

2013 National Medal Winner Video: Columbus Museum of Art

Narration: The National Medal for Museum and Library Services is the nation's highest honor for libraries and museums that are serving their communities in exceptional ways. Columbus Museum of Art Executive Director, Nannette Maciejunes, and community member Jeffrey Tucker traveled to Washington from Columbus, Ohio to receive the national medal and spoke to IMLS about how the museum impacts the community.

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Nannette Maciejunes: Well, the Columbus Museum of Art has been on a great journey. It's been an incredible ride.

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Nannette Maciejunes: We wanted to go on a journey where people wanted to spend time with us. They wanted to come and be at the art museum. In fact, one of the things we talk about a lot is when you talk about a library, you always talk about using a library. But you always talk about visiting a museum. What would it look like to use a museum? What would that look like if it was really part of your life, and it was-- there was this sort of interactive relationship with your art museum? What would that look like? So, that's the journey we decided to go on.

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Nannette Maciejunes: And so one of the things we did is we embraced the idea of being about creativity. Because there isn't anyone-- if you're really talking about everyone, talk about something everyone needs, and every one of us needs creativity in our lives. I mean, if we're going to solve the problems of the 21st century, we need creativity. We need people to think outside the box, think entirely new thoughts.

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Nannette Maciejunes: Art Lab is one of our new programs. // So this is an immersion program where it's 12 to 20 kids-- from different schools, you know, they're regularly with us each week all year long-- and the idea is for them to-- for us to find out what interests them related to creativity in the arts, and then also how do they see the museum in a different way.

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Jeffrey: I didn't really know what Art Lab was, but I knew my internship was at a museum. But once we actually started doing stuff in Art Lab, I realized it was a cool program. We make videos, we traveled all around Columbus, we play with MacBooks and HD cameras-- it was just so cool.

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Jeffrey: Like, we had a certain topic, and our topic was how does something relate back to the museum. So we'll go out, we'll make a video, but it has to relate back to the museum, if that makes sense. But now it has completely broadened. Like this year, we did a Social Sunday for district Art Lab interns, and there were so many different topics. Like there was a group that talked about "How do you save puppies?" And there was also a group about how recycling more can help with the water and pollution. So honestly, Art Lab has truly evolved to something like what you really enjoy doing, and try and make it more public and known, like media-based.

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Jeffrey: I was the master disaster of technology. Seriously, do not give me a computer because I feel like I'll break it. I just refused to touch it. But once I'd done Art Lab, my mentor, Kristin Lantz, she made me go-- touch a camera; she made me go on MacBook. She made me do it. Because she said, "The only way for you to enjoy it is for you to get used to it." So I was really nervous, I knew nothing. But now, I can't see myself living without it.

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Jeffrey: I really want to make a statement on how I can make it as a film producer or something across media. That's my big dream. That's my big goal that I have in mind, and I couldn't have done that without the museum.

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Nannette Maciejunes: I think that Jeffrey embodies what we're trying to do because--

14:29:00 // Jeffrey has discovered his creativity. He's discovered his passion for life by connecting with the art museum. The fact that he discovered that at the art museum I think for me is the most validating thing about what we've done. He found it at the museum, and he'll take it out into the world from the art museum.

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Nannette Maciejunes: Connecting people and art is so important because I think that's, at its core, what art museums started out to be. Art has-- art museums live in this wonderful tension between the art and the people // because art museums, or any kinds of museums-- and libraries-- are about-- they're the "and." They're the art and people. It is the connection. It is the discoveries. It is the "Aha" moments. It's all that you discover when you're with the object. And //

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Nannette Maciejunes: One thing that makes us very unique as an art museum is that-- a lot of people are trying very experimental programs, but to change, to be willing to experiment with the experience inside the gallery, // and we have been very bold, and I think that sets the Columbus Museum of Art apart. We call these interactive elements inside our regular galleries-- I mean, there are wonderful

works of art surrounding you-- there are Renaissance paintings, modern pictures around you on the walls-- a regular gallery-- and we'll introduce a Post-it note station, where we ask you a question, and then you can write on a Post-it note and put it there, and sometimes we'll-- these are hugely popular. People love to have a conversation around Post-it-- through Post-it notes. And they'll even draw arrows to the other Post-it notes-- "I totally disagree with his person, and they should not say that." Or, "I agree," or "I think this," or-- so this idea of having an interactive Post-it note station in an art museum gallery is very unusual.

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Nannette Maciejunes It's those conversations that you have at art museums-- // those connections between people and in between and the art object and the artist that created it-- those are the things-- that for us has been the journey we've been trying to go on.