



Katrina Stacy

Katrina Stacy: [00:00:00] It's really when you get to see these kids in out-of-school time and have these really in-depth conversations about identity, about self-esteem, about creativity and what is really important to them. Every single day is different. And I'm able to learn so much. And I feel like I'm the one who's benefiting from the program.

Annalies Corbin: [00:00:25] Welcome to Learning Unboxed, a conversation about teaching, learning and the future of work. This is Annalies Corbin, Chief Goddess of the PAST Foundation and your host. We hear frequently that the global education system is broken. In fact, we spend billions of dollars trying to fix something that's actually not broken at all, but rather irrelevant. It's obsolete. A hundred years ago, it functioned fine. So, let's talk about how we re-imagine, rethink, and redesign our educational system.

Annalies Corbin: [00:01:01] So, welcome to the next episode of Learning Unboxed. This is your host, Annalies Corbin. And as always, I am super excited about our next guest. And today, we're going to talk about the really amazing work that's happening at the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, which is in Santa Fe, New Mexico. And joining us today is the Director of Education Interpretation at the museum, the facility in Santa Fe. And I'm not sure if that means that there are multiple facilities, but we're going to get into that. So, joining us is Katrina Stacy, who has more than 20 years as museum educator and guest advocate. So, welcome, Katrina.

Katrina Stacy: [00:01:43] Thank you so much for having me.

Annalies Corbin: [00:01:45] So, I'm excited about this because, A, Santa Fe is actually one of my all-time favorite places to visit in the US because it's such an awesome town. Amazing stuff happens there. So, that's one. But the other thing is because I'm actually a Georgia O'Keeffe fan. And so, I was thrilled to discover the program and the work that you're doing there. So, for our listeners who are coming from all over the world, who may or may not know who Georgia O'Keeffe is or certainly, what the mission and vision of the museum is, why don't we start with that? Tell us about Georgia O'Keeffe.

Katrina Stacy: [00:02:23] Sure. Georgia O'Keeffe is an amazing and was an amazing human being. She's really known as the mother of American modernism, who forged her own path in the history of art history and wanted to be known as an artist. Not just a woman artist, but as an artist in her own right. And she really is known for her independent spirit. And those people who visit us here in Santa Fe are often overheard as coming here as part of their bucket list.

Katrina Stacy: [00:02:56] It really is a trek for some people to come and see the place that influenced her in the last 40 years of her life because she really was this icon in American history. She lived in New York. She was born in Sun Prairie, Wisconsin. She lived and worked in Texas. She was influenced by so many places in

America. But it really was, as I said, those last 40 years of her life that she spent here in the American Southwest that many people remember and identify her as this really independent spirit of the West that defined her in the last part of her life.

Katrina Stacy: [00:03:37] And the museum here talks about her entire life. But it's that Southwest spirit that we talk about so much and that many people identify her with. And you mentioned that the museum is one part of her life, but it is the two homes that she owned here in Abiquiu, New Mexico and at Ghost Ranch in New Mexico that some people come here to see as well. And the museum takes care of those historic sites, too.

Annalies Corbin: [00:04:06] That's quite a few endeavors. And people do come from all over the world to be sort of immersed in what they know of or what they believe they know. And I think that's part of what I really love about the work that you're doing. Folks think that they know who George O'Keefe was. And the reality is, and this story is told quite beautifully through the museum I have been through, quite beautifully the complexity of the things that she was involved in and the things that are reflected in her works over time.

Annalies Corbin: [00:04:41] So, how do you—because one of the questions that I know that folks will often sort of think about when they traditionally go to an art museum, they will walk in and they will see works from many, many, many different artists and maybe, you know, curator in particular collections. But it's not the everyday that you go to a museum that is, you know, a collection largely tied to a single individual. And so, how does the museum sort of structure or craft that experience when it's tied to a single individual versus a multitude of artists? Because that must be challenging. Or is it not?

Katrina Stacy: [00:05:19] Well, I think that is the thing that's so special about our institution, is that we're able to tell the story of art history through the lens of one woman. And her story is such an amazing one that so many people can identify with. You know, she was really a self-made person who struggled with her own identity. She knew from a very young age that she wanted to be an artist and experimented with a lot of different artistic styles.

