

## DEATH EDUCATION. *ATHANATOS*: EDUCATIONAL ACTIONS

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LEÓN-HERNÁNDEZ, M.N.; BENITO-MATEO, C. AND ARIJA-BARTOLOMÉ, L. (2021). Death and education. *Athanatos*: educational actions. *Canarias Arqueológica*, 22: 611-614. <http://doi.org/10.31939/canarq/2021.22.51>

**Abstract.** We present briefly the educational program developed from Museos de Tenerife on the occasion of the exhibition *Athanatos. Immortal. Death and immortality in past populations*.

**Keywords.** Death education. Educational actions. Museum education. *Athanatos* exhibition.

## PRESENTATION AND OBJECTIVES

On the occasion of the exhibition *Athanatos. Immortal. Death and immortality in past populations*, organized by Instituto Canario de Bioantropología and Museo Arqueológico de Tenerife (Museo de la Naturaleza y el Hombre, Santa Cruz de Tenerife, december 21th 2017-june 3th 2018), Museos de Tenerife has developed and coordinated an educational program in parallel whose main goals have been to promote knowledge of the attitude of mankind towards death along to contribute to normalize the acceptance of this part in our life cycle.

In its design we have counted on the Universidad de La Laguna (Facultad de Educación) and the Consejería de Educación del Gobierno de Canarias (*Proyecto Orugas y Mariposas de Colores en los pupitres de nuestras escuelas*).

From the beginning we proposed that the educational program should be addressed at early ages as well as adults. Although children are a particularly sensitive group that our society insists on keeping away from the terminal illness of their loved ones or collective funerary manifestations, they need to find their own answers to transcendental issues such as death. Therefore, the school public has had a special role in the design and implementation of our educational actions.

## EDUCATIONAL ACTIONS

### Guided tours

Team senior volunteers of Museo de la Naturaleza y el Hombre have made guided tours that have facilitated the understanding of the exhibition contents. These guided visits preceded the realization of a workshop appropriate to the age of the group.

### Workshops

Emotional education has been the pedagogical orientation of *Tales to the lost* and *Change of batteries*. A storytelling and an animated short film have served to providing abilities that help channelling the sense of loss among the youngest students.

*Journey to the eternity* has promoted the study of mummies as a source of knowledge of past societies. After a brief introduction, older students have become embalmers of ancient Egypt and Guanche society in pre-Hispanic times.



Fig. 1. Guided tours.



Fig. 2. Tales to the lost.



Fig. 3. Change of batteries.

### Cinema contests

Two short films competitions have allowed both schoolchildren and adults to express their concerns about this issue through the audiovisual format. The chosen treatments by the participants have been very diverse, highlighting that death can have a plural approach.

## CineForum

*CineForum Athanatos* has searched for the participation of the adult public through films and open debates at the hands of different professionals in anthropology, medicine, psychology, education and laws for encouraging reflection on different topics: terminal disease, mourning, acceptance of death, anthropology of death, euthanasia, funeral rituals and death penalty.

## RESULTS

Beyond doubt, the fact of death constitutes a complex topic of general interest and permanent relevance. The resources of informal education, outside the traditional educational institutions, produced from the museum around a temporary exhibition, have allowed us to carry out an unconventional didactic treatment of death, in its multiple perspectives, open to the participation of society, focused on reflection, the interaction, the expression of emotions and discussion more than in the traditional academic analysis carried out by scholars.

The favorable reception of the public that has had this programming confirms the role that museums should have in today's society as participative, dynamic institutions that generate proposals and enriching experiences, beyond their function as memory stores. Museums, like public spaces, must rethink the way to include society in its educational actions permanently.



Fig. 4. *CineForum Athanatos*.