

## Hands-On Looking: Preschool Groups and Workshops

Over the last year, the Yale University Art Gallery has enhanced its programming for preschool visitors and their care providers, welcoming young children and the people who work with them to enjoy the museum and original works of art in new ways. Dozens of children in Head Start, a child-development program focused on improving school readiness in children ages three to five, visited the Gallery and experienced the permanent collection and special exhibitions through tailored lesson plans that presented objects through storytelling. Since many of these groups included Spanish-speaking children, storytelling sessions were offered in Spanish—one example of the ways in which the Gallery has responded to the demand for bilingual teaching.

In a yearlong collaboration focused on early childhood, the Wurtele Gallery Teachers organized a series of workshops with All Our Kin, a nonprofit

dedicated to training, supporting, and sustaining home child-care providers throughout Connecticut. Each workshop drew anywhere from twelve to thirty-six people, many of whom returned for several sessions. The vast majority of participants were women of Latin American origin who spoke Spanish as their native language. Very few of them had previously visited the Gallery, and some had never set foot in an art museum.

Gallery Teachers Tess Korobkin, PH.D. candidate in the History of Art, and Ana María Gómez López, M.F.A. candidate in Painting, led the workshops in Spanish and English with the goal of inviting the child-care providers to learn new approaches to integrating art and the museum into their ongoing work with children. The sessions included guided looking at works in the Gallery's collection, modeling art-making activities for young

children, and discussion of exhibitions for personal enrichment. The workshops were built on the principle that everyone enters the gallery with his or her own expertise. When the All Our Kin group spent time looking at Picasso's *First Steps* (1943), the participants described the painting in the language of early childhood education, noting, for instance, how the child's thrilling step toward independence is enabled by the support of a steady, caring adult. During this conversation, the museum became a space where practitioners could talk about the theories of child care. The workshops also enabled conversations about language translation in artistic and cultural contexts. As Korobkin described, "In the same way that there is not always a perfect fit between an English word and a Spanish one, there is also no perfect translation for visual experience, no comprehensive set of sentences that can fully encompass a work of art."

Korobkin and Gómez López recently participated in All Our Kin's ninth annual Family Child Care Conference at Gateway Community College in New Haven. This year, the Education Department looks forward to continuing these collaborations and working with these young visitors and their care providers at the Gallery.

All Our Kin child-care providers at a professional development workshop with Wurtele Gallery Teachers Ana María Gómez López and Tess Korobkin

