

Breaking Out of the Glass Case: Collaborative Exhibitions in Library Spaces

October 1, 2010, 11am Pacific – 12pm Mountain – 1pm Central – 2pm Eastern

Discussion Leaders: Lorna Brown, artist and independent curator; Laura Graveline, Visual Arts Librarian, Dartmouth College

Transcript:

- 10:45 Heather Koopmans As you log into the chat room, feel free to change your user name to something more personal
- 10:46 Heather Koopmans You can right click on your user name (ie "guest12345") to do this
- 10:49 Adrienne Lai Just click on "edit nickname", located directly under the box where you type your chat message!
- 10:51 Heather Koopmans For those of you who also want a little more info about today's discussion leaders, we have two links to share (these are on the ARLIS chats website also)
- 10:51 Heather Koopmans "Group Search" at the Vancouver Public Library (Lorna's project): http://www.vpl.vancouver.bc.ca/find/details/public_art_at_vpl#group
- 10:52 Heather Koopmans "Uncommon Partners", an article co-written by Laura about arts collaborations at Dartmouth College (link goes to abstract) <http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/content~db=all~content=a912886729~frm=titlelink>
- 10:56 Lorna There is more information (and easier navigation) about Group Search here as well: <http://www.othersights.ca/pressrelease/group-search-art-in-the-library-2/>
- 10:56 Heather Koopmans thanks, Lorna!
- 10:59 Heather Koopmans ... just a reminder for those now joining us in guest mode, take a moment to update your user name
- 11:01 Heather Koopmans Since it's 2:00, shall we get started?
- 11:01 Laura G Sounds good!
- 11:01 Tammy Ravas Sure.
- 11:01 Adrienne Lai Let's!
- 11:02 Heather Koopmans Great. Thanks everyone for coming to the first chat of the 2010-11 season!
- 11:03 Heather Koopmans We have two guests today to share their experiences creating "collaborative exhibitions in library spaces"
- 11:03 Heather Koopmans Lorna Brown is an independent curator and artist who is responsible for the "Group Search" artist project at the Vancouver Public Library
- 11:04 Cara HI Lorna!

11:04 Heather Koopmans And Laura Graveline is the Visual Arts Librarian at Dartmouth College, where she has assisted with a number of arts collaborations in the library.

11:05 Heather Koopmans Shall the rest of us take a moment to introduce ourselves as well?

11:05 Heather Koopmans I am Heather Koopmans, Reference Librarian at the Savannah College of Art and Design, and a member of the professional development committee

11:05 Tammy Ravas I'm Tammy Ravas, Visual and Performing Arts Librarian at The University of Montana.

11:06 Cara Hi. I'm Cara List, Art Librarian at the University of Oregon, and member of the Education Sub-committee that hosts these chats

11:06 Adrienne Lai I'm Adrienne Lai, a librarian at NCSU Libraries, also a member of the education sub-committee

11:06 Celia Hello-I am Celia Walker, Director of Special Projects at Vanderbilt Library.

11:07 Ethan1 I'm Ethan Henderson, Special Collections Librarian and Archivist at Kenyon College (Performing Arts Librarian in another life)

11:07 Heather Koopmans Welcome!

11:07 guest2592665Susan I'm Susan Gangl at Univ. of Minnesota

11:08 guest438657 I'm Megan Kocher, also at the University of Minnesota

11:08 Jennifer I'm Jennifer Chisnell, Intern Coordinator at Brooklyn Museum Libraries

11:08 Courtenay I'm Courtenay McLeland, University of North Florida.

11:09 Heather Koopmans Great to see you all!

11:09 Heather Koopmans Before we begin the group discussion, Lorna and Laura, would each of you take just a moment to tell us about your respective projects / roles in creating artist-library collaborations?

11:09 Heather Koopmans Lorna, do you want to begin?

11:10 Laura G Hi everyone - I curate displays from our Art Special Collections, and I'm also the Coordinator for Novart, the library's cafe/study exhibit space.

11:11 Heather Koopmans Laura, the Novart space highlights student work especially, is that right?

11:12 Laura G Yes, we ask students to apply to show their artwork, and we sometimes have students act as the exhibit curator for group shows as well

11:13 Laura G We have some limitations on the kind of artwork we can display, mainly 2d wall art, but we did have one video installation

11:13 Heather Koopmans very cool - do you curate that (when the students are not acting as curators)?

