



Graduate School of Arts and Social Sciences

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**Hvornår giverdet mening?**

**The Political (Moral) Meaning of  
Constructivist Education**

15 March 2010

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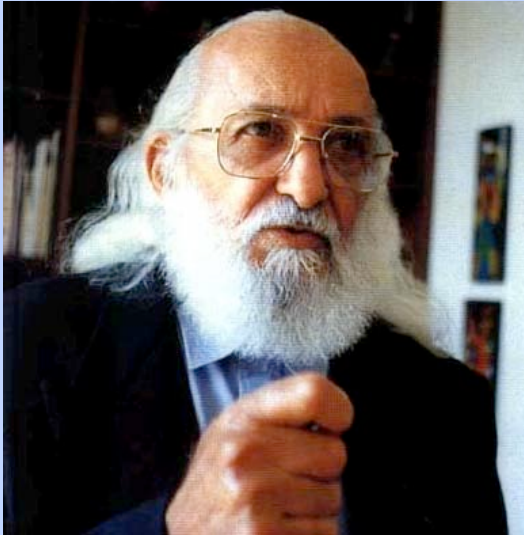
<http://www.lesley.edu/faculty/ghein/index.html>

## My argument in outline:

1. Museums are Educational Institutions.
2. Education includes theories of learning, knowledge and pedagogy. It also requires a moral/political aim. We engage in educating for a purpose. Why do we teach?
3. The appropriate education theory for museums is constructivist (based on learning and knowledge theory). **It also, it should be “progressive” in democracies, based on political theory.**
4. Progressive education has a particular moral/ political component: it aims to support democratic practice and social justice.
5. This relationship between pedagogy and educational goals was clearly described by John Dewey.
6. Examples of Museums as Democratic Educational Institutions:
  - a. Charles Willson Peale
  - b. The Barnes Foundation (not a museum!)

# Example of Constructivist, Progressive Pedagogy

## *(Why was Freire exiled?)*



Paulo Freire  
(1921-1997)



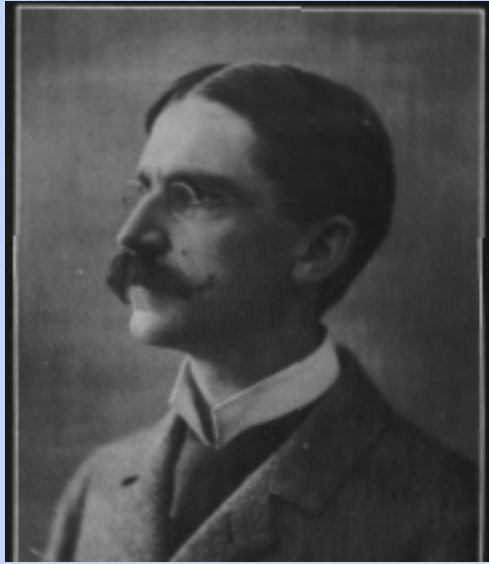
Man in the world  
and with the  
world, nature and  
culture



Man transforms  
the material of  
nature by his  
work

Known for his literacy training using simple, familiar and powerful images, and discussion about them, **in the service of social action.**

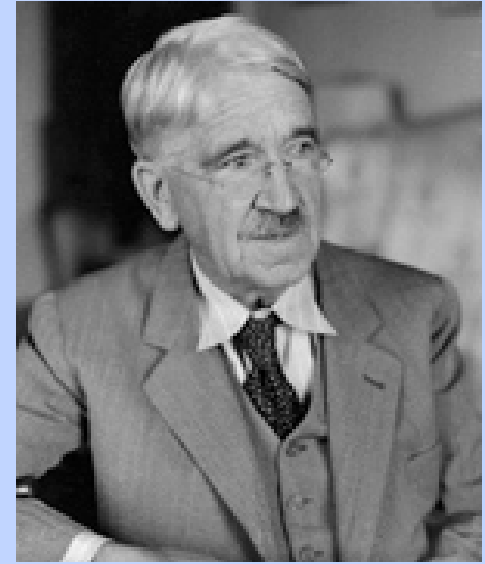
Illustrations from Freire, P. (1973) *Education for Critical Consciousness*.



in 1880's

## **John Dewey** **1859 - 1952**

Professor,  
U. of Michigan, 1884-1894;  
U. Of Chicago, 1894-1904;  
Columbia University, 1904-1939



