



Poster Presentation Summaries 2024 Annual Meeting

Casa Italiana Oral History Project

What does it mean to be Italian American in Rochester? To answer this question, The Frank DiMino Casa Italiana, a museum, archive, and library located on the campus of Nazareth University, has created the Casa Italiana Oral History Project in partnership with the Nazareth University Center for Public History. This collaboration between a museum and a center for public history has brought together Italian American community members living in the Rochester region and allowed for the creation of a digital archive centered around preserving the lived experiences of multiple generations of immigrant families. Ultimately, this will be part of an exhibit at the Casa. The oral histories are conducted by student interns and have had a positive impact in connecting the community, university faculty, and students by increasing undergraduate research opportunities, providing internships and experiential learning for students, and allowing the director of the Casa, Dr. Joëlle Carota to further her research in generational language retention patterns within Italian immigrant families. Presenting a model for other university museums seeking to enhance their presence on campus and in the community.

Presenters: Katherine Paulus, Student, Nazareth University

Engaging K-12 Audiences with Ancient Egyptian Collections in Registered and Public Programs

Museums must work towards building or repairing their local community relationships and becoming community-centered organizations. Research has proven that children who often visit museums become lifelong museum goers, making K-12 audiences the ideal target audience for strengthening community relationships in the long term. Institutions commonly engage adolescents through field trip programming, but this presentation investigates how registered and public programs that introduce decolonized language and narratives for local K-12 audiences create a meaningful relationship between this demographic and museums. Case studies of programs that utilize ancient Egyptian collections were conducted at the Children's Museum of Indianapolis, the Penn Museum, and the Carnegie Museum of Natural History, alongside



an analysis of current literature. Analysis of these museums has identified that the field can foster strong community relationships by offering a greater variety of registered and public programs for K-12 audiences, ensuring these programs are financially accessible, and implementing decolonization initiatives.

Presenters: Emma Gunst, Graduate Student, San Francisco State University

Homegrown: Activating Archival Collections as Teaching Tools and Advocacy for Environmental Justice

Co-curating a large-scale exhibition centered around Environmental Justice (EJ) was a 2-year long collaborative process resulting in “Homegrown: An Introduction to the Environmental Justice Movement”. Located in the large gallery space in Hornbake Library, the intention of the exhibit is to educate visitors, mainly undergraduate students, about EJ and to introduce ways in which a person could get involved with a number of groups and projects within the University of Maryland, College Park community. This poster will give an overview of the exhibition, a recounting of the process and how we chose and activated archival materials to teach about EJ and create further opportunities for community partnership, education and advocacy regarding EJ issues.

Presenters: Scotty Beland, Graduate Student Assistant, University of Maryland

Is it Worth It? Civil War Reenactments at the Local History Institution

Our poster proposal explores the institutional costs and value of hosting Civil War reenactments at local history museums. We draw on firsthand experiences through case studies at the Westmoreland Historical Society (PA) and Beverly Heritage Center (WV). We will discuss the paradox of continuing these unchanging annual reenactments as their popularity decreases and national museum attendance drops. Content will include the difficult interactions between staff and participatory amateur historians in managing events and presenting educational interpretation. These frustrations contribute to staff exhaustion and turnover with felt unrewarding outcomes to the event. While understanding the monetary value reenactments hold for the small institution and crowd drawer for Civil War history enthusiasts, we provide critique and optimism for



future revision and reinterpretation of the Civil War in museum programming. This topic connects with larger academic discussions in the public history field on the role and benefits of reenactments and their educational value.

Presenters: Lara Bromyard, Student, Duquesne University; Griffin Nordstrom, Student, Duquesne University

“Where there ain’t been no light”: American Museums and the Overlooked Potential of the Modern Black Madonna

The Madonna is among the most iconic motifs in the canon of Western art. Today, the subject’s presence in premodern painting out of Europe is of enduring interest to scholars of art, while its appearance in later works—especially those that challenge conventions of representation—is undervalued. This gap in research is particularly prevalent in analyses of art produced by African American artists during the Harlem Renaissance, when the subject was repeatedly reimagined.

Presenting a case study comprising nine works of art completed between 1925 and 1952, this poster presentation examines why the Black Madonna is often collected but seldom displayed by American art institutions.

After participating in this session, attendees will be able to grasp the significance of this overlooked iconography and identify its untapped power to decolonize and diversify collections as well as assess, reconsider, and reflect on their institutions’ own collecting practices and curatorial priorities.

Presenters: Kelly Richman-Abdou, Doctoral Candidate, The University of Birmingham; Educator, The Phillips Collection