Katrina Stacy: [00:05:51] And we're so fortunate that we have a lot of her early works in our permanent collection here. We also know a lot about who she was and what she was thinking because of the letters that she wrote so prolifically between herself and her future husband, Alfred Stieglitz. They wrote sometimes once, two, three times a day. And those letters are so telling about what she was thinking about, not only herself, but also her art and art making.

Katrina Stacy: [00:06:26] And being able to delve really deeply into those things about any person is a real treasure. So, we're able to tell that story from her very early years, all through her very final years. She lived to be 98-and-a-half years old throughout out the scope of our gallery spaces and her historic properties. So, that's a very special thing that not many museums can do to delve very deeply and tell that story in a very special way, through not only her art but also her personal effects.

Annalies Corbin: [00:07:00] And that, I think, is the beauty of sort of what you're able to do for and with the public. And so, with that as a jumping-off point because I do think that sets the context quite nicely for the way you're able to craft your programming. And so, this program is, after all, Learning Unboxed and so, I do want to spend, you know, a bunch of time kind of digging into the educational, the outreach and engagement work that the museum does because you do a fabulous job with that. So, give us the sort of 30,000-foot view of the way you think about the programming component. So, beyond just folks coming and visiting the museum, but the specialized programming that you have put in place.

Katrina Stacy: [00:07:43] Sure. You know, as an educator, I think it's an extreme privilege to work for this institution who values education so highly. We always go back to who Georgia O'Keeffe was and what she held dear in her life and want to show that to our public and share that with our public. So, we always remember that she was, in fact, an educator. In her early career, she thought she would be an art teacher and did teach as part of her life. And later in her life, she gave money once she was a very famous artist, very well-renowned.

Katrina Stacy: [00:08:22] She gave money to the Abiquiu Elementary School to build their gym, to build their classrooms. So, we know that, you know, education was important to her and giving back to the community was very important to her. So, that is something within our own education program that is very important to our own philosophy. I say that because, you know, providing educational programs to our youth free of charge is something that we hold very dear. So, all of our youth programs are, in fact, free. There isn't a charge for things such as our art and leadership program, which I'm sure we'll talk about a little bit more in depth, which is a completely scholarship program.

Katrina Stacy: [00:09:03] It's a very expensive program for the museum to run, but it's very important to our hearts, to our souls that we fund-raise and make it free of charge to our community. You know, taking a little step back, looking at what we do for the community of Santa Fe, for the community of Abiquiu, where her historic properties live, our commitment is to provide things to the local community that are free. So, that is something that we hold dear and cherish, and we have a commitment to.

Annalies Corbin: [00:09:37] What's the variety of programming then, I guess?

Katrina Stacy: [00:09:40] Yes. So, the variety is that we target certain age groups all the way from preschool to grade school to middle school. And then, from there, we make sure that we have something that is available to the general art-making public of all ages to inter-generational audiences. So, we have those touch points with our preschool audience. We go into the local classrooms, in two of our preschool classrooms that are very close to the museum here and teach just essentially general art, art making and art lingo.

Katrina Stacy: [00:10:23] And then, those classrooms do come here to the museum to see the real thing. We also have recently launched a fourth-grade initiative with the Santa Fe Public Schools. The goal is that all students in the fourth grade come to museum at some point during the school year and learn about Georgia O'Keeffe through the social studies curriculum because New Mexico history is in that grade level.

Annalies Corbin: [00:10:50] And what a great thing because they get to learn about it in class and then, actually get to go see it. And what we know, as you well know, that out-of-school or that informal opportunity to learn and become immersed in what they were learning in the classroom is so much more powerful. So, I'm thrilled to hear that there is a concerted effort to ensure that those kids get out of school and into the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum.

Katrina Stacy: [00:11:18] Yeah, it's a very important thing to us, and especially in Santa Fe, where there are so many nonprofit devoted to the arts. This is a real culture-heavy city.

Annalies Corbin: [00:11:27] Yes.

Katrina Stacy: [00:11:27] That was very important that those kids do have a touch point with our institution at some point during their school careers.

Annalies Corbin: [00:11:34] That's wonderful.

