

Innovation for Arts and Cultural Education Amid a Pandemic

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Abstract

Defined by lockdowns, face masks, and video conferences, the COVID-19 global pandemic caused the world to shift to an era of physical distancing, at-home and online learning, shuttered cultural institutions, and the possibility of stifled creation for young people around the world. From their positions at the frontline of learning and cultural development, educational and intangible cultural heritage (ICH) institutions have pivoted their practices through rapid innovation. In May 2020, UNESCO identified a cohort of “good practices” in arts education; meanwhile research in the U.S. was conducted on how youth-serving cultural programs adapted to the crisis. These case studies traversed the broad spectrum of arts and cultural learning, online and at-home, across disciplines, and offered by both large and small institutions. During this same time, scholars, envisioned new theoretical frameworks for how ICH and educational leaders can adapt their practices to address the needs of young people in times of crises. It is through this lens that the author conducts an analysis, identifies trends, and names replicable tactics for ICH institutions to more deeply engage in a ‘new normal’ for high-quality education for youth. The author summarizes demonstrative anecdotes from programs aligned with the four trends and provides recommendations, using an educational futures lens, for the ICH field of practitioners to inculcate these tactics into their future plans for the cultural and creative development of youngsters.