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Education Galleries in new exhibition center to engage all ages

Images, scents, touchable objects and archeological material connect visitors to the city's past

March 25, 2019 / New Orleans, Louisiana—When The Historic New Orleans Collection opens its new campus at 520 Royal St. on April 6, 2019, the institution will debut its first-ever Education Galleries, bringing a new level of interactivity to the institution's award-winning record of historical interpretation.

The Education Galleries provide the THNOC's first dedicated space for people of all ages to touch, see, smell and hear the awe-inspiring culture of the city. Designed to provide a broad sampling of New Orleans culture, the galleries encourage people of all ages to engage with objects on view and discover the complex web of stories that make up our collective history.

“We wanted to give people, especially our younger visitors, a number of ways to become interested in New Orleans and the significant holdings at THNOC,” said former Curator of Education Daphne Derven, who made the initial plans for the space. “We find that people will become more engaged in the history if they feel they have a starting place.”

The galleries, housed on the second floor of the historic Seignouret-Brulatour building, present large-scale images from THNOC's holdings, video clips, touchable objects, a smelling station, archaeological material and a virtual reality headset that each relate to a tangible piece of New Orleans culture.

“Instead of telling one large and complicated story, we tell a number of small ones,” said Jenny Schwartzberg, current curator of education. “We think we can engage everyone with at least something—an image of a young Trombone Shorty, the feel of a deer pelt or the smell of a barnyard—and hopefully they'll go from there to further explore stories behind these objects.”

A key component of the space is the archaeological material excavated from beneath the Seignouret-Brulatour building and a well in an adjacent courtyard prior to renovations. Archaeologists unearthed a trove of items from previous inhabitants, many of which are on display in the Education Galleries, giving visitors a link to the people who were here centuries before.

“A lot of people who come to the French Quarter don't realize that they're standing on centuries of history,” said Derven, who has a background in archaeology. “When people can place themselves within the history, through sight, smell, touch or sound, they'll gain a better understanding of the past, and possibly the present.”

Derven and Schwartzberg both see the space as a catalyst for family and group conversations about the forces that have, over time, shaped the city, country and our individual lives. Since admission to THNOC's museum spaces is free, families can visit the space as part of day-long outing in the French Quarter, or use it as a starting point to explore THNOC's other exhibitions.

The Education Galleries are housed in THNOC's new, \$38 million exhibition center at 520 Royal St., set to open April 6, 2019. The center was made possible in part through generous donations from the institution's local, national and international supporters and will be open Tuesday–Saturday, 9:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m. and on Sunday, 10:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m. Admission is free.

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About The Historic New Orleans Collection

Founded in 1966, The Historic New Orleans Collection is a museum, research center and publisher dedicated to the study and preservation of the history and culture of New Orleans and the Gulf South region. For more information, visit www.hnoc.org, call (504) 523-4662, or follow THNOC on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#).