

## Uncovering Professionalism in the Art Museum: An Exploration of Key Characteristics of the Working Lives of Education Curators at Tate Modern

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Fig.1

Audience consultation regarding the development of Tate's Continuing Professional Development programme for teachers, Art Contemporaries Conference, Tate Modern 2005.

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In *The Rise of Professional Society: England Since 1880* (2002), Harold Perkin characterised the professions of the twentieth century as manifestly informed by 'strategies of closure'.<sup>1</sup> Such strategies were played out through control over the specialist knowledge and expertise distinct to the concept of a profession, in a deliberately granted form of autonomy. However, concurrent with the growth of the welfare state in the latter half of the twentieth century, the status of the professions was called into question in England. Their 'self-protective autonomy' was perceived by the state as giving them too much power without sufficient accountability.<sup>2</sup> In relation to education, this backlash against the professions has been described as translating into a loss of control over what to teach and how to teach it.<sup>3</sup> In the early years of the twenty-first century we now see attempts to find new ways forward; nascent conceptions of professionalism which strike a balance between autonomy and accountability, and which might be said to be characterised by strategies of openness rather than of closure.

Against this broad background, and coupled with the Arts Council of England's current Review of Contemporary Visual Arts, in which one of five interrelated surveys focuses on an analysis of employment issues, career routes, professional development and cultural diversity, it would appear that now is an apposite time to attempt to uncover the key characteristics of education professionalism in the art museum, in order to better understand how our working lives are shaped and how we might best develop them in the future. Here the art museum context is important, having a distinctive relationship to the state and to various publics. In the last decade, shifts in these relationships have occurred which have impacted on what it is to be a cultural professional in today's museum. In particular, the movement from the museum primarily (but not solely) as a place of aesthetic contemplation and collection-centred expertise, to one of the museum primarily as communicator and partner to various audience constituencies, has resulted in the role of the education curator gathering greater agency, born out of policy directives and a cultural climate which questions the legitimacy of the museum's authority.<sup>4</sup>

In this climate museums have come under a confluence of pressures, which have impacted on professional roles. These pressures might be described as relating to the acknowledgement and experience of multifarious audiences; to telling several cultural narratives and not just a single meta narrative; to economic viability and relationship to community. For some cultural critics, such pressures signal the end of an era, so much so that ‘it’s become an orthodoxy in postmodern writings on museum culture to record the death-rattle of the project of the museum as it was forged in the crucible of the European Enlightenment’.<sup>5</sup>

But this death-rattle can be recast as rather protracted birth pains. What we are witnessing in the early years of this century is a refashioning of the museum, aspects of which persist from the mission of the first public museum of the French Revolutionary state with its aim of realising the legacy of the Age of Enlightenment, that is, political and moral freedom through education, alongside newly evolved characteristics.<sup>6</sup> Professionalism is just as subject to this refashioning as every other aspect of the art museum. It is possible to argue that in the current period, museums can be many different things to many different people: if a temple of aesthetic contemplation is what you are after, so be it – but such aesthetic contemplation will co-exist with commerce, corporatism, education and entertainment.

Today’s museum is radically syncretic in nature, and perhaps the greatest challenge to any museum professional, not least the education curator, is how to negotiate this and maintain a sense of professional identity which has an historic legacy. Thus, section I, ‘The Institutional Context’ offers a brief history of museum education against which to understand the institutional significance of characteristics of the education curator’s professionalism. Section II explores key characteristics of professionalism within the Interpretation and Education department at Tate Modern, and explores the usefulness of a new theoretical model for describing such professionalism. The conclusion briefly considers the implications of this concept for the institution as a whole.

### **Section 1: The Institutional context**

Uncovering professionalism within museum education today requires a consideration of the historical policy contexts which have shaped the field of museum education more broadly. Although I would argue that an important distinction can be drawn between the kinds of pedagogic content knowledge which education in the *art* museum employs and the educational discourses of the artefact-based museum (for example, questions of aesthetic judgement and plural meanings in the former, and of ethnography and cultural location in the latter), the history of education in the museum sector is to a large extent a shared history from a policy perspective. This section therefore offers a brief historical overview of education within the museum sector on a national level with reference to state policy in order to provide a historical background against which the present-day characteristics of professionalism in art museum education can be considered later.<sup>7</sup>