~1950

- America's greatest philosopher
- Major works (and ideas) on every Phil subject
- Comprehensive, systematic philosophy
- Connection of life and work (Pragmatism, Instrumentalism)

## Dewey's Achievements

- Collected works in 37 volumes (8 million words)  
Major areas: Aesthetics, Epistemology, Ethics, Legal Theory, Logic, Metaphysics, Pedagogy, Political Theory, Psychology, Social Theory
- Huge correspondence
- Countless lectures and essays
- Major national committees, academic offices, etc.
- Extensive travel: Besides frequent trips to Europe, (1894-1930's); Japan (1919), China (1919-21), Turkey (1924), Mexico, (1926 and 1936); U.S.S.R (1928); South Africa (1934).
- Political activist, defended civil liberties, liberal causes, etc.

## **Dewey addressed major social-political issues of the 1880's-1930's that are relevant today.**

- Rampant capitalism, huge and increasing gaps between rich and poor.
- Attacks on immigration—anti-immigrant legislation, racism and effort to attribute all ills of society to “others.”
- Serious attacks on civil liberties (especially during and after World War I.)
- Major debates on the US role in the world.

**For European interpretations—and misinterpretations—of Dewey, see *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, Volume 19 [1], January, 2000.**

## Museums played a major role in Dewey's life as well as in his writing on education

*Correspondence includes many references to museums*

Our serious occupation is pictures, in which we are both interested. In fact I think I'm more interested in them than anything else outside of philosophy, & we have both been educated a la Barnes & our tastes agree.

**JD to George Herbert Mead, 1928.06.20 (05438)**

*Museums were an integral component of Dewey's pedagogy*

“. . . Begin work after New Years on the basis of about 25 children between the ages of 6 & 9, . . . I don't know just what to say about hours, from 9-12 in the morning, but some afternoons a week to be given to going to see the country about, visit the museums &c."

**JD to Clara Isabelle Mitchell, 11.12.1895 (00268)**

# Museum references in *The School and Society*

Dewey's model for an ideal school:

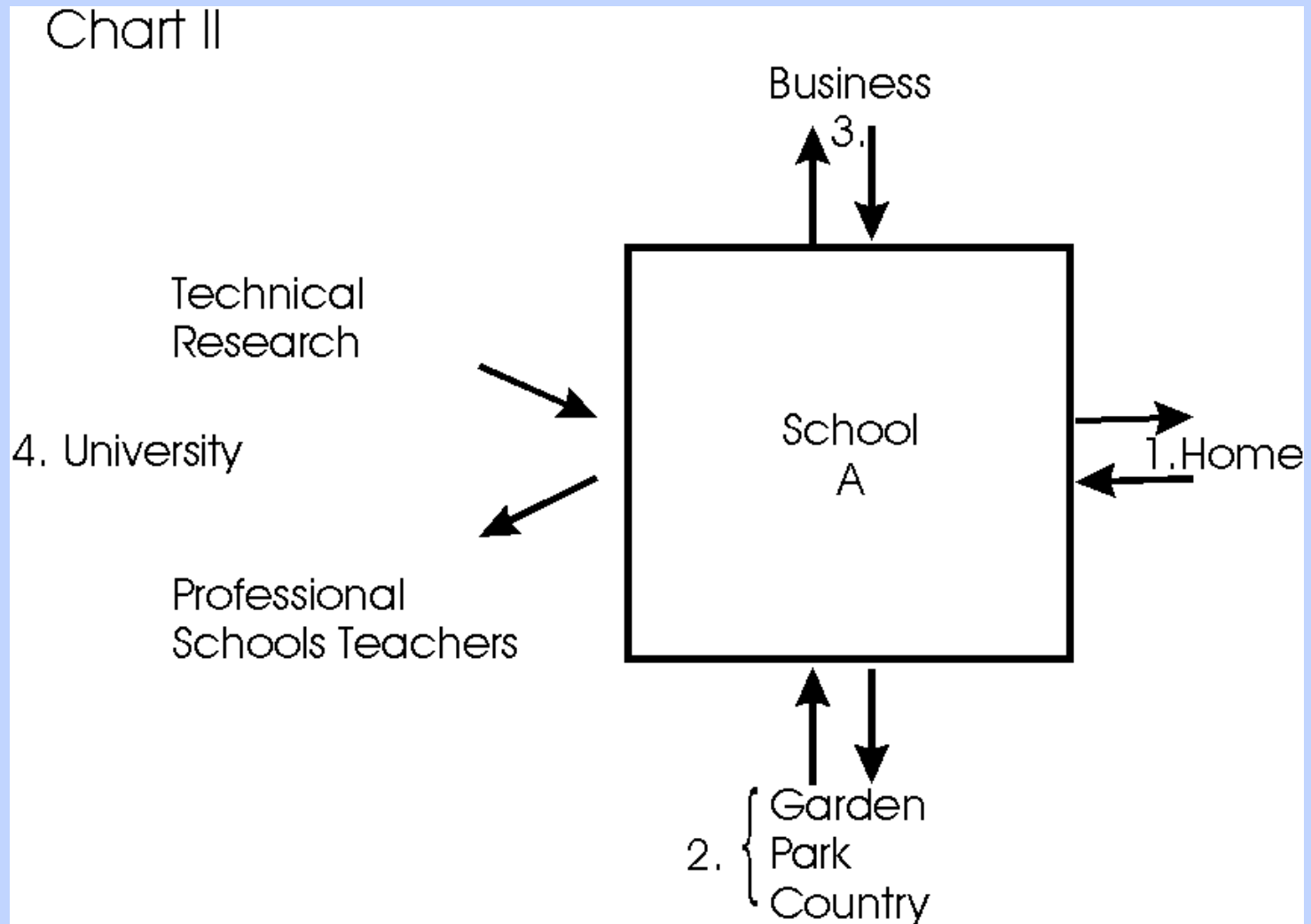


Chart II, p. 73, Dewey, J. *The School and Society* (1900) Chicago: U. of Chicago Press.