11:14 Laura G Yes, I co-curate with the Visual Arts Library Specialist, and we try to have the students also participate in hanging the show

- 11:15 Laura G Our space is a 24 hour study space, so we can't guarantee security. We ask students to sign a contract acknowledging this.
- 11:16 Adrienne Lai Lorna, can you tell us a bit about how you came to curating a show at the Vancouver Public Library?
- 11:16 Laura G Happily, we haven't had any issues of theft or vandalism :)
- 11:17 Tammy Ravas Laura, how did you have the video installation installed? Was it in a heavy traffic area or away from patrons to avoid potential noise issues?
- 11:17 Lorna A trust to support was set up when the VPL opened. 10 years later, the library and the city made a call for proposals to curators - and my project was chosen, and followed by Memory Palace, a series of artists in residence, curated by Karen Love
- 11:18 Lorna Artists in Group Search participated with the understanding that their work could not be insured.
- 11:19 Laura G Hi Tammy - The video had to be installed in a low traffic corner, to accomodate the wiring, so we felt it did not receive the same traffic as the wall art.
- 11:19 Lorna And the issues of traffic flow, sound abatement and other concerns had to be considered by the artists as well.
- 11:20 Heather Koopmans That's a good question. Space restrictions can be an issue when creating installations
- 11:21 Heather Koopmans What are some ways you all work around this? (Laura, Lorna, and anyone else in the group who has dealt with this)?
- 11:21 Lorna It really is a process of negotiation with the librarians of each area - and so that was a large part of my role as curator.
- 11:22 Laura G Noise can be an issue, and the main library at Dartmouth now has a cone of sound for video installations. Our Novart soace is a cafe, so some noise is OK, but we don't exhibit video or sound in the art library.
- 11:22 Lorna The Library managment team was fantastic in helping us work through problems.
- 11:22 Heather Koopmans Lorna, it sounds like the project was spread throughout the library system or building - not restricted to one area?
- 11:22 guest193029 We are putting up our first videos and find that noisy areas make it more difficult to hear, so the quieter areas are working better.
- 11:22 Lorna That's right - the artists chose the area that they wanted to work in - and that had to do with the issues they were dealing with in their artwork.
- 11:23 Lorna For instance - Mark Soo did a piece about literacy rates around the world, and so wanted to locate it in the most appropriate space.
- 11:24 Lorna Marina Roy's work involved slipping materials in the print collection - actually into the books - and so her work was quite dispersed.

- 11:24 Adrienne Lai Were the artists in on the conversation with the library management team, or did they get a set of restrictions beforehand and had to tailor their works to fit the spaces (and their limitations)?
- 11:25 Lorna They proposed their ideas and we worked together to troubleshoot problems.
- 11:25 Lorna It sometimes took two or three proposals from an artist to find one that would work.
- 11:25 Tammy Ravas @ Lorna- That is brilliant! How many ppl found parts of her work in the books they were browsing?
- 11:26 Lorna We really have no idea how many people saw the work - it was about that one-to-one relationship between different readers of the same book.
- 11:26 Tammy Ravas Ah. Still quite interesting.
- 11:26 Lorna I really liked the 'underground' nature of the project.
- 11:27 Yuri How often are these exhibits done and what kind of duration do they have?
- 11:27 Lorna The duration of the projects were different - Dan and Jillian's work rotated monthly over one year.
- 11:28 Laura G We try to change the Novart & Art Library exhibits 2-4x a year, plus we have special requests, such as an upcoming Dios Des Los Muertos installation.
- 11:28 Courtenay @ Lorna - was Roy's work removed from the books at the conclusion of the project or had the parts been removed by readers?
- 11:28 Tammy Ravas @ Yuri. The oil paintings from our last collaborative display are still in the library: Here is the related LibGuide: <http://libguides.lib.umt.edu/jamsession>
- 11:28 Lorna Kathy Slade's project involved a weekly 'performance' of borrowing a book, and the loan slips were used to create a unique bookwork after the end of the year.
- 11:29 Lorna @Courtenay - some of her altered books were turned in as 'damaged', and some still remain several years later.
- 11:29 Heather Koopmans Laura, are the students exhibitions theme related or is the work tied to events at Dartmouth library as well?
- 11:29 Yuri @Lorna interesting. so I imagine with the flexible schedule and using different spaces these projects can overlap. is there always some project going on or is there downtime between them?
- 11:30 Laura G Students can choose their their theme or artwork for NovArt, but the Art Library exhibits we try to connect to campus events, or classes that are being taught.
- 11:31 Lorna @Yuri- the project took place over two years. The VPL is now considering whether or not to continue with temporary exhibitions. The response has been very good, so I hope they will.
- 11:31 Heather Koopmans @Laura can you provide a recent example?