Museum education as a distinctive endeavour emerged amid the mid-nineteenth century social history context of philanthropy and self-improvement. In 1845 the Museums Act allocated public money to national museums for the first time. This indicated recognition by the state that museums could play a significant role in the life of the nation. The Act enabled local authorities to levy rates to build museums, and for those museums to charge for admission. Significantly, education and curating were seen as part of the same task. In 1870 the Education Act, which heightened the profile of education nationally by making provision for children up to the age of fourteen to attend school, also raised the profile of museum education and in doing so raised some key questions about the relationship between education and care of collections. By this time the South Kensington (now the Victoria and Albert) Museum and the Natural History Museum had explicit educational aims with special provision for children in which the primary pedagogic experience was the ‘object’

lesson, i.e. artefact-based learning. But there was a concern about who should be delivering these lessons. Several national museums employed educators specifically for this purpose, thereby freeing up curators to devote their time wholly and autonomously, to care of and developing scholarship about the collection. This practice of employing guide lecturers for the purposes of education continued well into the twentieth century, with the first such lecturer engaged at Tate in 1914.

Perkin's thesis that the twentieth century was the age of the specialist professional rings true for the cultural sector, in that the early twentieth century was a period of increased specialisation and separation of fields of practice within the museum. Curators increasingly withdrew from a direct relationship with the visiting public, to the field of curating exhibitions and maintaining the collection. Strong arguments were put forward for the value of collections per se, and museums were perceived as centres of research about their respective collections. The educational activity of the museum focused on formal education for school children (during World War One some museums even housed schools); very little provision was made for adult visitors. State-commissioned reports of the 1920s and 1930s, in particular those by Miers in 1928 and Markham in 1938, suggested that exhibitions were not related to the lives of visitors nor was the experience of the visitor at the museum of any concern in the development of exhibitions.

But the latter half of the twentieth century saw a shift in focus to acknowledge and encompass the experience of the museum visitor. In the 1960s the first professional designers were employed in museums as part of a newfound interest in display methods and visitor experience. Education services were repositioned, but nevertheless remained second cousin to exhibition planning and curatorial work; the notion that 'a museum is primarily an institution of culture and only secondarily a seat of learning' echoed throughout the twentieth century by generations of museum directors and curators who perceived the role of education as secondary to the mandates of collection and preservation.<sup>8</sup>

This ancillary role mutated into something of much greater significance following the 1997 election of the Labour government. The 1997 state-commissioned report on the country's museums, *A Common Wealth*, was used to lobby for additional funding to support museum education (as late as 1994 only 1 in 5 museums had education staff) and the first DCMS Comprehensive Spending Review put public service at the heart of what museums should do.<sup>9</sup> With a new government whose electoral mantra was 'education, education, education', issues of access to museums and questions of social inclusion took centre stage, often within the rubric of museum education. In May 2000, the policy document 'Centres for Social Change; Museums, Galleries and Archives for All' set an access standard for the cultural sector which some museum professionals perceived as firing a broadside into the museum as a place of scholarship and specialism. The concept of a social model of disability was raised for the first time; museums should provide access for many not just for the enlightened few; they should nurture educational opportunities; foster creative industry and most importantly, museums should be *about* collections, but *for* people.

This access policy agenda provoked – and continues to do so – lively debate among cultural professionals. In May 2000 the Peer group, an amalgam of artists, curators, cultural commentators and philosophers, published *Art for All? Their Policies and Our Culture*.<sup>10</sup> In part a response to the *Museums for the Many* policy document, this publication and accompanying series of debates signalled a profound concern about the greater involvement of the state in shaping the activities and responsibilities of the art museum in relation to its publics. At the heart of this debate was – and remains – a perception that the opening up of museum culture from scholarship and expertise about the collection, to one which is more permeable to and takes account of the lives of its multifarious publics, might result in a dilution and undermining of that scholarship.<sup>11</sup> Such anxiety is not new,

and might be said to be an essential ingredient of the entrance of new groups into cultural professionalism; witness Poynter's worries about the explosion of commercial galleries in the late nineteenth century and the effect the new pattern of art marketing would have on the hitherto exclusive relationship between aristocratic art patron and artist.<sup>12</sup>

I would suggest that this anxiety is also bound up with the existence of only a relatively small body of scholarship about education in the art museum, in comparison with the great swathes of scholarship which comprise the discipline of art history. In an optimistic mood one might argue that this makes it a very good time for art museum educators in what is arguably a nascent profession to be researching and publishing about their field; a cynic may well point to the existence of the growing literature in the field and, with eyebrow raised, suggest that perhaps what is afoot is the denial of the *nature* of scholarship in art museum education. Such scholarship has at its centre the relationship between the visitor and the artwork; the artwork is subject to a range of ways of knowing in which art historical connoisseurship is but one. Whatever the various political, economic, philosophical and moral causes and effects of the changing role of education in the art museum, the fact that issues of access have found their way into DCMS funding agreements is 'particularly significant for the art museum, because participation surveys demonstrate that their audience is less democratic than for other museums'.<sup>13</sup>