Katrina Stacy: [00:11:35] Kind of our banner program, art leadership target is middle school audience. Those kids are nominated by their art teachers to come during the summer months. And we know there's a huge drop off in what is offered to middle school students, especially during the summer months. So, we thought that was a very important school-aged group to target, especially in Santa Fe.

Annalies Corbin: [00:12:01] Yeah. Everywhere, we talk about it frequently on this program that their middle school is the sweet spot, right? If we can't capture kids' imaginations and tap into their natural curiosity and ensure that they are courageous enough to persist by middle school, then we will often lose those kiddos. So, I'm always, always, always thrilled when I find programs that are so deliberately and specifically thinking about how, you know, to encourage and then, ultimately, to curate natural curiosity and passion at that age level. So, bravo to you and to the museum for that. I want to dig into the art and leadership program because, you know, as you indicated, that's actually the thing that I'm most curious about.

Annalies Corbin: [00:12:49] And really, one of the things that we love to do on this program is, you know, it's case studies of positive disruptions. And folks are looking to learn from you. So, even if they're not in Santa Fe and they can't come to the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, you know, teachers in classrooms or other informal programs have the opportunity to learn from what you're doing and to be able to adapt and modify components of what they hear maybe today into changing their practice or their experience for their own students. So, I really want to get into the nuts and bolts of the art and leadership program. What does it do? Who's it for? We already touched on, but how does it work?

Katrina Stacy: [00:13:24] Great. I love to talk about art and leadership because it is so impactful for the children who come through it. And this is a program that is now going into its 22nd year with the institution.

Annalies Corbin: [00:13:39] Wow.

Katrina Stacy: [00:13:39] And the institution itself is 22 years old. So, it's a program that has grown and developed along with the founding of the museum itself. So, it has been really part of our lifeblood, you know, as long as the museum has been in existence. You know, it's something that has grown and evolved. But at its core, as we talked about, it lives to serve children who are in middle school in Santa Fe. And the goal really is to target those kids who are passionate about art in some way.

Katrina Stacy: [00:14:15] But as we know, those services just do not exist unless there is an institution who is out there to really target help for them. There are sports in the summer. There are often other targeted camps. But, you know, where did those art-minded children go, who really, you know, want to focus on art making, creative art making when they're in their middle school years? So, this program was developed to really focus on those kids who have a career trajectory or maybe not even necessarily want to go to a career in the arts, but show leadership potential within the fine arts.

Annalies Corbin: [00:14:57] And so, the kids are nominated by an art teacher and then, what?

Katrina Stacy: [00:15:03] So, the program very logistically starts within the classroom setting, within the schools or with a leader in the community who sees a child who really would benefit within the program during the summer months. And it is not a program that a child's parents can sign them up for. They do need to be nominated. From there, they are in. There's nothing more that a parent needs to do or pay for that student to be in the program.

Katrina Stacy: [00:15:34] So, as long as the parent is able to get them here this summer, we will accept that child into the program. So, every school is able to nominate three boys and three girls into the program and we will accept them during the summer months. No more questions asked. It's not need-based, but we do ask those teachers if they are able to nominate a student who has a need within their life for this program to give them preference to come to this program.

Annalies Corbin: [00:16:04] Sure.

Katrina Stacy: [00:16:05] The program is structured such that students are nominated in their either fifth or sixth grade and then, are able to return to the program for three consecutive years before they go to high school. So, really throughout their whole middle school.

Annalies Corbin: [00:16:21] That is absolutely fabulous. And do the majority of the kids not to derail? But I do want to touch on that because that's something that I think in many summer programs that are intended to give and scaffold student experience, and no matter if it's art, if it's, you know, radio-controlled cars, if it's astrophysics, it doesn't make any difference, but, you know, the notion that you give these kids the opportunity to have an ongoing learning experience that's immersive and the thing that they aspire to or that they're going to ultimately love. That's incredibly powerful. So, I assume that the return or the retention rate is pretty darn high.

Katrina Stacy: [00:17:08] Yes. And it's something that we're studying year-after-year to see if a student does not return, what is the reason why? We found that sometimes it's as simple as parent transportation problem.

Annalies Corbin: [00:17:22] Yeah.

Katrina Stacy: [00:17:22] And we're hoping to find a solution to that. It's not an easy solution, however.