**Chart III**

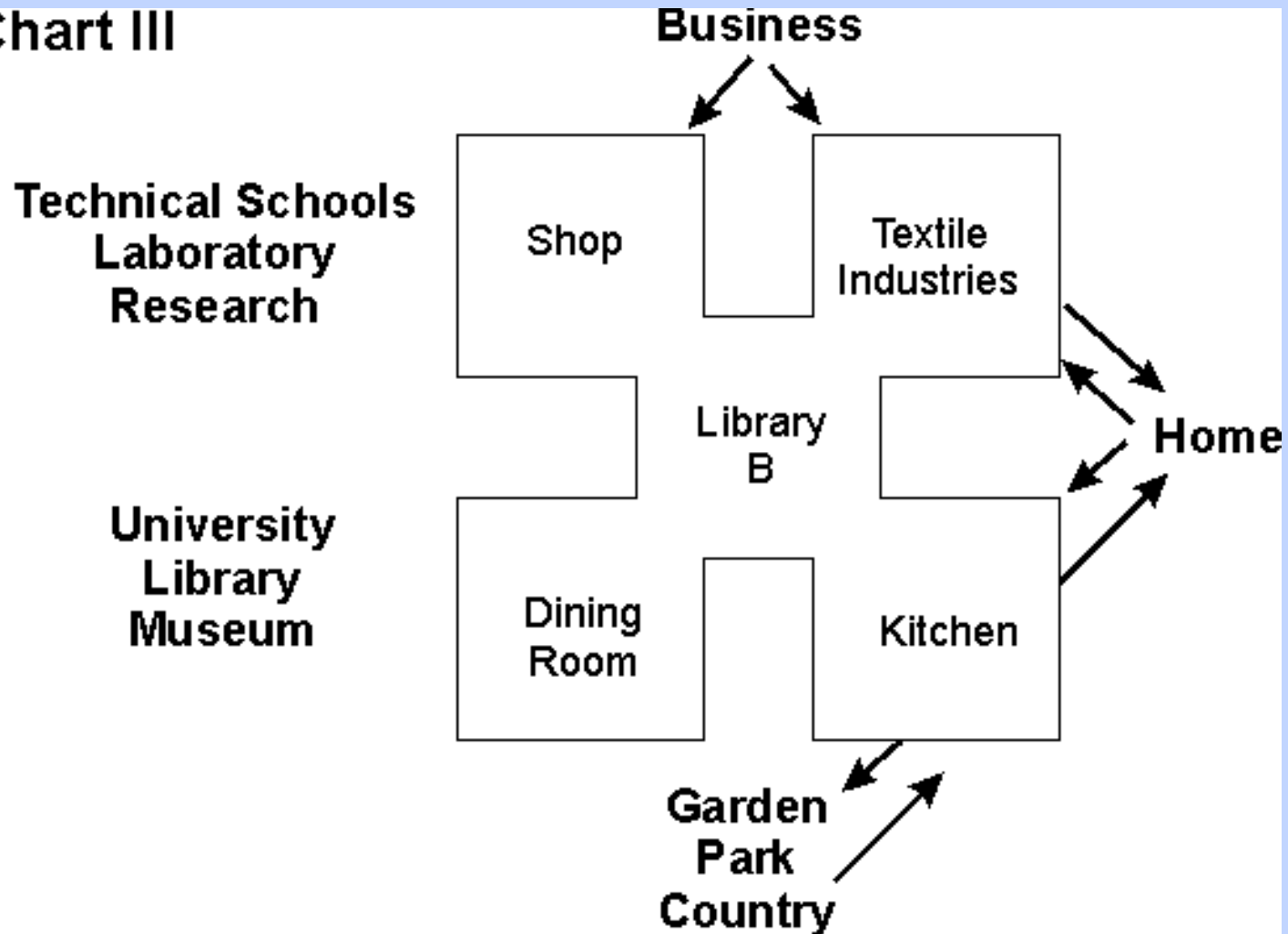


Chart III, p. 81, Dewey, J. *The School and Society* (1900) Chicago: U. of Chicago Press.

## Chart IV

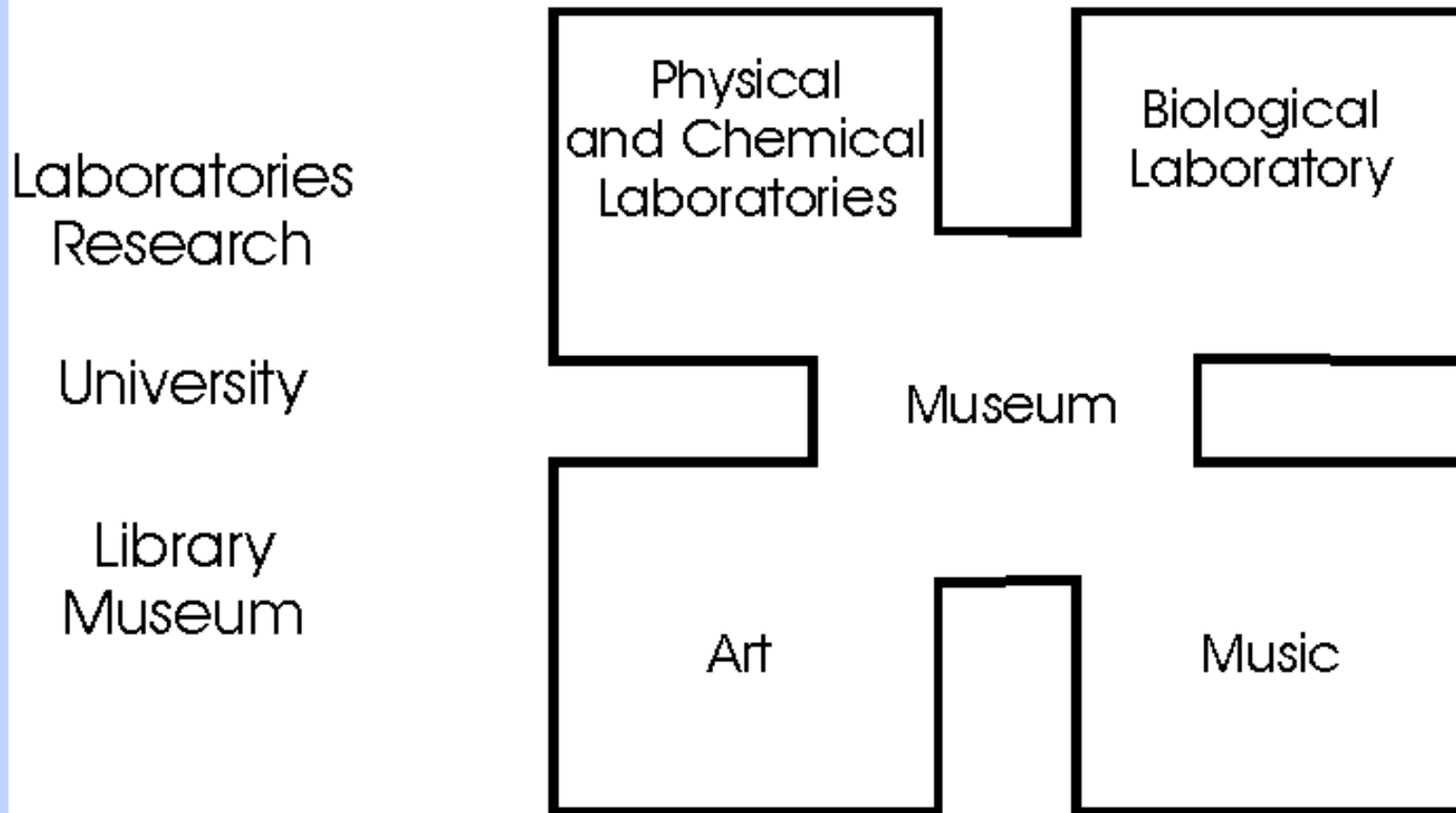
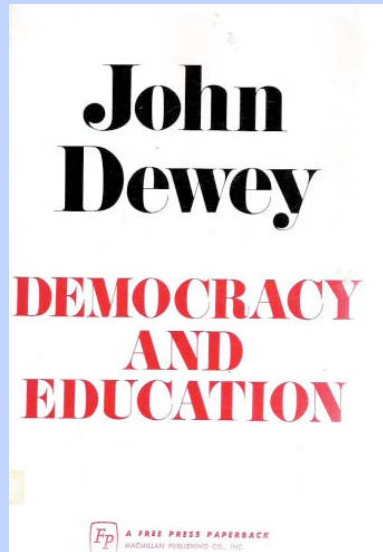