## **Section 2: Uncovering key characteristics of art museum education**

From a sociological perspective there is a question mark over the status of museum education as a profession per se. Not only is there relatively little scholarship in the field, our work only loosely meets Millerson's check-list of established features of an occupation which enable it to be termed a profession, i.e. the use of skills based on theoretical knowledge; education and training for those skills; competence ensured by examination; a code of conduct; orientation towards public good; and a professional organisation to represent it.<sup>14</sup> But the question of status as a profession is moot: Millerson's check-list is based on normative definitions of law and medicine and thus can only be taken as an aspirational strategy. It is also somewhat outmoded. Just as Duchamp tells us that a work of art can be defined thus according to intention and context, so, too, contemporary sociologists will argue that a profession is whatever chooses to call itself a profession.

Section II uses Hoyle and John's writing on three key characteristics of professionalism to uncover the character and contemporary conditions of professionalism in art museum education.<sup>15</sup> These characteristics are specialist knowledge, responsibility and autonomy. My analysis is context-specific and uses a criterion approach, based on observations of the work of curators in the Interpretation and Education department at Tate Modern since 1999, the year preceding its opening.

In an annex to the International Committee on Museums (ICOM) Code of Ethics, entitled *Definition of the Museum and Professional Museum Workers*, the latter are defined as 'having received specialised training, or possessing an equivalent practical experience, in any field relevant to the management and operations of a museum'.<sup>16</sup> Different professional groups will understand and present different theoretical perceptions of professionalism according to their histories, institutional contexts, and the individual. For museum educators worldwide, the ICOM Code of Ethics suggests that the concept of specialisation is key in constituting professional identity and hence professionalism. So how does this concept play out in the role of a contemporary museum educator at Tate Modern?

When Tate Liverpool opened in 1988, Toby Jackson, then Head of Interpretation and Education, had an epistemic agenda at hand. Traditionally, the job titles of those who run education programmes in museums had been distinctly bureaucratic and administrative in flavour, for example, Education Officer/Manager/Co-ordinator. That Tate Liverpool inculcated the change is

significant for a variety of reasons. In an informal interview for this paper, Jackson described the change as a political move to create equal status within the institution between curators of Collections, Exhibitions and Displays, and the work of educators, which historically had taken an ancillary role to the primary role of caring for the Collection. But it is also significant in terms of recognising the specialist knowledge of the educator. As curators, educators could be perceived to have joined what Friedson terms an ‘epistemic community’ within the art museum in which the idea of specialist knowledge is paramount. The concept of the ‘epistemic community’ is one in which such knowledge is organised in institutions set apart from everyday life, as a series of disciplines: ‘Special groups of intellectual workers embody the authority of these disciplines, their work being to create, preserve, transmit, debate and revise disciplinary content’.<sup>17</sup>

As a member of the particular ‘epistemic community’ of curators, the museum educator is acknowledged as having a relationship to specialist knowledge as an integral part of their professionalism. Indeed, Friedson’s description of the five different ways that intellectual workers relate to their disciplinary content (‘create ...revise’) can be summarised in one Latin word: ‘curare’, to care for, the etymology of the verb ‘to curate’. But whereas the professionalism of the curator of Tate Collection or of Exhibitions and Displays will focus primarily on the art work, the Education curator’s professionalism is janus-faced, both looking inwards to the institution and collection while at the same time being inherently outward looking, towards the particularities of audiences.

### **Specialist knowledge**

Within the Interpretation and Education department at Tate Modern, an education curator’s role involves complex tasks which require a level of sophisticated judgment and both autonomous and collective decision making. Specialist knowledge relates to areas which define the activity of being an education curator. However, of equal significance as the types and fields of knowledge is the way this knowledge is employed. In *Professionalism: The Third Logic*, Friedson argues that the concept of ‘discretion’ is central to ‘the ideal-typical character of the knowledge and skill imputed to practitioners who receive official sanction to control their own work’.<sup>18</sup> By discretion is meant the use of fresh judgment on an individual task by task basis, based on specialist knowledge borne out of experience and sensitive to the nuances of each task. It is the opposite of routine knowledge and as such, has ‘potential for innovation and creativity’. Crucially, ‘the right of discretion implies being trusted, being committed, even bring morally involved in one’s work’. Specialist knowledge is therefore intimately bound up with issues of trust, which in turn has implications for responsibility and autonomy.

