

SummerVision DC 2014: Five Years of Museum Explorations as a Professional Learning Community

by Renee Sandell

SummerVision DC (SVDC) educators traveled to Washington, DC, in July 2014 from all over the United States and as far away as Thailand and Mongolia to experience museums as unique learning environments. Since 2010, nine sessions of SVDC have been experienced by over 200 visual arts and other educators, representing teaching levels ranging from K-12 to higher education, arts organizations, and museums—with several previous attendees returning for additional sessions. Taking advantage of summer break to gain a new creative and reflective perspective and to develop “new eyes” within an evolving professional learning community, participants engaged in multidisciplinary arts connections as they experienced the rich offerings of DC museums.

Designed to help participants gain firsthand knowledge about using the museum as an educational resource, SVDC 2014—directed by Renee Sandell, with Carole Henry as lead interpreter—provided educators with an intensive expeditionary learning experience through onsite, object-specific explorations of artwork and behind-the-scenes examination of the museum itself as a work of art. The program was guided by Henry’s text, *The Museum Experience: The Discovery of Meaning* (NAEA, 2010), and Sandell’s *Form+Theme+Context Palette for Decoding an Art Museum* (2009). Using *Marking & Mapping™* to link studio experience with critical response, participants visually documented the learning process utilizing a portable studio with materials from SVDC sponsors Blick Art Materials, Canson, Derwent, and Sax School Specialty.

Museum educators led interactive tours and conducted activities that inspired SVDC participant experiences, expanding possibilities for the classroom and future museum visits. In 2014, museum learning sites and educators included the National Gallery of Art (Elisa Patterson, Lorena Baines, Deirdre Palmer); Freer/Sackler Gallery (Theresa Esterlund); National Museum of African Art (Deborah Stokes); National Museum of Women in the Arts (Deborah Gaston, Adrienne Gayoso, Ashley Harris); The Phillips Collection (Meagan Estep, Margaret Collerd); National Building Museum (Lara Finder, Mary Hendrickse); Corcoran Gallery of Art (Liz Lloyd); Smithsonian American Art Museum

(Elizabeth Dale-Deines, Peg Koetsch); and National Portrait Gallery (Briana Zavadil White, Ann Showalter). Each museum provided participants with educator packets and materials, and the private museums also provided free admission passes for participants to spend additional time at their museums. NAEA Executive Director Deborah Reeve provided comments at the first closing celebration exhibition of *New Eyes Maps*, which gave visual representation to the week’s experiences.

Social media continues to support our evolving professional learning community. Using the SummerVision DC Facebook group page to connect (before, during, and after the 4-day intensive experience), SVDC 2014 participants shared photographs, visual journals, and insights—with plans to meet at state conferences and the 2015 NAEA National Convention in New Orleans. In addition, SVDC 2014 photos from both sessions were posted on NAEA Pinterest boards. In response to requests for SummerVision experiences in other parts of the country, plans are being made to offer the first session of SummerVision at the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Bentonville, AR, in June 2015, in addition to one July 2015 session in Washington, DC. Plan to join us and become a part of this professional learning community as you immerse yourself in unique museum experiences. ■



SVDC 2014 Session I group.

SVDC Attendees say...

- *It was tailored to our needs as visual art educators and included activities for both the gallery and the classroom—so I can use these ideas wherever I am teaching.... Administrators have a hard time providing us art teachers with professional development opportunities sometimes so this was really great! I love NAEA.*
- *No one could walk away from such an experience without imagining a million ways to apply the knowledge gained to their professional work.*
- *The many activities were so amazing.... The interaction with the others participating was wonderful. The variety of art and artists made this unique and energizing.*
- *I felt honored and celebrated. It was amazing to interact with the museum professionals and be “fed” artistically, historically, spiritually, emotionally, and actually in our nation’s capital. The treasures were innumerable, friendships indelible.*
- *The whole entire week... inspired me spiritually, as an educator and as an artist and an individual intellectually. SummerVision is likened to a soul mate, which feeds my soul.... The valuable, treasured relationships... are priceless!*
- *Learning is remembering the journey. Where are my souvenirs? My visual journal, Facebook, and my colleagues’ phone numbers—but the genuine souvenir is in my heart. Thank you for guiding me toward becoming a summer visionary!*



Far left: Collaborative poetry response to Japanese screen at Freer/Sackler Gallery.

Left: Becky M. with her visual journal response at National Portrait Gallery.