



NEWS

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ArtsConnectEd WEB SITE IS STATE-OF-THE-ART
ONLINE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE

DEVELOPED BY WALKER ART CENTER AND
MINNEAPOLIS INSTITUTE OF ARTS

PROVIDES NEW TOOLS FOR CONNECTING ART AND ARTISTS
TO THE LARGER WORLD

Minneapolis, September 1, 2009—The Walker Art Center and the Minneapolis Institute of Arts (MIA) announce the relaunch of ArtsConnectEd (artsconnected.org), their award-winning educational Web site. The new ArtsConnectEd includes a rich array of extra features, such as the ability to contribute content through comments, tags, and ratings, and it invites teachers and students to create and upload presentations, lesson plans, and curricula and classroom materials. These changes make the Web site more responsive to the needs of educators, students, higher education scholars, and an international public—while maintaining and improving the site’s access to both institutions’ collections, educational resources, and archives.

“We re-envisioned this site as an easy, flexible, and fun-to-use tool,” says Susan Rotilie, the Walker’s manager for school programs, who is a codirector of ArtsConnectEd along with the MIA’s Treden Wagoner. “We’re looking forward to seeing the creative uses that people find for it, in all academic disciplines.” She and Wagoner, plus other education and new media staff at both institutions, have been working for more than two years on the site’s overhaul with Sandbox Studios, a company that works with museums on education and technology projects.

Teachers in Minnesota are developing and field-testing activities with the new ArtsConnected. “It is much more self-directed in its design than many other online resources,” says Kevan Nitzberg, an Anoka High School teacher who is part of a “power user” group that has been using ArtsConnected since its earliest days. “That helps to give students open-ended access to researching and using the data they discover.”

At the core of the ArtsConnectEd site are two functions: **Art Finder** and **Art Collector**. With the new Art Finder function, users can explore over 100,000 art-specific resources, including works of art, texts, audio, and video. The site’s interactive resources are now searchable by culture and medium from drop-down menus, or by keyword. Simply by typing an artist’s name, the user is given auto-completed options of available artists.

The improved **Art Collector** feature makes it possible to save, customize, present, and share items—both works of art and other pieces of information on the site. Brand new features allow users to “compare and contrast” two works of art and add external images, audio, and video from sites such as Flickr, YouTube, and ArtBabble. Examples already available for use in the classroom include “Animals in Art,” a presentation that includes an ancient Chinese bronze horse from the MIA and Franz Marc’s *Die grossen blauen Pferde (The Large Blue Horses)* (1911), a masterwork of the Walker’s collection; and “Building a Story,” which helps students create a fictional tale based on works of art. One lesson investigates different kinds of brushstrokes; another offers an adventure for younger students based on the color red. Students have used the site to create MySpace-style Web sites for photographers that interest them.

“Introducing new tools for accessing and sharing information is just the beginning,” says Walker director Olga Viso. “ArtsConnectEd presents opportunities for people to be creative themselves, to have two-way conversations about art, and to contribute to an expanding network of communities both here and outside the state of Minnesota. Ultimately, it’s one of our key tools for connecting art and the visions of artists to the larger world.”

Kaywin Feldman, director of the MIA, says “Education has always been central to the mission of the MIA, which makes the ArtsConnectEd site a natural extension of this institution into the digital realm. With a collection of more than 90,000 works of art to experience, ArtsConnectEd offers visitors the opportunity to explore the world through art and culture, and reinforces the role that education can play in teaching both children and adults how to look, listen, and learn.”

When it was originally launched in 1998, ArtsConnectEd represented a milestone in a partnership between the MIA and the Walker—the creation of a unique site for education in the arts, history, and culture. The idea began in 1997, when the MIA and the Walker Art Center received joint funding from the state of Minnesota to digitize and integrate the collections and educational resources of both museums. After ArtsConnectEd launched, it went on to win a Best of the Web Educational Site from Museums and the Web, and a Gold Muse Award from the American Association of Museum’s Media and Technology Committee in the spring of 1999.

The museums’ Education Committee subsequently began to explore strategies for training teachers to use ArtsConnectEd through a train-the-trainer model, based on one lead trainer developing a highly skilled core group of teachers from around the state, who would in turn conduct teacher workshops in their regions. To date, more than 3,500 K-12 and pre-service teachers have participated in workshops focusing on the effective classroom use of ArtsConnectEd. Usage increased more than 300% between 2001 and 2008, when 2.2 million users visited the site. ArtsConnectEd’s approach and tools have become a model for similar Web sites around the country, including the Art Institute of Chicago’s Art Explorer, ARTstor, Virtual Museum of Canada, North Carolina’s Museum of Art’s ArtNC, and the Whitney Museum’s new Learning@Whitney.

A joint project of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts and the Walker Art Center, the redesign of the ArtsConnectEd site was funded by an Institute of Museum and Library Services National Leadership grant.

About the Minneapolis Institute of Arts

The Minneapolis Institute of Arts (MIA), home to one of the finest encyclopedic art collections in the country, houses more than 80,000 works of art representing 5,000 years of world history. Highlights of the permanent collection include European masterworks by Rembrandt, Poussin, and van Gogh; modern and contemporary painting and sculpture by Picasso, Matisse, Mondrian, Stella, and Close; as well as internationally significant collections of prints and drawings, decorative arts, Modernist design, photographs, textiles, and Asian, African, and Native American art. General admission is always free. Some

special exhibitions have a nominal admission fee. Museum hours: Sunday, 11 A.M.–5 P.M.; Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday, 10 A.M.–5 P.M.; Thursday, 10 A.M.–9 P.M.; Monday closed. For more information, call (612) 870-3131 or visit www.artsmia.org.

About the Walker Art Center

The internationally celebrated Walker Art Center is known for commissioning and presenting innovative contemporary art; fostering the cross-pollination of the visual, performing, and media arts; and engaging diverse audiences in the excitement of the creative process. The Walker features 11 exhibition galleries for displaying special exhibitions and a renowned collection of paintings, sculpture, videos, prints, drawings, photographs, artists' books, and installation works. Its holdings of more than 11,000 works date from the early 20th century to the present. The artists included represent visual arts, film, performing arts, and digital arts, and range from established figures such as Merce Cunningham, Jasper Johns, William Klein, Joan Mitchell, Bruce Nauman, Andy Warhol, and the Wooster Group to younger practitioners such as Matthew Barney, John Currin, Lee Bul, Improbable Theater, and Kara Walker. The renowned Minneapolis Sculpture Garden is adjacent to the museum and features more than 40 works of contemporary and modern art. Gallery hours: Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday 11 am–5 pm; Thursday 11 am–9 pm; closed Mondays. The Walker Art Center is located at 1750 Hennepin Avenue—where Hennepin meets Lyndale—one block off Highways I-94 and I-394, in Minneapolis. For public information, call 612.375.7600, or visit walkerart.org.

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