The specialist knowledge of an education curator breaks down into three major areas. The relationships between each of these are to a large degree variable, the only constant being that they each impact on and inform all aspects of decision making, such that it is in their negotiation that the complex nature of this particular form of professionalism resides. These areas are: audience and policy contexts; learning theory and pedagogic content knowledge; and subject disciplines (in particular, critical art history and museum studies). These three areas relate respectively to Eraut’s discussion of three typifications of knowledge in his writing on concepts of professionalism in education: policy making, action context and academic.<sup>19</sup> A fourth area is organisational knowledge which is common to all professionals within an institution and at managerial level encompasses the more routine aspects of curatorial roles, including staff, budget and programme management.

A consideration of the three major areas of knowledge specialism reveals how each type of specialist knowledge is developed and employed with the aim of working in partnership with

audiences and with colleagues within the profession, and in doing so sharing, extending and deepening the reach of the art museum. These processes constitute an emergent form of open professionalism, a way of moving on from the ‘strategies of closure’ which dominated the previous century. In their writing on postmodern professionalism in education, Hargreaves and Goodson posit the term ‘occupational heteronomy’ as a salient characteristic. Occupational heteronomy sees education professionals ‘working authoritatively, but openly and collaboratively with a range of partners in the wider community’.<sup>20</sup> As the following exploration of our working lives demonstrates, it seems an appropriate concept to borrow from the corpus of literature on formal education and use to describe the activities of education curators at Tate Modern.

### **Audience and policy contexts**

For an education curator, the relationship with audience is as important as the relationship with the collection. Different policy contexts will inform the work of education curators depending on which audience they specialise in. Jackson’s aim in setting up the department with a staffing structure in which individual curators work with specific audiences is based on a belief that best practice is informed practice. Thus in developing and managing an educational programme of activity for a specific audience group, the curator develops specialist knowledge of policy frameworks which impact on the professional, and often, personal lives of those audiences. For example, the Curator: Schools Programme will have an in-depth knowledge of formal education policy and frameworks, while the Curator: Community Programme will need to know about urban regeneration and social policy. Additionally, some policy contexts cut across all audiences, for example the Disability Discrimination Act and Lifelong Learning. In working with these audiences, curators will strive to develop activities which are fully cognizant of the different sets of expertise and backgrounds that these audiences bring with them, within an ethos of reciprocity and mutuality.

### **Learning theory and pedagogic content knowledge**

Over the last fifteen years there has been a shift in museum education from the transmission model of learning theory to a constructivist model, which posits that the construction of meaning depends on the prior knowledge, values and beliefs of the viewer, who finds points of connection and reference between these aspects of themselves and the art work.<sup>21</sup> This shift has been widely documented and analyzed. Its significance for education curators is in the way it denotes a changed relationship between the institution and its audiences. Audiences are understood as ‘interpretive communities’, each with their own discreet categories of understanding. The challenge for education curators within the institution is how best to work with these various and fluid interpretive communities. It is also at present predominantly the province of education curators at Tate Modern and is perhaps where the concept of occupational heteronomy is most relevant. While a curator in the Exhibitions and Displays department will certainly have a notional idea of audience (and scanning an Exhibition catalogue will reveal how this audience is configured, that is, with a certain level of familiarity with the language and concepts of art criticism and western art history), their role is not concerned directly with addressing that audience other than through the mechanism of the much-valued and increasingly popular exhibition catalogue. Rather, their primary responsibility is to the exhibition and display of art works, and the building up of scholarship pertaining to the art work and exhibition. Education curators create a layer of interpretation between the art work and the audience. Participation in this gamut of interpretation strategies is not obligatory but its variety signifies a recognition of the different needs of interpretive communities, indeed, of their existence. Interpretation tools range from straightforward wall texts, individually authored to break down the notion of a single, anonymous institutional voice, to technologically sophisticated devices such as Personal Digital Assistants, to teams of artists and other creative

practitioners who facilitate gallery teaching sessions for specific audience groups, often encompassing different disciplines such as story telling. Such teaching is informed by ‘pedagogical content knowledge’, the ‘amalgam of content and pedagogy that is uniquely the province of teachers, their own special form of professional understanding’<sup>22</sup> Simply put, this is knowledge of how to teach ones’ subject. An important part of the process of uncovering professionalism is in making this largely intuitive, practical know-how into codifiable, professional knowledge.