Chart IV, p. 87, Dewey, J. *The School and Society* (1900) Chicago: U. of Chicago Press.

# Applying the democratic faith to education is the theme of *Democracy and Education* (1916)



All societies educate. Education is necessary to transmit culture from one generation to the next.

Experience is educative if it increases capacity to learn.

Formal and informal education should relate to social and political life, not be separate from other experiences.

“Static” education is sufficient for a static society, but “Progressive” education is needed for a progressive society, i.e. one that strives to improve, to become more democratic; to change the status quo in the direction of decreasing gaps between rich and poor, immigrants and native born, social classes, etc.

Citizens need to be taught how to think, how to inquire.

**The term “progressive” modifies society, not only education.**

# Charles Willson Peale

Founded the first major U. S. museum in Philadelphia, 1794.

© Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts



Charles Willson Peale  
(1741-1827)

Photograph © 1990 The Detroit Institute of Arts



The largest room in Peale's Philadelphia  
museum, founded 1786

“In a country whose institutions all depend upon the virtue of the people, which in its turn is secure only as they are well informed, the promotion of knowledge is the first of duties.”

Quoted in *Useful Knowledge in the New Republic - C.W. Peale* <http://www.lewis-clark.org/content/content-channel.asp?ChannelID=376>

## Peale was a contemporary and colleague of advocates for public education for building our republican democracy



Thomas Jefferson, 1743-1826)  
(statue at UVA-Wise)

At the first session of our legislature after the Declaration of Independence, we passed a law abolishing entails. And this was followed by one abolishing the privilege of primogeniture . . . These laws drawn up by myself , laid the ax to the foot of pseudo-aristocracy. And had another which I prepared been adopted by the legislature, our work would have been complete. It was a bill for the more general diffusion of learning. This proposed to divide every county into wards of five or six miles square; . . . to establish in each ward a free school for reading, writing and common arithmetic.

Thomas Jefferson letter to John Adams, October 18, 1813. Lee, G. C. (1961), *Crusade Against Ignorance: Thomas Jefferson on Education*, New York: Teachers College Press. 160-167

## **Charles Willson Peale: Contributions to Museums for Democracy**

1. Active civic life: military, public office, American Philosophical Society officer
2. Public museum – inexpensive and accessible; museum as educational before there were many public schools
3. Multiple areas: portraits, natural history, technology (each with distinct pedagogic/moral value)
4. Naturalistic displays of animals to facilitate learning
  - a. Taxidermy
  - b. Natural groupings
5. Public (popular) Lectures
6. Efforts to establish a “national” museum—gain public support



