



16 BEHIND THE SCENES

Sarah Alvarez facilitates an exercise in the Art Institute galleries.

Beginning this fall, the Art Institute, in partnership with Chicago's creative conference center Catalyst Ranch, launches Art-Work, a facilitated workshop designed to enhance the world of corporate training through the experience of observing art. Each Art-Work session is conducted jointly by an educator from the Art Institute and an experienced corporate facilitator and takes place at both the museum and Catalyst Ranch. The project is a recent addition to the Museum Education Department's Art and the Workplace programs, joining the Discerning Eye, a course that helps medical professionals hone their visual observation skills, and Art Express, a series of lectures on the Art Institute's collection and special exhibitions delivered to Loop-area businesses.

Art-Work capitalizes on the growing number of businesses eager to find ways to recharge their employees and help them stay productive, alert, and competitive in an ever-changing global business climate. Art-Work meets this challenge by presenting a new model of arts-based learning, one that focuses on visual observations and analysis as the basis for developing sound communication, leadership, and teamwork skills, thus fostering creativity and innovation and promoting diversity awareness. Rather than rely on art history, which participants may have little or no experience with, facilitators encourage clients to use what their eyes tell them. Participants quickly realize that what they see and interpret visually—whether in a museum or in the boardroom—may not be the same as what their colleagues experience. Conveying and balancing interpretation encourages clear communication and teamwork.

For example, if a group were seated in front of Reginald Marsh's 1932 painting of *New York City, Tattoo and Haircut*, illustrated here, they would be asked to make observations

related to a business skill or work environment. If the subject of the Art-Work session were communications, participants might be asked to interpret the figures' gestures and facial expressions. Who is the center figure in the yellow coat looking at? What can one read into his expression? Is he bored? Dismayed? A session focused on diversity might ask the group to judge whether the painting suggests stereotypes or works against them. This exercise can lead to a discussion of how members of a diverse and inclusive work group consider and negotiate their roles in the workplace.

After a morning of this sort of observation and evaluation in the Art Institute's galleries, the afternoon uses the amazingly creative and dynamic spaces of Catalyst Ranch to continue the learning process. Meeting rooms are boldly colored and filled with eclectic furnishings and props, from hats and wigs to crayons and clay. Afternoon activities may include performances, hands-on art making, or thoughtful and provocative discussions. Both the morning and the afternoon are carefully designed and crafted by the Art Institute educator and a corporate facilitator; the facilitator brings expertise in the business world and the educator brings expertise in the act of looking at art. Together they produce a powerful, enriching, and unique



Reginald Marsh. *Tattoo and Haircut*, 1932. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Earle Ludgin.



Diversity facilitator Troy Cicero engages an Art-Work group at Catalyst Ranch.

experience for corporate training. Currently, a group of 10 select facilitators have been invited to join in the Art-Work experience, each bringing a unique vision to the project.

According to Sarah Alvarez, coordinator of the museum's Art and the Workplace initiatives, Art-Work promises to live up to its goal of strengthening the museum's ties with Chicago's professional communities. Her sentiments are echoed by Bobbie Soeder, explorer-matchmaker and vice president of sales and marketing at Catalyst Ranch, who characterizes Art-Work as a stimulating, enriching, powerful, and, of course, fun means to professional development and personal fulfillment.

For more information about the Art and the Workplace programs, or Art-Work in particular, contact Sarah Alvarez (salvarez@artic.edu) or log on to www.artic.edu/artintheworkplace/html. For more information about Catalyst Ranch, log on to www.catalystranch.com.

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How many School of the Art Institute alumni are represented in the Art Institute's collection?

A number of artists who have attended, graduated from, or taught at the School of the Art Institute have work in the museum's collection. Georgia O'Keeffe, Ivan Albright, and Archibald Motley, Jr., are some of the more familiar names associated with the School. Gladys Nilsson, whose work is featured above, attended the School in the late 1950s, where she met the artists who would begin exhibiting in 1965 as a group named the Hairy Who. She married one of these artists, Jim Nutt, also an alumni of the School. As one of the prominent Chicago Imagists, Nilsson is primarily a watercolorist who paints colorfully patterned scenes dominated by odd, often comical figures. You can make an appointment to see Nilsson's watercolor or other works on paper in the Goldman Study Center by calling (312) 443-3660. For a list of notable School alumni visit www.saic.edu/about/glance/index.html#notable_alumni.

Members receive 10% off Continuing Education courses at the School. For information log on to www.saic.edu/continuing_studies/welcome/index.html.

Gladys Nilsson. *Pink Suit #2*, 1966. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Phil Shorr.