### **Subject disciplines**

The academic knowledge of an education curator should be on a par with that of Collections or Exhibitions and Displays curators in order to facilitate cross-departmental working with a language of shared concepts. At Tate Modern all education curators have a Masters level qualification in art history or a related subject such as cultural theory. They also need to be familiar with the discipline of museum studies with an understanding of the history of the institution and its local, national and global role. This shared knowledge has interesting implications for the concept of occupational heteronomy as it enables colleagues to work authoritatively across the institution. As such it extends the concept: occupational heteronomy can take place both within as well as external to the institution. For example, it is not unheard of for education curators to move between departments or to work across departments. For example, the current Curator: Adult Learning formerly worked in Tate Collection and is curating a room for the new 2006 displays at Tate Modern, while the post of Curator: Film Programme is co-funded by both the Interpretation and Education department and the Exhibitions and Displays department. Friedson calls the weaving across of such specialist knowledges ‘transferability’.<sup>23</sup> In his account, it is where such transfer of knowledges occurs that professionalism is at its strongest. With this in mind, the more inter-departmental and external partnerships that can be forged within and by the art museum, thereby breaking down divisions between professional roles, the stronger the curator’s professionalism within a particular context becomes.

### **Responsibility**

In the ICOM Code of Ethics the section on Professional Conduct annotates three areas of professional responsibility: to the Collections, to the Public, and to Colleagues and the Profession more broadly. The code is offered as a means of professional self-regulation. It sets out ‘minimum standards of conduct and performance to which all museum professional staff throughout the world may reasonably aspire. At the same time, it also provides a clear statement of what the public may justifiably expect from a museum profession’.<sup>24</sup> Responsibility to the collection is set out as the first key area. Interestingly, of all the sections on professional responsibility, that of the relationship to the public is the shortest. This is noteworthy because it is in the changing and contested relationship between the museum and a multifarious public that current tensions and debates have arisen; and negotiating this relationship is precisely where the bulk of a museum educator’s work is located. What is distinctive about the values and attitudes entailed in the notion of professional responsibility for the education curator? Responsibility to the Collection takes the form of keeping up to date with art historical subject knowledge (for example through researching learning resources for our audiences or planning new courses) and of contributing to pushing forward the diversification of the Collection so that it becomes more international (the inclusion agenda means that museums have to address the question of non-representation of work from minority cultures, and likewise of staffing). This is not in itself distinctive to the Education curator, but developing appropriate interpretative strategies in order that different audiences can best engage with the collection is.

Responsibility to colleagues and the profession takes the form of being engaged in research and

of disseminating and sharing good practice through conversation, conference contributions and publication. It can also take the form of sharing and supporting professional development through mentoring, for example, of colleagues new to the profession. At the managerial level responsibility to colleagues also includes administrative tasks such as budget and staff management.

But it is in responsibility to audience that a distinctive quality of an educator's professionalism emerges. Responsibility, especially in relation to the public, can be recast as a form of duty of care which embraces not just the intellectual experience of our visitors, but also cares for their emotional and physical well-being whilst at the museum, recognizing and respecting the embodied visitor who has physical and emotional needs as well as aesthetic and cognitive ones. For example, it is telling that the Curator for Access is located within the Interpretation and Education department. Ideally a more holistic understanding of the museum publics would be embraced within all institutional departments, rather than falling to the preserve of Education curators and their colleagues in Visitor Services.

Responsibility is interwoven with issues of trust. Tate holds a national collection in trust for the nation. While this trust extends across a plethora of institutional activities (for example acquisition, conservation, finance), for an education curator it relates to how and what kinds of opportunities are provided for audiences to engage with the collection, and how those audiences are perceived and understood. They should feel welcomed, looked after and valued. Recognition must be given to the fact that these audiences bring a whole host of experiences and ideas that have relevance for their engagement with the Collection, and our programmes should be sufficiently reflexive to provide that essential, critical space for questioning, of the institution, of its policies, indeed of the very role that art can play in their lives, of its value for the individual. James Wood, former Director of the Chicago Institute of Arts, has written at some length on the nature of trust within the art museum, which he relates to different conceptions of institutional authority. He writes that perhaps the most difficult sort of trust is that which both retains the authority of the institution, whilst at the same time allowing, or consciously inviting, criticism and debate about the institution: 'the museum must maintain a creative tension between demonstrating its expertise and questioning its assumptions'.<sup>25</sup> It is a fine balancing act in which education curators need to be well practiced.

