



VISUAL ESSAY

Teachers: the museums as a didactic laboratory

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DOI: 10.24981/2414-3332-2.2015.2.2

ABSTRACT

Each year the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes de Chile offers various opportunities to approach the museum's heritage specifically designed for school teachers. Their intention is to enable teachers to take ownership of the spaces and heritage in innovative ways, so that teachers use these strategies in their classes, engaging their students with art in dynamic and experiential ways.

The Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes (MNBA) in Santiago, Chile has a Mediation and Education Team, who are responsible for generating links of various kinds between visitors, the institution, and their collection.

Exactly what does it mean to create links of various kinds? When I mention this idea, I mean to encourage people through different methods and levels to have experience with art and develop a sense of belonging and identity with the museum and its imagery. So each person, through their own experiences, establishes a relationship of ownership and use of heritage which is treasured by the museum.

A good example of this are the activities specifically targeted for teachers. The most emblematic of these is the Teacher Seminar, a program running for the last ten years, which involves 120 visual arts teachers in a full day journey around art and reflection on artistic and educational practices. In spring and autumn, follows courses designed specifically for this audience, which in recent years has become a sort of didactic laboratory.

Why work with teachers in this particular way? What makes them a target audience?

Museums, as non-formal education spaces, enjoy a freedom of action in their educational efforts in contrast to schools, which as formal education institutions need to work based on preset guidelines. This official curriculum framework allows each teacher to use teaching strategies that are within their reach. From this starting point the museum takes the opportunity to exponentially expand the possibilities of reflection and learning by educators. Museums allow teachers to develop new and innovative strategies by direct experiences with the museum's heritage.

As all activities of the MNBA, fall and spring courses are free and open, and are specially designed for school teachers. Unlike the teacher seminar, they are not intended for only visual art teachers, but are also open to teachers of other subjects attracting language, history and philosophy teachers as well. These classes work as a laboratory, where the Museum proposes certain routes to follow, but it is by working together that the result of the course is elaborated. For this purpose, the mediation is used as the working tool methodology. Active dialogue between all participants from the approach of open questions as a motor for reflection and participation is encouraged.



Why work with teachers in this particular way? What makes them a target audience?

A key factor is the possibility of being in a privileged space to work, such as that generated by working in galleries in evening hours when the museum is closed for regular visitors. This situation encourages contact and a relationship with the artwork. At the same time it creates a sense of ownership and belonging of teachers with the museum's heritage.



