

National Art Gallery of The Bahamas

# Lesson:

# Art Museums

*What is an art museum?*





## Overview

At the end of this lesson, students will understand the difference between art museums and art galleries. They will become familiar with the National Art Gallery of The Bahamas and the National Collection through research and investigation. They will also have a deeper understand of the importance of art museums to the culture of The Bahamas.

## Content

### *Art museum vs. art gallery*

Art galleries and art museums are both places to see and experience art. Galleries and museums share some characteristics; for example, the artworks are typically shown in clean empty spaces with minimal distraction and controlled lighting to showcase the exhibited art. However, an art gallery is a small business that sells the art it exhibits and the profits made from sales will cover the operating costs to run the business. Unlike art galleries, art museums are usually non-profit organizations. Because museums are not for-profit, they don't sell artworks; instead, they rely on endowments, donations, grants and admissions to pay for operating costs, and they are sometimes subsidized by the government. Museums typically have permanent and temporary collections.



*Hard Mouth: From the Tongue of the Ocean" exhibition at the National Art Gallery of The Bahamas, 2019.*

## *The National Art Gallery of The Bahamas (NAGB)*

Even though the name suggests that it's a gallery, The National Art Gallery of The Bahamas is actually a museum. The NAGB was the first institution of its kind in the history of The Bahamas, announced in 1996, by then-Prime Minister, Hubert A. Ingraham, as part of a larger expanded system of museums that would record, preserve and historicize the narrative of the independent sovereign nation, established in 1973. The museum boasts four gallery spaces: the PE (Permanent Exhibition space), on the ground floor, which houses rotating shows drawn on the National Collection; The PS Room (Project Space) for monthly interventions, also on the ground floor; and two temporary exhibition spaces on the second floor (T1 and T2). The NAGB collects, preserves, exhibits and interprets historic and contemporary Bahamian art.

## *The National Collection*

The founding mandate of The National Art Gallery of The Bahamas called for two things: to promote Bahamian fine art and also to preserve it; the National Collection serves the latter function. Culled from our own staged exhibitions—as well as from research, studio visits and collaborations with other collections and collectors—the NAGB's aim is to form an archive for future generations to understand both the development of fine art in The Bahamas and that of a developing nation.

The National Collection consists of early paintings, drawings, and watercolors from the turn of the 20th century, a wide range of recent contemporary works in diverse media including ceramics, photographs and other mixed media works to further highlight the evolution of creative and conceptual practices. The National Collection tracks the course of a nation discovering its own voice both artistically and politically, through times of oppression, social change, independence and in a postcolonial context.

The act of collecting is an act of authorship and ownership. The telling of our own story is a key component of nation building, as well as an important educational tool, and an investment in the human capital of The Bahamas. By exhibiting our National Collection in different forms — through curated shows in the Permanent Exhibition rooms of the NAGB — and through public loans, we are able to create different points of view of our country and its creative output. Through an active and ongoing historicising of the collection and by highlighting individual works from the collection the NAGB continues to educate, showcase and underscore how vital art is as a component of the national dialogue.



# Discussion Questions

1. How is an art museum different from an art gallery?
2. What is the role of an art museum?
3. What is the importance of an art museum to our culture in The Bahamas?
4. What is the function of art in our lives?

# Activities

Have your students imagine that they are sending an email to a friend who doesn't think that art museums are important. The job of the student is to convince their friend of the significance of an art museum such as the NAGB. In the email students should include:

- + a title in the subject line of the email
- + a brief history and some background information on the NAGB, being sure to point out the difference between a museum and a gallery
- + an explanation of what the National Collection is (definition, purpose etc.)
- + an explanation of the role of the museum and its importance to The Bahamas
- + one thing they find interesting about the NAGB
- + two images of exhibitions, programs, artworks at the NAGB

Once students have drafted their email, they should send it to you. Respond via email with your thoughts and feedback.

# Extensions

Have students assume the role of an art critic or blogger. They can write an exhibition review of one of the National Exhibitions and post to an actual blog of their own or to social media.

# Resources

- [National Art Gallery of The Bahamas](#)
- [NAGB National Collection](#)