory practices in art museums

In recent decades, knowledge production has become a central aim for museums¹. This is in part due to the developments of new forms of visitor-centered mediation such as new museology, constructivist museum approaches, and participatory practices. However this poses specific challenges for Art museums linked to the relationship between meaning making and knowledge production as well as the perceived tensions between autonomous artwork, aesthetic experience and knowledge production.

Furthermore, in the wake of new museology and constructivist learning theories, the traditional unidirectional educational role of the museum has been contested and challenged. Art museums need to find new ways to engage publics of all ages and from diverse social and cultural backgrounds, as well as to represent multiple community voices. Museums have the potential to be progressive pedagogical sites and are an ideal terrain to experiment with alternative learning method. Participatory practices have been hailed as the solution to that educational dilemma of the art museum.

This paper proposes to explore, through the analysis of examples, the potential impact of participatory practices on learning in the museum from the perspective of narrative and learning theories.

¹ HEIN, George. *Learning in the Museum*. London: Routledge, 1998, p. 3.