

Careers in the Arts

Museum Education

Melissa Gonzales

Melissa Nelson is the Manager of Teaching in the Community at the Dallas Museum of Art.



What influenced you to be a museum educator?

I majored in Art History in college, but I had no idea what I wanted to do or could do with that degree. I saw a flyer for an internship at the Dallas Museum of Art my senior year, and luckily was selected for a summer internship in their Education department. I immediately fell in love with teaching young children about art and sharing my excitement and passion for art with them. At that point, I knew I wanted to pursue a career in Museum Education.

What kind of professional training did you go through to become a museum educator?

I earned an undergraduate Art History degree in college. I also volunteered as a docent for the McNay Art Museum Education department while I was in college. I learned a great deal about museum education during my summer internship in the community outreach programs for the DMA. I continue to pursue professional development through local and national education conferences, as well as reading articles related to current best practices in Museum Education.

What is your favorite part of the job?

I love when the students I teach are having as much fun as I am, whether it is looking at and talking about works of art or making art activities.

What is the most challenging part of the job?

Juggling multiple responsibilities, such as managing, training, and communicating with volunteers; writing and developing new programs; and attending meetings and doing other administrative tasks.

What advice do you have for students who are interested in becoming a museum educator?

Take a wide variety of art history classes as well as museum studies and museum education classes, if they are available to you. Volunteer and intern in museum education departments, and pursue other teaching opportunities like children's summer camps, art classes, etc. The more related experience you have, the more likely you will be selected for a paid internship or position in a museum.

Interview conducted in 2014.