Annalies Corbin: [00:17:27] No. Transportation in the summer, you know, pick the city, pick the state, pick the country, I can't tell you, I hear that over and over again.

Katrina Stacy: [00:17:36] Yeah.

Annalies Corbin: [00:17:36] Transportation is a real issue. And I've heard some incredibly creative solutions. So, if you want, offline, shoot me an email and hear a few of the more creative ones I've heard that might be helpful. But that a problem.

Katrina Stacy: [00:17:50] Yeah, I'd love to hear some creative solutions from the folks who listen to this program, as well.

Annalies Corbin: [00:17:55] Yeah.

Katrina Stacy: [00:17:55] I'm all ears. You know, we've tried to work through public transportation solutions, carpool solutions and so on. I'm sure it will continue to be an issue.

Annalies Corbin: [00:18:06] So, the students come and they get to spend those three years gaining exposure and experience, and I would assume some confidence along the way. So, talk through this a little bit about sort of the day-to-day experience, I guess, if you will, within the program itself. What are these kiddos learning? What are they experiencing or exposed to?

Katrina Stacy: [00:18:24] Sure. Really, the goal of the program is to give them opportunities to gain independent thinking skills, you know, hands-on skill-building, problem-solving, things that will help them develop their artistic talents. And since it is gender-based, the girls' program is separate from the boys' program. So, they're able to also be with like-minded peers within their own gender identification. We're also giving them ways to discuss things that might develop within their own gender identification as well.

Annalies Corbin: [00:19:04] So, give us an example of that. So, what kind of—I mean, I assume that over the years, you've observed a lot of these conversations. So, is there one that sticks out?

Katrina Stacy: [00:19:16] Sure. So, body issues within the boys' program developing non-violent behavior in relationship to how they react to bullying, developing better role models for themselves, both in school and out of school.

Annalies Corbin: [00:19:37] So, they're talking about a lot of things that, quite frankly, don't necessarily have anything to do with art or artistic leanings, but are about growing up and about society and culture.

Katrina Stacy: [00:19:49] That's correct. And how you express that often comes out in what they do within the creative arts. But it is creating that kind of safe space year-after-year in becoming a better leader and peer leader within the program.

Annalies Corbin: [00:20:07] I love that. It's wonderful. Keep going and give us more.

Katrina Stacy: [00:20:11] Sure thing. So, year one is one-week program. And year two, they are allowed to come for two weeks. So, it's a little bit more in-depth as the children get a little bit older. The program also, staffing-wise, we hire now five college interns per program. The program itself is a model for a museum education as well. We hire students from around the country to come to us, not only because Georgia O'Keeffe Museum is, you know, a well-known national name, but because we hope to be a center for museum education within this program as well. So, the students themselves have these wonderful role models that they can look up to as peer teaching artist within the program. So, the students are learning from one another.

Annalies Corbin: [00:21:07] That's fabulous. We love near-peer mentoring. We know how incredibly powerful it is. And kids will get so much more out of somebody closer to their age than they will from, in my case, those of us that are older trying to provide wisdom, right?

Katrina Stacy: [00:21:21] Right.

Annalies Corbin: [00:21:22] How many kiddos are we talking about each summer?

Katrina Stacy: [00:21:27] Sure. So, over the course of the summer, we generally have about 180 kids for one reason or another. Even though equal number of students are nominated to the boys' program and girls' program, we tend to get about 100 girls and about 80 boys who actually attend.

Annalies Corbin: [00:21:48] And then, what are the other sort of components or the pieces? Is there a teacher or a teacher of education, professional development opportunity that also comes out of the things that you've learned or is this strictly tied to student-and-student experience?

Katrina Stacy: [00:22:04] Yeah. There's a wonderful curriculum that is added to and built upon every single year. So, we have a wonderful program manual that has been built upon by the staff who lead the program. We hire a site coordinator for each site. And then, those site coordinators then hire within our own community,

visiting, teaching artists. So, those teaching artists are very varied in the types of materials that they bring to the students.

Katrina Stacy: [00:22:37] So, in addition to having these wonderful college interns that they can learn from, we also have professional artists in the field that can come and teach a variety of media to the kids. So, for example, we had some fiber artist, glass artist, everything from music, movement, ink, print making, watercolor and so on that the students may or may not have experienced in the classroom setting before.