- 11:31 Laura G The Dios des los Muertos installation was proposed by a fellow in the Latin American Studies dept., and will be created by student volunteers.
- 11:32 Lorna @Laura - that sounds amazing!
- 11:32 Susan Has anyone done a project for International Education Week? That's coming up in November
- 11:32 Adrienne Lai @ both Laura and Lorna - what are the reactions from people who come into the library to use the library and then encounter the art unexpectedly? Do you get much feedback from these serendipitous exhibition visitors?
- 11:33 Laura G The art on display in Novart is usually well received, although one student created a painting from chewing gum last year, and we had a few comments about the smell.
- 11:34 Lorna Library users at Central Branch are very invested in the space. The reaction to the work was really fantastic. Laiwan's project - online - allowed library users to input the call numbers from their books, and the site translated it to music.
- 11:34 Lorna There was a lot of documented participation on that one.
- 11:35 Laura G The one issue we have with displaying materials from the art soecial collection, or loaning them to the museum on campus, is that people see them and want to take them out of the display
- 11:35 Lorna And the 'compositions' could be downloaded.
- 11:35 Tammy Ravas When you have artists sign contracts stating that the library has no insurance on the work, have you had any resistance to this?
- 11:36 Lorna No - the artists took it into consideration when designing their work.
- 11:36 Tammy Ravas That's good.
- 11:36 Laura G No one has objected. Most of the artists have been students, but we hosted a traveling photography show, and the photographer also agreed
- 11:37 Lorna The projects were commissions, so their production costs were covered, and the received a good fee on top of that.
- 11:37 Adrienne Lai I think it also helps that a lot of contemporary artists are interested in engaging with a public outside of traditional gallery spaces
- 11:37 Tammy Ravas That's helpful to know.
- 11:38 Lorna It was a challenge that the artists really embraced.
- 11:38 vanglisa do you have pictures/videos of the space and some of the displays somewhere that we can see?
- 11:38 Adrienne Lai so they think about work that can be put by itself in a public sphere, where people are free to encounter it in different ways

11:38 Lorna They also had to come to terms with the fact that a library is not a gallery - that it doesn't exist solely to support the artwork.

11:39 Yuri speaking of support, Lorna mentioned a trust being established, how are other people funding these projects? grants? part of the institutional budget? Do the artists have to carry any of the cost burden?

11:39 Heather Koopmans @Yuri great question!

11:39 Tammy Ravas <nods in agreement>

11:39 Laura G We're working on an exhibits page for our website, but we do have current information posted at <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~library/sherman/>

11:40 Lorna In the VPL example, part of the funding came from the trust (the interest earned over 10 years) and I fund-raised to complete the necessary budget.

11:40 Laura G We had a small budget at Dartmouth, to assist students with framing their work, but due to budget cuts, that has not been replaced. We will supply some tools for hanging, and the students are very resourceful

11:40 Adrienne Lai @vanglisa: here are links to pdf downloads with some images and artist bios at and http://www.vpl.vancouver.bc.ca/images/uploads/file/pdf/GroupSearch_Jan_2007.pdf and http://www.vpl.vancouver.bc.ca/images/uploads/file/pdf/GroupSearch_Sept_2006.pdf

11:41 Laura G We are also lucky to have a graphic designer in the library, who can help us develop posters for bigger displays, such as the Dios des los muertos installation

11:42 Celia1 http://www.library.vanderbilt.edu/guide/Guide_to_libraries_10.11.pdf

11:42 Celia1 Just sent an example of the way we've used existing documents to publicize art exhibits

11:43 Lorna @vanglisa "Twelve Subjects" looked at the idea of 'the library display': <http://www.othersights.ca/category/projects/group-search/twelve-subjects/>

11:43 Laura G Thanks Celia!

11:43 Heather Koopmans Speaking of posters and websites, who is primarily responsible for getting the word out about exhibits? Artists, libraries or both?

11:44 Yuri @ Heather that was going to be my next question

11:44 Heather Koopmans :-)

11:44 Laura G We take on the main role of posters, news announcements, etc, although it is up to the artist to help organize a reception, if they want one.

11:44 Lorna I did a brochure that was available in the library for the public, and for librarians to use in answering questions about the projects.

11:45 Lorna We also hosted artists' talks, and did an opening reception.

11:45 Yuri Did you do any local press releases?

11:45 Lorna Yes - through the Other Sights publicity list, and the city's list.

11:45 Laura G Sometimes the student newspaper will highlight an exhibit, or our Arts on Campus website will list it.

11:46 Heather Koopmans @Lorna what is Other Sights?

11:46 Lorna It is a non-profit collective that I often work with - made up of artists, architects and tech. people.

11:46 Lorna We have done a number of projects in public spaces.

11:47 Heather Koopmans Anyone using blogs, twitter, etc to spread the word too? Or online library guides (libguides)?

11:47 Lorna I think artists working in libraries are really excited about how the library is a democratic space.

11:48 Laura G We're considering starting a blog, but we're not sure if it will reach a lot of people, or how to publicize it

11:48 Celia1 We're building LibGuides into the next set of exhibits.

