

Coney Island: Visions of an American Dreamland

Exhibition Inspired Program Ideas

Here are several program ideas for varied audiences that relate to the *Coney Island: Visions of an American Dreamland* exhibition that can be adapted to your local audience and institution's needs. Please contact our constituent services team to be put in touch with other venues hosting this show at 816-421-1388 or MoreArt@maaa.org to find out what other organizations are planning. Please consider sharing your own programming ideas and venue's programming success stories with other sites taking this exhibition by posting information on our the NEH On the Road facebook page www.facebook.com/nehontheroad. Email Beth at beth@maaa.org images and press related to your exhibition and programs.

Illustrated Talk: History of the Carousel

Use the carousel horse exhibition content as a topic for an illustrated talk about the history of the carousel, carousel horse carving and fabrication, and/or relate it specifically to Coney Island carvers in comparison to carousel factories elsewhere in the United States. Connect to regional carousel museums, refurbished carousels, or other carousel resources in your region.

Illustrated Talk: History of Coney Island

Invite a Coney Island historian and/or Coney Island exhibition curator Robin Jaffee Frank to present an illustrated lecture about the history of Coney Island and how it has been depicted through various artists' works over time.

Lawrence Ferlinghetti: Poems about Place

Use select poems written by Lawrence Ferlinghetti about Coney Island and Brooklyn as a starting point for a discussion about memory and poetic description of place. Engage a local or regional poet to host a reading of Ferlinghetti's work and compare/contrast it to other poems that evoke a similar experience. Consider pairing the reading and examination of Ferlinghetti's work with a poetry- writing workshop.

Family Day: Swimming at the Seashore

Host an all-ages event that provides a virtual escape to the seashore (no matter what time of year it is). Have participants pose for photos at a cut-out photo station featuring two-dimensional bodies wearing men's and women's vintage bathing costumes. Engage visitors in creating a three-dimensional "play-scape" diorama image of themselves at the seashore using paper, scissors, and crayons or colored pencils. Engage visitors in looking for beach-related items in the exhibition, invite musical performers to create atmosphere, and consider other creative play activities (sand castle contest outdoors in a parking lot sandbox, etc.) Relate the Coney boardwalk and beach area to a regional body of water and beach-like experience.

Film Series

Use the bibliography in this programming guide to craft a film series related to Coney Island content. Consider collaborating with Joshua Glick (a suggested speaker in this guide) and screening his short film *This Side of Dreamland* to discuss the life of Marie Roberts (together with artist Marie Roberts, also featured as a speaker in this guide) to reflect on Coney Island past and present. Reach out to Deborah Gaudet, Curator of Film and Theatre at the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art for

additional assistance in crafting a film series.

Sideshows: A Discussion of Difference, Human Exhibition, and Identity

Invite Circus Amok founder and Pratt Institute faculty member Jennifer Miller to engage in a conversation with author Rachel Adams about American culture, featured performers, and aspects of sideshow life related to carnival and amusement park life and history.

The Amusement Park in American Culture: Past and Present

Consider engaging Donna Braden, author of *Leisure and Entertainment in America*, to present a lecture about the history and rise of amusement parks and similar forms of entertainment in the United States in the early 20th century. Compare and contrast local and regional amusement parks to Coney Island.

Race and Identity at Coney Island

Coney Island was a melting pot of ethnicity, race, and socioeconomic status. Invite William Frank Mitchell, Executive Director of The Amistad Center for Visual Art & Culture at the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art to engage in conversation with Coney Island exhibition curator Robin Jaffee Frank to discuss how Coney Island transcended social boundaries.

Banner Painting Workshop: Put Yourself in the Sideshow

Invite Coney Island artist Marie Roberts to discuss her work and life at Coney Island, then engage teen participants in a banner painting activity using themselves (and aspects of their personality, strengths, or weaknesses) as subject for a sideshow. Each workshop participant will craft a banner emphasizing his or her special ability as an imaginary sideshow attraction.