Annalies Corbin: [00:23:06] Sure, sure. And they get the benefit of getting to meet some pretty amazing people who work in that space along the way, as well. And that's immensely valuable to these kids.

Katrina Stacy: [00:23:17] Correct.

Annalies Corbin: [00:23:18] So, this program has been running 20, 21 years, I think, you said at the beginning of the program. And so, along about that journey, I would assume that you and others who've been involved in the program over the years have not only, you know, enjoyed the opportunity to teach these kiddos, but I bet you've learned from the kids as well. Are there, you know, particular instances or experiences that you've shared with these kids that stands out to you?

Katrina Stacy: [00:23:52] What a great question. You know, I am a parent to a middle schooler, and I feel like I learned from him all the time about what is really going on in the schools and what is really important to kids who are 11, 12, 13 years old. But it's really when you get to see these kids in out-of-school time and have these really in-depth conversations about identity, about self-esteem, about creativity and what is really important to them, every single day is different.

Katrina Stacy: [00:23:52] And when they're able to sit down and choose for themselves what is important to them and what they want to do in this creative sphere, I'm able to learn so much. And I feel like I'm the one who's benefiting from the program. And I'm sure every single staff person who comes into contact with these kids feels exactly the same way that they're the ones who are benefiting. You know, now that the program, like we discussed, is 21 years old, now going into this 22nd year, many of the kids who started out in the program are now out there in their own professional careers.

Katrina Stacy: [00:23:52] It may not be in art. In many cases, they are not in art careers, but they have learned so much having gone from this program. And we hear this all the time, that they have benefited from this atmosphere of openness and learning from their peers and forming friendships. So, it generally is just such a mutually beneficial experience to go in depth in such an open atmosphere that we both benefit so much.

Annalies Corbin: [00:25:37] Yeah. And you actually preempted my next question, I was going to ask you about, you know, the former student and the experiences or the things that you hear from them. You know, often, there are these amazing programs and lots of times, programs, they don't know what happens to the students afterward. So, for starters, I'm thrilled to hear that you have some insights into sort of the experiences of students who've participated in the program.

Annalies Corbin: [00:26:05] Are there any that sort of stand out in your mind? Because I do think that one of the important things that you just said is that, you know, kids benefit from this program in so many ways, whether they end up going into the world of art or arts or not. And oftentimes, what I hear, especially from parents, is, "Well, you know, my kid shouldn't go to that program because that's not what my kid is interested in."

Annalies Corbin: [00:26:31] And the reality is that immersing kids in these type of safe collaborative environments gives them the opportunity to gain so many skills that may have nothing whatsoever, quite frankly, to do with the topic at hand and everything to do with the experience of being immersed in something else and an expectation that you participate, and you participate fully, and that you're a contributor to whatever the thing happens to be. And I would assume, you know, that you have students who've gone on to art careers or to other careers that come back and share with you the meaningful impact beyond just the moment, but it truly actually helps them along the way.

Katrina Stacy: [00:27:13] That's absolutely right. And we absolutely have heard from former students or participants in the program who have gone on to very meaningful careers. Some, we might not have heard from again, but that's all right.

Annalies Corbin: [00:27:27] Yeah.

Katrina Stacy: [00:27:28] And others who have come back to teach for us in the program as teaching artists or essentially college interns and then, like coordinators. So, it's wonderful that we've had these boomerang experiences of these kids who come back to us again. And the program has meant so much to them that they want to teach the next generation.

Annalies Corbin: [00:27:47] I love that so much. That is so truly near and dear to my heart. We have the exact same experience at the PAST Innovation Lab. We have any number of students who go through programs and then, they come back to volunteer and then, they graduate and they go to college and they come back and they teach one of the summer programs or they turn up again as an intern in some capacity. In fact, the young woman that you've been communicating and corresponding with to help set the program up, Fatima. So, Fatima came to us as a freshman in high school in engineering. And I bet Fatima has gone through or been part of just about every program that we ran during the time that she was in school with us. And now, she's off in college and we are her college job.

Katrina Stacy: [00:28:40] That's wonderful.

