



Designing for Access: Approaching Modern Art in Museum Spaces

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Thesis Committee

To the faculty of the University of the Arts

The members of the committee appointed to examine the thesis of Emily DeClement find it satisfactory and recommend it to be accepted.

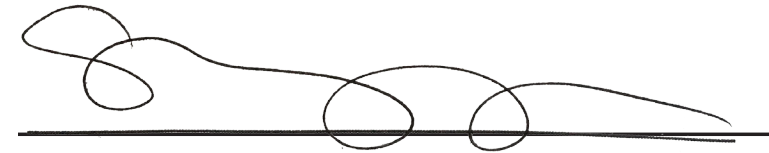
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Abstract

This thesis strives to develop research contributing to developing or evaluating creative access points and experiential tools in order to achieve the highest amount of access into modern art. The access point explored here is emotional resonance and how people connect to art through this. Cases were evaluated that help visitors attain access points into art by using spaces where visitors can manipulate the space, creating interpretation for themselves and others in “creative access points” areas. It was determined that there are three main tactics which proved beneficial in creating a memorable experience. These tactics are: response area, immersive elements, and exhibit design elements, which can be used alone or more optimally congruently to create the most access into the art. This thesis puts forward two design solutions to two modern art exhibits, Leger: Modern Art and the Metropolis at the Philadelphia Museum of Art and Landscapes Behind Cézanne at the Princeton University Art Museum.

Chapter 1: Thesis Overview

Exploring the Landscape

Interactive experiences, specifically experiential tools, aid in creating access points into modern art by facilitating an emotionally resonant experience into the art and therefore a deeper understanding of the art and a more meaningful museum going experience. This thesis will examine how experiential tools (a state of evoked emotion and prolonged reflection influenced by an object or experience) can facilitate emotional resonance through creative access points that allow the visitor to manipulate the environment creating interpretation for themselves and others.

Painting is regarded as a dying medium with the precision and pace of art that can be done digitally. However, painting as a medium offers a unique affect that cannot be offered through any other medium. What is the future of access into art and what are the tools visitors must be provided with in order to have a valuable museum going experience?

Many art museums have focused their visitor experiences on directions that encourage engagement and accessibility to a wider range of people, from amateurs to experts. As art museums continue to encourage engagement through exploring experimental exhibits that provide new forms of access to the artwork, this thesis investigates new methods to further emotional connections. This thesis refers to “access points” as the facilitation of visitors to make further connections so art works will be newly understood or appreciated. The arts and cultural learning are important components in our understanding of the world around us and our humanity. Currently there have been more challenges to the importance and



Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, NE



Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, TX

funding of arts and culture. Author Edmund Burke Feldman argues in his book *Philosophy of Art Education* that art education expands “moral and individual development.” Many studies have been done on the physical and psychological benefits of arts and culture. Heather Stuckey, DEd, and Jeremy Nobel, MD, MPH are among those who have conducted research on the subject and came to the conclusion that they “have seen positive outcomes for the potential of using art to promote healing in our four primary areas of focus” regarding music engagement, visual arts therapy, movement-based expression, and expressive writing. In terms of visual art, they found that it “can be a refuge from the intense emotions associated with

illness” and is often used to help patients understand and accept medical diagnosis. In another study, they found that six months of art therapy “was related to improved quality-of-life measures” and were measured by factors such as social functioning, bodily pain, tracking weight gain, and monitoring serum carbon dioxide content and phosphate levels¹. These studies document the positive effects of arts and cultural engagements and the need to continue to provide the multiple forms of access for broader and more diverse audiences.

Experiential elements to exhibits can help a person connect to the artwork. Traditionally, art is exhibited without much interpretation, as the works themselves are experiential and the artwork itself anticipates strong emotional responses from the viewer, explains Skye Malash-Olson, exhibit designer at the Dallas Museum of Art. She goes on to explain a part of her role as an exhibit designer in an art museum is to help provide people with the tools to construct their interpretation of the art. These tools could be provided through an in-gallery experience that helps visitors construct their own

1 H. L. Stuckey & J Nobel “The Connection Between Art, Healing, and Public Health: A Review of Current Literature,” *American Journal of Public Health*, no. 100(2), 254–263 url: doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2008.156497



Albers, Josef. GA 2. 1969

interpretation of the art for themselves and for others around them.

At the basis of interpretation, a visitor will look at a piece of art and think “what does it mean, and why?” Exhibit elements can be included to help the visitor get a feeling of the energy meant to be conveyed by the artwork. For example, imagine a Josef Albers exhibition of different colored monochrome paintings. The layperson walks into this exhibit and does not understand how a painting of simply one color can be regarded as art. However, imagine the visitor is viewing a red monochrome painting, in the background is heavy metal music, and a faint smell of a match burning lingers only in that area. Now, the visitor feels more intensity, and possibly a range of anger. They relate to this feeling and now understand what Albers was trying to convey.

Progressing through the exhibit to a monochromatic blue painting, the visitor hears the calming sound of waves crashing, and the area is slightly cooler than in other areas of the exhibit. This exhibit could also have small rooms out of the gallery space that are completely painted a monochromatic color from a painting in the exhibit. In a space completely covered in a color, a person will be able to immerse themselves in the art- by being presented with more access points, more opportunities for engagement- resulting in more understanding of the artist’s intent. In these spaces, visitors interpret

“Sometimes with contemporary art the works themselves are experiential and part of the artwork and anticipating strong emotional responses from the viewer”

-Skye Malash-Olson

the works based on the tools they are given. These tools could allow the visitor to understand why the image is portrayed the way it is.