11:48 Laura G Is anyone else using a blog or twitter to publicize their exhibits?

11:49 Heather Koopmans @celia - very cool, is there a special libguide(s) just for the exhibit or are you cross-posting in other guides on art?

11:49 Yuri @Lorna I'm curious how you got into the library setting. Was it just the opportunity that presented itself or was there something about the library specifically that attracted you?

11:49 Laura G We linked one libguide to an exhibit of outsider art last spring, that was curated by our graphic designer

11:49 Celia1 The library tweets news through the university so we will include exhibits

11:49 guest1773131 We have recently started collaborating with the 2 galleries on our campus, one in the Visual Art Dept and the other at CALIT2, which is a research entity that brings together technology with many disciplines, including the arts.

11:50 Laura G Here's the libguide link
<http://researchguides.dartmouth.edu/content.php?pid=99574>

11:50 Celia1 We're doing libguides for each of our exhibit topics. This show is less about art and more special collections, but we do have some art works included (John cage piece). Our topic is the Sixties at 50

11:50 Heather Koopmans @Laura thanks!

11:50 Adrienne Lai I'm wondering if any of you have had impromptu/"unofficial" exhibitions put up in your spaces?

11:51 Adrienne Lai I remember something on the ARLIS listserv awhile back about one librarian who had found that a group of students had come in and rearranged a section of books by colour as an art project.

11:51 Lorna @Yuri - I've always been interested in libraries - and some of my own art projects are cited there. For instance, I did an installation at the Koerner library at UBC: <http://www.belkin.ubc.ca/past/lorna-brown>

11:51 Laura G We had a great one a few years ago, when little doramas of trees and plastic dinosaurs popped up in nooks all over the library.

11:52 Lorna Fantastic!

11:52 Laura G We don't know who did it, and sadly did not take pictures, but a couple dioramas live in at staff desks

11:52 guest1773131 Yes, during our renovation, a student did a site specific work using bound journals in an empty area!! Cool, but she didn't talk to us before she did this!

11:53 Lorna Libraries seem to bring out the desire to intervene!

11:53 Heather Koopmans @guest @laura were these works allowed to stay up for a little while?

11:54 guest1773131 A few days, in our case.

11:54 Laura G Yes we left them up for several month, and I think eventulaly either the custodians or other students remopved them.

11:54 Laura G One tiny tree stuck in a chipped brick in our wall lasted for three years.

11:54 Lorna Nice.

11:54 Adrienne Lai That's such a great image.

11:55 Adrienne Lai We're running out of time, so if there are any last questions, get them in now!

11:56 Adrienne Lai We will also be getting a transcript of the chat, which will be available on the ARLIS website.

11:56 Yuri Thanks you all for taking the time to talk abotu your projects and answer questions!

11:56 guest8157316 thanks so much for doing these. i heart arlis!!!

11:56 Adrienne Lai Thanks so much to Laura and Lorna, and thanks to all of you for participating!

11:57 Lorna I wanted to share a more recent project: Ruins in Process: Vancouver Art in the Sixties: <http://vancouverartinthesixties.com/>

11:57 Cara Thanks Heather, Adrienne, Lorna and Laura!

11:57 Laura G Thanks everyone, it was really fun

11:57 Lorna I heart ARLIS too.

11:57 Heather Koopmans Yes, thanks Laura and Lorna -- great discussion, all!

11:57 Adrienne Lai There were lots of great ideas for exhibitions here! I'm inspired to run out into the library and set up an artwork right now!

11:57 Lorna You go girl.

11:58 Heather Koopmans @Lorna I have seen that site - looks like a really cool project!

11:58 Lorna Thanks, Heather!

11:59 Tammy Ravas Thanks for setting this up.

11:59 Heather Koopmans Just a reminder that we have another chat in one week - Adrienne, can you tell everyone a bit more about it?

12:00 Adrienne Lai Yep! Next week, we've got a chat about last month's OCLC conference on collaborations between museums, libraries and archives.

12:00 Adrienne Lai Gunter Waibel from OCLC will be here to moderate

12:01 Adrienne Lai I know that there were quite a few ARLIS members in attendance

12:01 Adrienne Lai or even if you couldn't make it, but want to hear more

12:01 Adrienne Lai we're going to talk about some of the ideas and issues that were raised

12:01 Adrienne Lai Friday, October 8 at 2 PM EST - scroll to the top of the page to find out more!

12:02 Heather Koopmans http://arlisna.org/chats/chat_101008.html

12:02 Adrienne Lai And thanks again to everybody who participated! Hope to see you again next week!

12:05 vanglisa thanks! this is fab and great use of technology without having to spend a penny