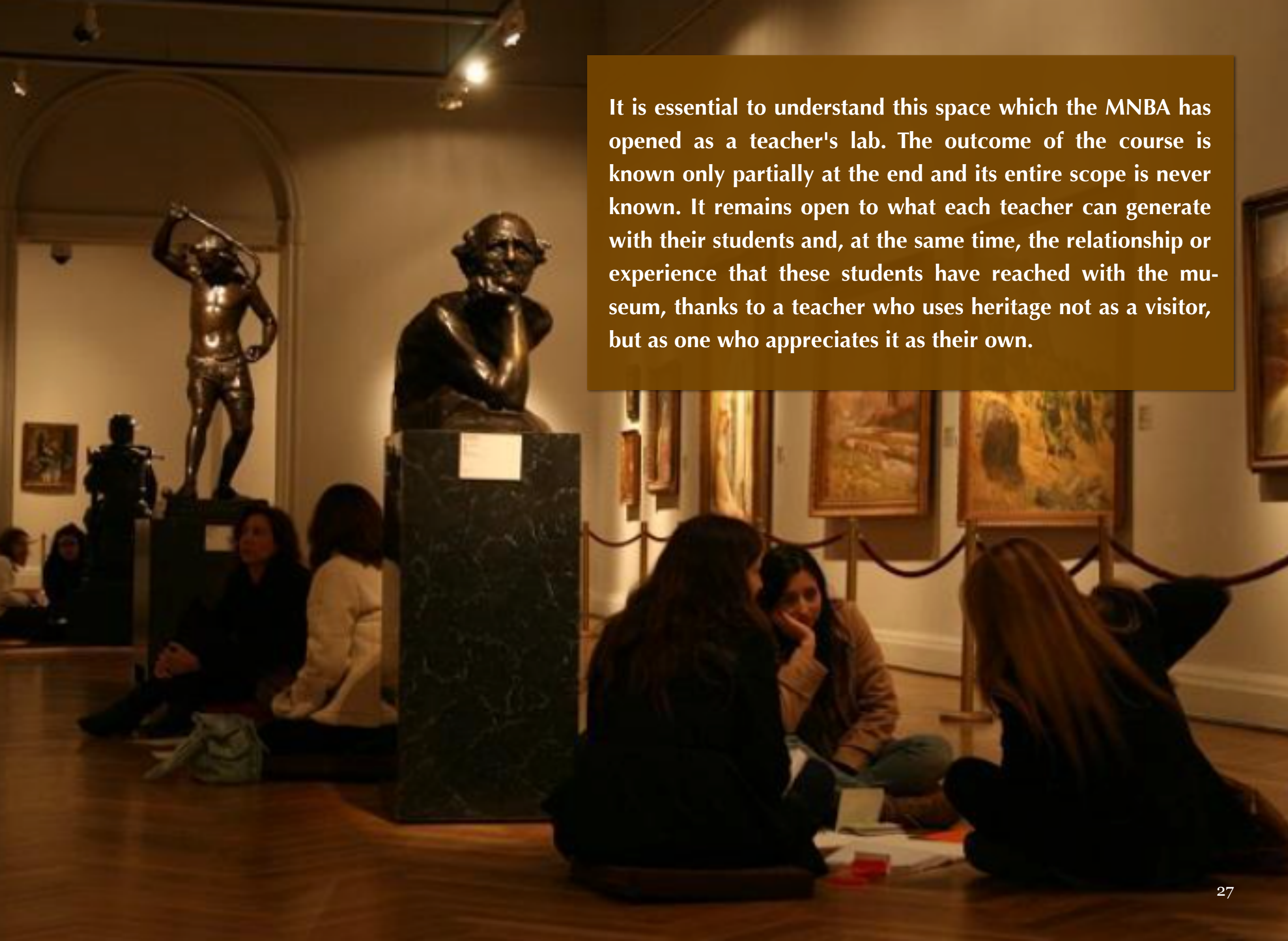
Another significant aspect is the development of didactics by the attendees within the same course as a product of collaborative work. They enrich their school practices by dialoging and reflecting with their peers and incorporating contents produced by them, as well as contents of our own art history.



It is noteworthy that the break of classical schooling formats through mediation activities, to which teachers are accustomed, helps to convert experiences into learning situations at the same time. This allows them to broaden their perspectives about art and their own educational practices. Thus, through dialogic new teaching methods, created during the course, they can revisit their own school programs in a new light, with special emphasis on reflection and appropriation of visual art heritage by their students.



It is essential to understand this space which the MNBA has opened as a teacher's lab. The outcome of the course is known only partially at the end and its entire scope is never known. It remains open to what each teacher can generate with their students and, at the same time, the relationship or experience that these students have reached with the museum, thanks to a teacher who uses heritage not as a visitor, but as one who appreciates it as their own.



THE AUTHOR

NATALIA PORTUGUEIS CORONEL graduated in Arts with a major in printmaking, Diploma in Religious Studies with mention Judaism (CEJ) and is a candidate for Master in Theory and History of Art at the Universidad de Chile. She also has a diploma in interfaith and multicultural education, a joint program of the Universidad Católica Silva Henríquez and the Universidad de Chile. Working since 1999 in the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, she serves as coordinator of Mediation and Education since 2010. While working at the MNBA, she produces projects in ALEPH ART, an independent artistic production company together with her brother Ricardo. She has also volunteered for the NGO Amnesty International since 1999 where she serves as Human Rights Education team coordinator since 2013.