Illustrated Talk: Photographing Coney Island

Host a lecture that explores various photographers' works that feature Coney Island as subject. Consider inviting New York artist Harvey Stein to share images from his publication *Coney Island 40 Years* and discuss his work. Engage Erin Monroe, the Robert H. Schutz Jr. Assistant Curator of American Painting and Sculpture at the Wadsworth Atheneum to speak about various photographers' depictions of Coney Island and how these images have changed over time.

Teacher Workshop

Host an afterschool or in-service educator event specifically for area K-12 teachers at your museum to relate aspects of content featured in the exhibition—Coney Island history and development, technology and tourism, patterns of leisure in America, etc. Allow time for teachers to explore the exhibition on their own, then discuss teachable topics related to art, history, geography, literature, and other aspects of American popular culture. Invite guest speakers (as desired), and consider collaborating with regional amusement parks or American studies departments at your local or regional university. Make use of the lesson ideas included in this programming guide.

Roller Coaster History and Mechanics

Consider hosting a program about the history of roller coasters in America and iconic and historic roller coasters in your region or community to compare with Coney Island. Engage the America Coaster Enthusiasts non-profit to locate a suitable historian and speaker who can present an interesting program about design and mechanical aspects of various American roller coasters.

Potential Program Speakers & Presenters

The following individuals and organizations have been contacted on your behalf by Mid-America Arts Alliance for this NEH on the Road exhibition and they have expressed an interest in receiving invitations from your organization to present a strong program inspired by *Coney Island: Visions of an American Dreamland*. Please discuss speaker honoraria and travel fees, your program's goal, the intended audience, and the timeframe for the program with each individual for full consideration of your invitation.

American Coaster Enthusiasts
P.O. Box 540261
Grand Prairie, TX 75054-0261
469-278-6223
<http://www.aceonline.org/ExecComm/>

TOPIC(S): Contact ACE to obtain the best speaker in your region who can address roller coaster history of a park near your community and/or Coney Island.

ACE is the world's largest ride enthusiast organization, and its members are the most educated, dedicated, and passionate amusement park guests. ACE's activities are extensive and include award-winning publications, action-packed events, and exhaustive preservation efforts. ACE is highly visible in the mainstream media. Local television stations and newspapers often consider ACE events in their area to be major news items. ACE officials are frequently on hand for the debut of major new roller coasters at amusement and theme parks. In addition, numerous shows made for cable networks such as The Discovery Channel have prominently featured ACE. Ultimately, ACE's mission is to promote and enjoy roller coasters

everywhere, regardless of type or size.

Rachel Adams
Professor of English and Comparative Literature
Columbia University
405 Philosophy Hall
1150 Amsterdam Ave.
New York, NY 10027
212-854-3831
rea15@columbia.edu

TOPIC(S): Author of *Sideshow U.S.A.: Freaks and the American Cultural Imagination*.

*Rachel Adams is the director of "The Future of Disability Studies Project," and also holds an appointment in the American Studies Program at Columbia University. Her most recent book is *Raising Henry: A Memoir of Motherhood, Disability, and Discovery*, published by Yale University Press in 2013. She is also the author of *Continental Divides: Remapping the Cultures of North America* (University of Chicago Press, 2009) and *Sideshow U.S.A.: Freaks and the American Cultural Imagination* (University of Chicago Press, 2001). She is co-editor (with David Savran) of *The Masculinity Studies Reader* (Blackwell Press, 2001) and (with Sarah Casteel) a special issue of *Comparative American Literature* on "Canada and the Americas." She is editor of a critical edition of *Kate Chopin's The Awakening* (Fine Publications, 2002). Her articles have appeared in journals such as *American Literature*, *American Literary History*, *American Quarterly*, *Minnesota Review*, *Camera Obscura*, *GLQ*, *Signs*, *Yale Journal of Criticism* and *Twentieth-Century Literature*. She has also written for *The New York Times*, *Salon*, *the Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Gastronomica*, and *the Times of London* and blogs for *The**

Huffington Post. *In 2010, she was the recipient of the Lenfest Distinguished Columbia Faculty Award.*

Donna Braden
Curator of Public Life
Henry Ford Museum & Greenfield Village
20900 Oakwood Blvd.
Dearborn, MI 48124
313-982-5029
research.center@thehenryford.org

TOPIC(S): Leisure and entertainment in America, history of amusement parks and world's fairs.