Annalies Corbin: [00:28:41] But you do, exactly. You love that. And just the chance—certainly for me, the chance to watch these young folks mature. You know, they are on the way into the fully-formed human that they are going to be one day. And it's a very special thing to me that we are gifted with the opportunity to be part of their journeys.

Katrina Stacy: [00:29:01] That's a great way of putting it.

Annalies Corbin: [00:29:03] So, I want to talk a little bit as we sort of get ready to wrap about some of the aha moments, because I have no doubt that in 21 years of doing this work and this program, that you and the museum have been surprised along the way. And so, I always love to share with our listeners some those ahas or those things you just didn't expect, but have proven to be very, very meaningful either in the moment or in the way you thought about iterating the program as you moved forward.

Katrina Stacy: [00:29:35] Oh, great.

Annalies Corbin: [00:29:36] I didn't mean to put you on the spot here.

Katrina Stacy: [00:29:40] Sure. I'm not originally from New Mexico, but I think every day I'm in the galleries, I learn something more about how different people view O'Keefe's work differently. And we had a great school

visit where some young, I want to say, second or third graders were viewing one of O'Keefe's New York City scenes. And one of our gallery educators was asking the kids, you know, "What do you see in this work?" And this was essentially these skyscrapers. There was a night scene and it's fairly abstract. But unless you've been to New York City or had experience with skyscrapers, you might not immediately recognize what you're looking at. And these children, having grown up in New Mexico, they couldn't see the skyscrapers. All they saw was a canyon.

Annalies Corbin: [00:30:38] Interesting. Fascinating.

Katrina Stacy: [00:30:38] And, you know, they saw the night sky, they saw the canyon walls, but didn't see the skyscrapers. And I thought that was so wonderful and beautiful. And it just tied so readily into the next stage in O'Keefe's life, where she actually did move to New Mexico, where she photographed and painted and traveled readily through these wonderful, beautiful New Mexico canyons all the time. And that's what they saw and that's what they knew. So, really sewed those two pieces of her life together and I thought was just so beautiful.

Annalies Corbin: [00:31:16] That is absolutely awesome. I mean, context is everything, right?

Katrina Stacy: [00:31:22] Yeah. Yeah

Annalies Corbin: [00:31:23] Yeah. What a—oh, thank you so much for sharing that with us. That's just a fabulous thing to step back and pause for a moment and think about that from that group of kids' perspective and the place they've been in the world and what they're able to see or not. That's just wonderful. I always love to end our program with sort of that high lob. So, for folks that are contemplating the kind of work that's happening at the Georgia O'Keeffe or reaching out to their own local museums of any descriptions and really wanting to know how can we take the lessons that are happening in your work and apply them either into my own classroom, into my own after-school or informal programs, my own thinking about summer experiences for students, what are some of the, you know, key things that you think that people should know as they endeavor on a journey to create or be part of programming for kids that are coming out of the informal museum world?

Katrina Stacy: [00:32:25] Wow. Well, I'd say you should definitely check out the okeeffemuseum.org website. We have some great resources for teachers and for informal learning. If you want to check out more about Georgia O'Keeffe, she's a great model for anyone who, you know, is someone who was self-taught and also, who had some formal education as well. So, she was someone who really just knew in her heart she wanted to express herself and wanted to follow her own path. I think that's why she resonates so well with people who really know a lot about art history and people who just love the way her paintings look. I guess I should leave it at that.

Annalies Corbin: [00:33:17] Well, we certainly thank you for spending time with us today. And when the episode goes live on the Learning Unboxed website, we will have the links to the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum and some additional resources that Katrina suggested to us. And if you find yourself in Santa Fe, I highly recommend you make a stop at the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, spend time in that community as a whole. As Katrina said, it is a beautifully wonderful, artsy town and it is a great place to spend time. So, I encourage folks to make a visit there. And Katrina, thank you so much for the work that you do and for sharing a little bit of time with us today.

Katrina Stacy: [00:34:03] Great. Thank you so much for having us.

Annalies Corbin: [00:34:06] Thank you for joining us for Learning Unboxed, a conversation about teaching, learning and the future of work. I want to thank my guest and encourage you all to be part of the conversation. Meet me on social media at Annalies Corbin. And join me next time as we stand up, step back, and lean in to re-imagine education.