

March 20, 2015, Brooklyn Museum  
Fourth Year Fellows and Associate Fellows  
Sean MacDonald and Christopher Swift

### **Classroom Exercise: Collection, Organization, and Taxonomies of Museum Curation**

If new taxonomies mean new ways of ordering and documenting collections, then do the existing ways in which collections are organized mean that taxonomies are in fact socially constructed rather than 'true' or 'rational'?.... Are the exclusions, inclusions, and priorities that determine whether objects become part of collections, also creating systems of knowledge?

– Eilean Hooper-Greenhill. *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge*. London: Routledge, 1992.

#### **STAGE 1**

As you make your way through the Luce Center for American Art "Visible Storage" (non)exhibit, please write down the title, artists name and a brief description of any three objects of art that you find interesting. You will use this information in an exercise later in the day.

Thanks!

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## **STAGE 2**

Reconsider the reading for today's class, "What is a Museum" (quoted above). In groups of three, share and describe the works of art you documented in the tour. Considering all objects together, decide as a group

- 1) which works to include and which to exclude (if any);
- 2) an organizing principle for your collection; and
- 3) a one-sentence rationale for your organizing principle (taxonomy).

Be prepared to share your ideas in large group discussion.

## **STAGE 3**

How might you use this museum (or any museum) as a place of learning for the students in your own classes (or in classes you might want to teach)? Is a museum able to "house" any and all disciplines? Consider and discuss in large group.