Donna's curatorial area includes everything from vacations and world's fairs to civil rights and social activism to advertising and retail. Her work on numerous museum exhibitions, programs, Village buildings, and writings over more than three decades has led her down many different paths into the Museum's rich collections, which she refers to as a "bottomless pit of wonderfulness." She received her M.A. in Early American Culture from the University of Delaware. Her articles on American culture have appeared in various periodicals. She is the author of Leisure and Entertainment in America.

Daze (Chris Ellis)
New York City
<http://www.dazeworld.com/>
dazeworld@earthlink.net

TOPIC(S): Any lecture, presentation, or symposium related to being a contemporary artist, Coney Island as subject matter, working as an artist in New York City.

Chris Daze Ellis began his prolific career painting the gritty New York subways in the mid 70's while attending the High School of Art & Design. He is one of the few artists from that period to make the successful transition from the subways to the studio. His first group show was the "Beyond Words" show held at the Mudd club in New York in 1981. Showing alongside artists such as Jean Michel Basquiat and Keith Haring, Daze sold his first work, an impromptu collaboration with Basquiat, from this show. His first solo show was held a year later in 1982 at Fashion Moda, a gallery in the Bronx. Since then he has had countless solo shows in such cities as Monte Carlo, Hong Kong, Paris, New York, Beijing, Chicago, and Singapore. His work has also been included in numerous group shows and museum surveys internationally. Alongside these museum and gallery exhibitions Daze has also completed many public art projects over the years. Some of them include a mural for the Star ferry terminal in Hong Kong, lectures at Hofstra University and the Bronx Museum, the design of an entire train station in Hannover, Germany alongside fellow artists Lee Quinones and Crash, youth workshops during the Hutuz Festival in Rio de Janeiro, and a mural for the VivoCity shopping center in Singapore. Daze's paintings have found themselves in the private collections of Madonna, and Eric Clapton among others. His work can be found in the permanent collections of such museums as The Museum of Modern Art in New York, The Brooklyn Museum, The Museum of the City of New York, The Groninger Museum in the Netherlands and The Ludwig Museum in Aachen, Germany. Daze continues to live and work in New York City.

Charles Denson
Coney Island History Project
c/o Deno's Wonder Wheel Park
3059 West 12th Street
Brooklyn, NY 11224
crdenson@earthlink.net
<http://www.coneyislandhistory.org/>

TOPIC(S): Please consult Charles about any historical topic related to Coney Island History. The Coney Island History Project also has an extensive archive of images etc.

Coney Island History Project Executive director Charles Denson is a Coney Island native, a noted historian, and the author of the award-winning book Coney Island: Lost and Found.

Robin Jaffee Frank
***Coney Island: Visions of an American Dreamland* exhibition**
curator
former Chief Curator, Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, CT
158 Easton Road
Westport, CT 06880
213-247-1384
robinfrank1178@gmail.com

TOPIC(S): Exhibition overview of Coney Island as a prism through which to view the American experience (*America's Playground: Visions of Wonder and Menace, Dreams and Nightmares*); Coney Island as an enduring subject for artists, musicians, writers and filmmakers; artists' visions of Coney Island as a site to imagine the future and later recall the past, conveying changing ideas about leisure, and exploring the mixing of people of different races, ethnicities, and classes, transcending social boundaries.