### **Autonomy**

Although it is the case that, as with other professions in England in the latter decades of the twentieth century, the cultural sector has seen professionalism put under pressure by the state through being called to account for their activities (in the main by providing performance indicators to DCMS based on the number of visitors to the museum), educators in the museum have to a large extent escaped the grasp of new managerialism which as so dramatically affected the working lives of educators in the formal and higher education sectors. For example, unlike our colleagues in schools, the Curator: Schools Programme is not required to run a programme which delivers the National Curriculum. Rather, the content of sessions for visiting schools is devised in-house, by a team of artists and other creative practitioners who enjoy complete autonomy in a programme which is described elsewhere as 'complementing the National Curriculum and extending classroom practice'.<sup>26</sup> The same goes for all other education programmes run by the department. Education curators have a devolved budget and are fully trusted to plan and manage their programmes. Such autonomy is a deliberate way of allowing curators to build up expertise and specialism in relation to their audience. On Jackson's part, there is a recognition that experimentation is part of the process of developing high quality educational activities and a confident team of education curators who can thrive: 'Complexity grows when it is given the right amount of time, space and support ... the model of devolving autonomy entails the health and continuation of the department'.

Such a high trust, low accountability culture within museum education may well account for why education curators are prepared to earn significantly less than their education peers – on average 42% less than colleagues in the formal education sector after ten years of employment.<sup>27</sup> Currently, at no point does the state dictate what should be taught or how learning should take place in the museum, and there are no formal assessment criteria for learning and teaching in place. But this high trust, low accountability culture is experiencing the winds of change with discussion afoot in the DCMS about museums delivering educational activities to a recommended set of Generic Learning Outcomes, as part of a drive to professionalise education in the cultural sector and make educational processes explicit. While this may afford fresh insights into practice and enable greater sharing of ideas through a common framework, it is essential that any such recommendations are sensitive to the particularities of context, that is, the collection and institutional history. When it comes to questions of learning and teaching in the art museum environment, it is not a case of ‘one size fits all’.

### **Conclusion**

Through this consideration of the three key characteristics of professionalism for education curators in the art museum I hope to have suggested how nascent concepts of ‘open’ professionalism hold rich potential for our working lives, both on a theoretical and practical level. Yet the heavily debated nature of the evolving role of the art museum in relation to its publics suggests that occupational heteronomy may not sit quite so happily with cultural professionals who have a stake in maintaining the art museum as a place of predominantly object-centred expertise and who seem embattled by the concept of acknowledging diverse publics through inclusion agendas and educational programmes which are rooted in the activities of the institution.

However, it can be argued that occupational heteronomy as an ontological concept for the art museum would strengthen rather than weaken cultural professionalism at all levels of curatorial activity. As well as working in partnership externally with the wider community, there is much to be gained by curators working ‘authoritatively but openly and collaboratively’ in partnership with one another. The idea of crossing over between different professional knowledges and activities is theoretically significant. Hoyle and John refer to Basil Bernstein’s 1971 work on collective codes in which he claims that ‘a greater integration of knowledge is likely to occur if the boundaries between the demarcations are weak rather than strong, thereby allowing a powerful collective code to emerge’.<sup>28</sup> Thus professionalism is strengthened if the boundaries between its different types of knowledge and practices are permeable. Such permeability starts with conversation but needs to translate into organizational structure. It might include regular, informal inter-departmental meetings to enable colleagues to gain insight into each others areas of specialism and how these might inflect with or impact on their portfolios of work, which may in turn develop into joint programming of courses or exhibitions and displays.

As the art museum today is a hybrid creature, able to be many different things to many different people, so too its professionals need to embrace this multiplicity within their working lives. I would suggest that one such way is through practicing occupational heteronomy, replacing ‘strategies of closure’ with those of openness. But this may mean surrendering certain privileges as the passing of a particular notion of the professional as expert or specialist is acknowledged. Further research is needed to deepen and extend the discussion of education professionalism within the changing paradigm of the art museum, including those particularities of professionalism which inform the work of our teams of artists, art historians and other creative practitioners within the art museum’s education programmes. This initial consideration gives rise to bigger issues about the identity of the art museum and its relation to society and its own history, and philosophical arguments about what

it means to be a cultural professional in today's art museum take centre stage.

## Notes

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