## Albert Barnes and John Dewey



Albert Barnes and John Dewey  
© The Barnes Foundation

*A close friendship (and mutual admiration and respect) for 33 years. Barnes believed that art was transformative and could enrich and improve life, and, thus, society.*

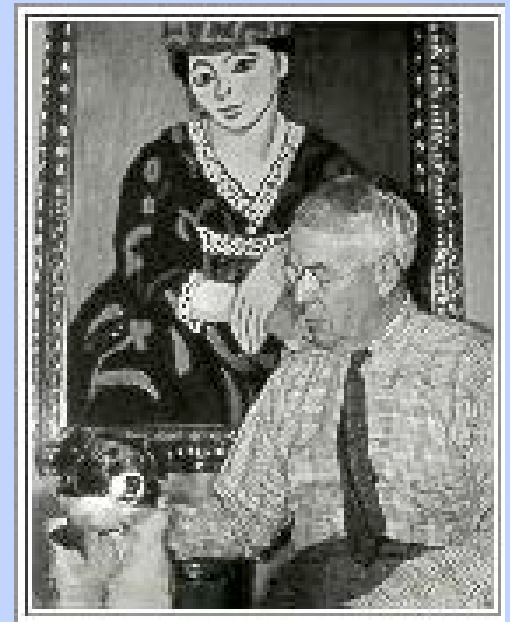
“The key to Barnes’ personality was that he believed in human perfectibility and was messianic about it. He believed in it because he was convinced he had proved its

possibility in his own life. . . Barnes never doubted that he had molded his own destiny, and that he had done so by means of ideas derived from James, Santayana and Dewey. . . **Barnes also believed that ideas should lead to action, and that if we fail to act we stultify ourselves and in time become permanently paralyzed psychologically.**

Hart, H. (1963) *Dr. Barnes of Merion: A Biography*, New York: Farrar Strauss, p. 23-4.



The Barnes Foundation, Merion, PA







The Barnes Foundation ©Yoko Yamazaki



[http://jameswagnercom/mt\\_archives/Barnes-7gallery2F.jpg](http://jameswagnercom/mt_archives/Barnes-7gallery2F.jpg)

Wall arrangement at The Barnes Foundation



© The Barnes Foundation

Barnes's combination of thought and action through aesthetic education was central to his efforts at the A. C. Barnes Co. beginning ~1908 and continuing into the 1920's.

*(According to his and others' retrospective reports.)*

My principal interest has always been in education first for myself, then for those less fortunate ones around me, then in the education of the public in general.

**ACB to Alice Dewey, letter 9/20/1920 © The Barnes Foundation Archives**

We believe that the most valuable asset of this Foundation is the 20 years' experience in the working out of a community plan which is basically educational in the modern conception of the term. By that is meant education as a means of growth, of direction, of personal development cooperated in by a group of people who work for their livelihood in a corporation engaged in the manufacture of chemicals.

**Barnes, A. C. *The New Republic*, 1923, Vol. 34, No. 432, March 14, pp. 65-67.**

The general plan of the work, as well as the selection of topics of study, has at all times been based upon the educational principles of John Dewey. **The primary purpose has been to cultivate intelligence by showing the possibilities of which every-day life is full, and to make intelligence effective by setting it to work to realize those possibilities, to make labor free, spontaneous, rich in cultural as well as material rewards.** The plan has aimed at **democracy in education**, not by watering down knowledge or by relaxing standards of intelligence, but by making the whole process a cooperative affair, free from any authoritative control.

Mullen, M. *Opportunity*, 1926 (published by the National Urban League)

# Possible activities related to democratic educational goals

- 1.Content:** Peale's museum; challenging exhibitions; sponsoring specific artists.
- 2.Exhibition Methodology:** Foster intelligent inquiry and challenge museological practice: **The Barnes** approach to art education; Fred Wilson's *Mining the Museum*; promoting some kinds of inquiry, such as the Exploratorium's A. P. E.Project.
- 3.Creating Social Justice Museums:** International Coalition of Sites of Conscience Museum of World Culture
- 4. Mission related programs:** Lower East Side Tenement Museum (New York); Stockholm Education Project.
- 5. Staff experiences, structure: Who works at the museum, How is it organized?** YouthALIVE! (ASTC) Women's Museum, Copenhagen
- 6. Other?**



# 1. Content

## *A More Perfect Union*



National Museum of American History,  
1989 (bicentennial of the US Constitution)

Was the deportation of  
Japanese- Americans from the  
West Coast of the US during  
World War II Constitutional?