Robin has organized exhibitions, lectured, and published widely on American art and culture from the colonial to contemporary periods. As chief curator at the Wadsworth Atheneum, she organized the original exhibition Coney Island: Visions of an American Dreamland, 1861–2008; she is the lead author and editor of the accompanying award-winning book. It has been her joy to engage diverse audiences with the show’s art and ideas by speaking at places across the nation—among them the Brooklyn Museum, McNay Art Museum in San Antonio, Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, New York Public Library, San Diego Museum of Art, and Yale University. Before coming to the Wadsworth Atheneum, Robin was a curator at the Yale University Art Gallery, where she co-organized Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness: American Art from the Yale University Art Gallery. Among her many other exhibitions and publications are Love and Loss: American Portrait and Mourning Miniatures and Charles Demuth Poster Portraits: 1923–1929. She received a Ph.D. from Yale University in the History of Art.

Deborah Gaudet

Curator of Film and Theater

Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art

600 Main Street

Hartford, CT 06103

860-838-4027

Debbie.gaudet@wadsworthatheneum.org

TOPIC(S): Deborah can curate a film series related to Coney Island and will present a lecture.

Deborah A. Gaudet has been on staff of the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art since 1989. In 2004, Gaudet was named as the first Curator of Film and Theater in the Museum’s history. In addition to curating a successful cinema series, Gaudet administers a theater

rental program for community groups and works with artists and performing arts groups to plan works in celebration of the Atheneum's collections and special exhibitions.

Joshua Glick
Assistant Professor of English and Film Studies
Hendrix College
1600 Washington Avenue
Conway, Arkansas 72032
joshua.glick@yale.edu

TOPIC(S): Joshua can curate a film series related to Coney Island and present a lecture.

Joshua Glick is Assistant Professor of English and Film Studies at Hendrix College. He holds a PhD from Yale University in Film and Media Studies and American Studies. His research and teaching interests are focused on global documentary film, television, and web-based media, history and theory of broadcast communications, and American social history. His articles have appeared in Film History, The Moving Image, and the Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television. Joshua recently completed a series of catalog essays and a short documentary for the traveling museum exhibition, Coney Island: Visions of an American Dreamland, 1861-2008. His manuscript on Los Angeles and documentary film and television, 1958-1977, is under contract with the University of California Press.

The New England Carousel Museum
95 Riverside Avenue
Bristol, CT 06010
860-585-5411
info@thecarouselmuseum.org
education@thecarouselmuseum.org

TOPIC(S): Carousel history, carousel horse carving, early manufacturing. Consult with the New England Carousel Museum to locate an expert speaker for a program.

Jennifer Miller
Associate Professor of Performance and Media Studies
Pratt Institute
200 Willoughby Avenue
Brooklyn, NY 11205
718-636-3790
jennifer@circusamok.org
<http://circusamok.org>

TOPIC(S): The sideshow and Circus Amok.

Jennifer Miller is a playwright, performer, and the director and founder of Circus Amok. She has been working with alternative circus forms, theater, and dance for over twenty years. She is the recipient of the 2008 Ethyl Eichelberger Award. Her work with Circus Amok was awarded a "Bessie" (a New York Dance and Performance Award) in 1995 and an OBIE in 2000. Circus Amok is the subject of a French documentary film, Un Cirque a New York (2002) and Brazilian documentary, Juggling Politics (2004). As a dancer she has performed with Cathy Weis, Jeff Weis, Jenny Monson, John Jasperse, Johanna Boyce, Doug Elkins, and They Won't Shut-up, among others. She had a seven-year stint at Coney

Island Sideshow by the Seashore. She toured her solo shows Morphadyke and Free Toasters Everyday here and abroad. She is the author of Cracked Ice, or The Jewels of the Forbidden Skates and The Golden Racket. She is an Associate Professor of Performance at Pratt Institute.

William Frank Mitchell, PhD
Amistad Director and Curator Amistad Center for Visual Art & Culture
Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art
600 Main Street
Hartford, CT 06103
860-838-4089
fmitchell@amistadcenter.org

TOPIC(S): Race and Coney Island; history of the African-American experience in Connecticut (contact Dr. Mitchell for program format, topics, and fees).

