

New Exhibits: Can We Reach More People?

Impact Report

JUSTICE
FOR ALL

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Training thousands to make abortion unthinkable for millions...

In this Impact Report, Joanna Bai (recently married; previously Wagner) shares a story about a conversation at our new *Art of Life* Exhibit, and other JFA staff members reflect on what it was like to use our new exhibits in April and May to start conversations. You'll notice a theme: With three large exhibits now in the toolbox, we're experimenting with ways to reach more people by attracting to the conversation many people we would be unlikely to reach with only one exhibit.

 - Steve Wagner, Executive Director

P.S. This is the third in a special series of Impact Reports giving you an experience of JFA's new large exhibits through stories and pictures without much prior explanation. Our July Impact Report introduced the new exhibits (www.jfaweb.org/july-2016). In August (www.jfaweb.org/august-2016), recent UCLA graduate Meredith Boles shared about a conversation she had at the *Stop and Think* Exhibit. As I've said previously in this series, we are happy to talk to you at any time to give you further explanation of the exhibits, to hear your comments, and to discuss the thinking behind the exhibits. You can also see www.jfaweb.org/exhibits for pictures and additional information about each exhibit.

...one person at a time.



I suspected that once Mark and Sarah began to see that there was another intended purpose for the exhibit in addition to the art itself, they might lose interest and walk away. But much to the contrary, both remained interested throughout my whole tour of the exhibit, and as interestedly as they had shared their artistic knowledge, they began sharing their views about abortion with me. Both were pro-choice, but they did not hold identical positions. I talked with them for a significant amount of time. My recollection is that it was at least an hour, and Sarah and I were so engaged in dialogue that she skipped one class, and I ended up walking her to another class that afternoon as we were still finishing.

At UCLA this spring, “Mark” and “Sarah” came up to the *Art of Life* Exhibit talking excitedly. As I walked up to them, I overheard Mark mentioning interesting details he had learned regarding the famous paintings by Velázquez and Van Eyck which were prominently displayed on the thirteen-foot-tall panels in front of him.

I asked Mark what he thought of the message of the exhibit. In response he said, “Oh, I don't really know what this is at all. I just saw the works of art and got really excited. I had to come over here and see it!” In fact, he had been so excited that he had brought his friend Sarah with him.



Joanna (light blue) and UCLA students look up at the *Art of Life* Exhibit panels (left) during a conversation in May 2016. See www.jfaweb.org/art-of-life for more detail of the *Art of Life* Exhibit.

The details of the conversation are fuzzy in my memory, but what stuck out to me was how fabulously the paintings themselves worked to interest these students in a conversation about a totally unexpected topic – abortion. They (Mark especially) loved the artwork, and it seemed to create an openness in both of them to discuss whatever purpose we had in raising the well-known works of art on their campus that day. The exhibit seemed a uniquely beneficial starting point that helped them enter into talking about abortion. - Joanna Bai



What I like about the *Stop and Think* Exhibit is that the subject matter seems current because it addresses topics like feminism which are very important to many women, especially women with pro-choice views. So, as a woman, it gave me a platform to find immediate common ground; and in turn, this helped most people see me as a reasonable person, and it kept them engaged. At both Colorado State University (CSU) in April and UCLA in May, I saw more pro-choice people rethinking their views on abortion than at any of our previous events this school year. - Tammy Cook

I was excited to be sitting in front of a new exhibit that reaches yet another unique group of students. Several students shared with me that it was the beauty of the *Art of Life* display that made them stop. Other students told me they were willing to stop this year because the display wasn't graphic. In years past they had avoided coming near the exhibit. The variety of responses gave me confidence that we are reaching a new group of students with these new exhibits, which is exactly what we want to do! We desire to have more conversations that change hearts and minds. To have the flexibility to put up more than one exhibit during an outreach allows us to reach a variety of students we wouldn't have otherwise had the chance to engage. - Rebecca Haschke

I was talking to two students in front of the *Art of Life* Exhibit at UCLA, and a young woman cut into the conversation asking if she could record our conversation since she is a reporter for *FemNews*, a UCLA magazine. I hesitated, knowing that audio recordings can be manipulated, but I decided to extend the benefit of the doubt to her and said it was fine. She put many questions to me, such as, "What about back-alley abortion?" and "Since people disagree about abortion, how can we make a law about it?" I think she was surprised by my willingness to give ground, to find points of agreement, and to qualify my statements with concern for women both outside and inside the womb. I was uncertain what kind of treatment our conversation would get in *FemNews*, but her report, while confidently pro-choice, ended up being pretty fair. [See www.jfaweb.org/ucla-2016-femnews for a link.] The pro-life perspective I shared with the people in the conversation was heard, and unlike many articles, I think my words were relayed to the audience verbatim. So, a whole new audience got to hear some of the logic of the pro-life position, and that audience also witnessed our heart for all human beings, including women and men struggling with unplanned pregnancies. Not only that, through the images of the *Art of Life* Exhibit, the *FemNews* audience saw that we are interested in a different sort of conversation about abortion, one that sometimes uses beauty as a starting point. I am hopeful for more dialogue in the future with the woman who wrote the article. - Steve Wagner

It made me reflect that in order to make abortion unthinkable we need to reach all kinds of people, and different kinds of people respond to different types of things. Therefore, it is important to utilize all types of exhibits and approaches to reach all types of people. I liked how the new exhibits confused people – many expected something else entirely. This seemed to make some people stop that wouldn't have otherwise. I enjoyed seeing and hearing their surprise and, in some cases, delight. - Jeremy Gorr



Tammy Cook opens the original JFA Exhibit Brochure to refer to pictures of human development in a conversation with a UCLA student at JFA's new *Stop and Think* Exhibit.



Rebecca Haschke was interviewed by student television during the *Art of Life* Exhibit at CSU (April 2016). Go to www.jfaweb.org/csu-2016-tv to watch the coverage.



JFA trainers Catherine Wurts (second from left) and Jeremy Gorr (right) dialogue with UCLA students about abortion at the *Art of Life* Exhibit in May.

Share JFA's New Exhibits to Start a Conversation about Abortion:

www.jfaweb.org/exhibits