<http://americanhistory.si.edu/perfectunion/experience/>

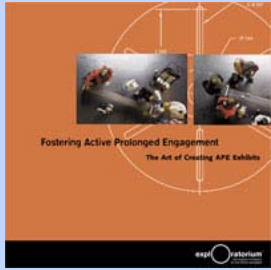
## IMAGINATION WITHOUT BORDERS FEMINIST ARTIST TOMIYAMA TAEKO AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

*The work of Japanese visual  
artist Tomiyama Taeko and . . .  
[others who] think of themselves  
as political artists and see their  
work as a protest against social  
injustice and the suffering such  
injustice causes.*



<http://imaginationwithoutborders.northwestern.edu/>

## 2. Exhibition Methodology



Humphrey, T. and J. P. Gutwill. 2005. *Fostering Active Prolonged Engagement: The Art of Creating APE Exhibits*. San Francisco, CA: The Exploratorium.

“[An] important goal of the project [is] empowering visitors to pose and pursue their own questions at the exhibits . . . APE exhibits were created to encourage visitors to explore phenomena in their own ways, answering their own questions, rather than turning to the authority in the label. “



### Metalwork 1773 -1880

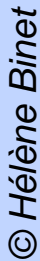
From, *Mining the Museum*, Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore, 1992

Slave shackles and fine silver objects (perhaps made by the same workmen) both in the museum's collections, are displayed together

# International Coalition of Sites of Conscience:



Interpret history through historic sites; engage in programs that stimulate dialogue on pressing social issues; promote humanitarian and democratic values as a primary function; and share opportunities for public involvement in issues raised at the site.



The Museum of World Culture wants to be an arena for discussion and reflection, where many different voices are heard, where the controversial and conflictual topics can be addressed, as well as a place where people can feel at home across borders.



## 4. Mission related auxiliary programs



Lower East Side  
Tenement Museum,  
New York City

**BE AN AGENT  
FOR CHANGE!**

### HOW TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

‘Agent for Change’ is a Tenement Museum initiative that highlights stories of ordinary individuals taking action to make a difference in their communities. We hope that these stories encourage you to find their own ways to engage in positive social change.

*Museums, Key Workers and Lifelong Learning* (Helena Friman, Stockholm and European Union, funded in several locations) (Stockholm Education Project)





## 5. Staff experiences, internal structure



### ASTC YouthALIVE!

Program had significant impact on the staff of participating museums.



The mission of the Science Museum of Minnesota's Kitty Andersen Youth Science Center is to engage youth from communities traditionally under-represented in . . .Science, Technology, Engineering, & Mathematics fields in educational and professional opportunities, thereby empowering them to pursue their



The Women's Museum in Denmark is a product of the 1980s. . . .The museum grew, based on the organizational forms of the new women's movement, including fundamental democracy and collective management, and it involved women of all ages, from all social classes, and having widely differing educational backgrounds in the daily operations of the museum.

Barnes recognized early in his life the association of thought and action and *the association of aesthetics to life experience*.

I have a suggestion in your academic line which I believe is practical and much needed: . . . You hold a seminar at Columbia on life itself and its aesthetic phases. All the material you need is in Democracy & Education, Santayana's Reason in Art; it would take William James, McDougall, Creative Intelligence in their philosophical and psychological aspects. **Art now is detached from life, whereas it is essentially life itself.** . . . we'll have some Renoirs here to show the meaning – real meaning, not bunk – of the terms, drawing, color, values, etc. . . . This is only a sketch, but you'll see what I mean. **Art, Ethics, Politics, Philosophy will dovetail with Life perfectly.** Your seminar could be made the finest thing ever attempted. I would be glad to cooperate each week in getting the plan in practical shape. **Don't say it won't work – I know it will, I've tried it for years** with people who never went to any college but a work-shop. Of course I eschewed [technical] terms and I was handicapped by the absence of what you could put into it.

ACB to JD, August 20, 1919 © Barnes Foundation Archives

## The Barnes Foundation Program as Progressive Education

1. Education is the first priority
2. Education is conceived as method, process
3. The intention is to improve life; enable students to grow, learn to “see” (and to apply to life experience)
4. Developed and carried out in the context of progressive political action.