Marie Roberts
Coney Island USA Artist-in-Residence
Brooklyn, New York
bitterwonder@hotmail.com
www.bitterwonder.com

TOPIC(S): Hands-on workshop (banner painting) or a lecture about her work and/or living/working at Coney Island.

"Snake oil and sideshows are normal to me. My father's family was involved in early 20th-century Coney Island; my grandfather was acting battalion chief of the Coney Island District and Uncles Harry and Guy were at Dreamland the night of the fire. My Uncle Lester and my father worked at the Dreamland Circus Sideshow in the

1920s. Coney is so peopled with ghosts and memories, there is no place in Coney Island that is totally mine, except for Coney Island USA. That not-for-profit arts center is a haven where both sides of my life can co-exist—the academic and the sideshow. It is the only place in the earth where I feel back at home, with my relatives (deceased) gathered around. Coney Island USA lets me paint as much as I want. Making the corner of West 12th and Surf beautiful is a testament to my family, and a challenge to my present as an artist.”—Marie Roberts

Harvey Stein
New York City
hsteinfoto@aol.com

TOPIC(S): Author of *Coney Island 40 Years*, Harvey can present an illustrated talk and/or do a book signing.

Harvey Stein is a professional photographer, teacher, lecturer, author, and curator based in New York City. He currently teaches at the International Center of Photography and is Director of Photography at Umbrella Arts Gallery, located in the East Village. He has also been a member of the faculty of the School of Visual Arts, New School University, Drew University, Rochester Institute of Technology and the University of Bridgeport. Stein has published six books including Coney Island 40 Years. His photographs and portfolios have been published in such periodicals as The New Yorker, Time, Life, Esquire, American Heritage, Smithsonian, and the New York Times, among many other publications.

Dick Zigun
Artistic Director
Coney Island USA
1208 Surf Avenue
Brooklyn, New York 11224
adam@coneyisland.com
dzigun@coneyisland.com
<http://www.coneyisland.com/cast/bookings>

TOPIC(S): This Coney Island non-profit features a broad pool of performers who perform as part of the Coney Island Circus Sideshow. Contact Coney Island USA to obtain information about fees and schedule based on your geographic location, and to obtain information about the history of Coney Island.

Dick D. Zigun, the founder of the Coney Island Circus Sideshow, holds an MFA from the Yale School of Drama and has received many NEA grants. Known to many as the Mayor of Coney Island, Dick is an authority on amusement parks, American popular theater, and the history and tradition of the American sideshow. An excellent public speaker with many TV appearances to his credit, Dick lectures college classes and other groups. Dick not only produces the Sideshow, but the Mermaid Parade, America's Largest Art Parade, and has produced air shows, fireworks and other events on both large and small scales.

Connecting With Local and Regional Experts

Contact local groups with whom you might wish to collaborate for program design, audience development, or speaker outreach. Some ideas related to this exhibition:

- American Studies Department at a local or regional university
- History Department at a local or regional university
- Art History and Art Department at a local or regional university
- Regional art centers and art museums
- Local historical societies and cultural centers
- Local or regional amusement park

Your state arts council, state humanities council or regional arts organizations may also be able to help you locate regional speakers who would be willing to be involved in a program or event at your museum.

- A list of state arts councils can be found at http://arts.endow.gov/partner/state/SAA_RAO_list.html, or call the National Endowment for the Arts at 202-682-5400.
- A list of state humanities councils can be found at <http://www.neh.gov/whoweare/statecouncils.html>, or call the National Endowment for the Humanities at 800-NEH (634)-1121.
- The U.S. Regional Arts Organizations represents six nonprofit entities created to encourage development of the arts and to support arts programs on a regular basis. Their web site is <http://www.usregionalarts.org/> and lists all state arts agencies. You can also check your regional arts organization for information on its performing arts programs.