As a museum going experience is quite often a social experience, visitors are then also creating interpretation for others as visitors contemplate the exhibit. This thesis focuses on creative access points as spaces as a successful way to achieve this. In these spaces, visitors are adding to or manipulating the environment in some way, which then builds meaning for other visitors. In an environment that offers a way to achieve tools to access the art, the visitor will be immersed in ways to understand and connect with the work and understand why the artist approached the image the way they did.

Understanding how creative access points, manipulable environments where visitors build interpretation for themselves, and others could help the visitor have a more meaningful connection/ understanding with modern art by enabling an emotional response (defined as *a reaction to a particular intrapsychic feeling or feelings accompanied by the psychological changes that may or may not be outwardly manifested but that motivate or precipitate some action*



Josef Albers in Mexico, The Guggenheim Museum, NY, NY

or *behavioral response*²). Through an emotional resonance evoked by the interactive experience the user will understand that art can be universally decipherable.

In recent years, museums of all subject matters have continued to utilize experiential tools as a way to enable connection with the material and learning. This type of exhibit would include some interactive element but becomes experiential due to its high levels of immersion and ways to engage with the work. Experiential elements are widely credited in engaging visitors of different ages, different abilities, and different interests. They can engage different learning styles such as visual, aural, verbal, physical, logical, social, and solitary which allows learning for all types of people. An interactive

2 Mosby's Medical Dictionary, 8th edition. S.v. "emotional response." Retrieved April 7 2018 from <https://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/emotional+response>

can be defined as "one that takes user input to activate, or better yet, to generate its output" and is very beneficial in "craft[ing] experiences for visitors"³.

Art can be experienced without a plethora of foreknowledge of art technique and art history. This project will explore the ways in which an experiential tool can aid visitors in bypassing this perceived barrier and tapping into the emotional resonance of the work. This project will consider Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning Theory, which was revised in 2001, in order to determine if an interactive successfully creates learning. According to this model the first step of learning is "remembering"⁴. Here the visitor is "recognizing" or "recalling" and therefore subconsciously searching for context from one's own life to apply to the context, in this case the art presented. The next step is "understanding" which consists of interpreting the information offered then "applying", "analyzing", "evaluating", and "creating".

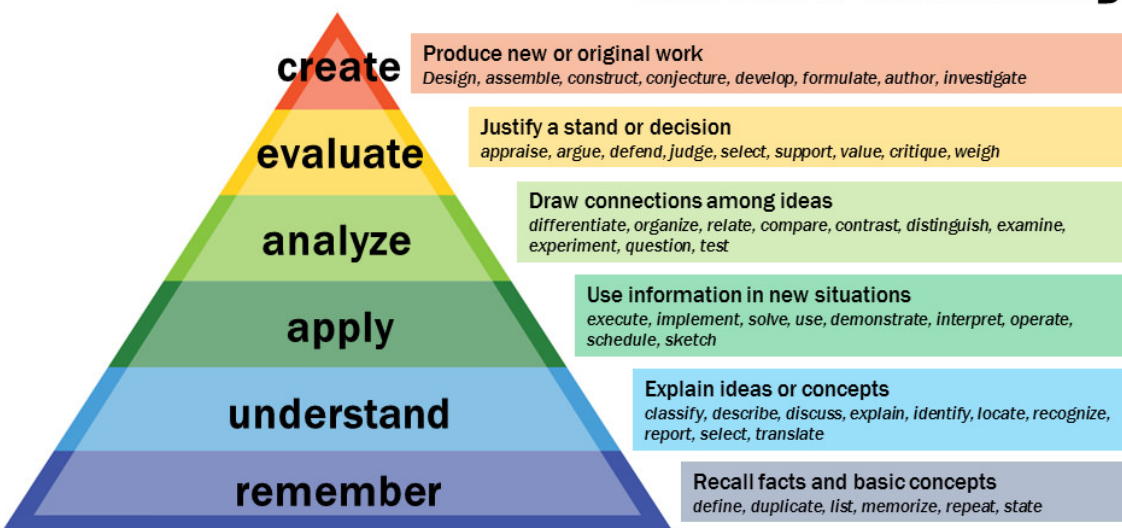
Conceptual knowledge exists when a person regroups big understandings and corresponding relationships among them (such as when a person learns a theory and applies it to their life); while metacognitive knowledge encompasses self-knowledge and knowledge of cognitive tasks (such as knowing when to apply strategies for learning or problem solving). Both of these types of knowledge can be applied to connecting and understanding a piece of artwork. The experience can promote this type of thinking when viewing the artwork to create a connection between the viewer and the work.

An article published in "Psychologists World" considers experiments that draw connections between memory and emotion and concludes "the results of MacKay's experiment, and others with similar outcomes, suggest that an emotive state at the time we perceive and process an observation can positively affect the encoding of

3 Jane Boyd MSEM 714 Slideshow 11-08-17

4 Patricia Armstrong "Bloom's Taxonomy" Vanderbilt University Center For Teaching

Bloom's Taxonomy



information into the short or even long-term memory.”⁵

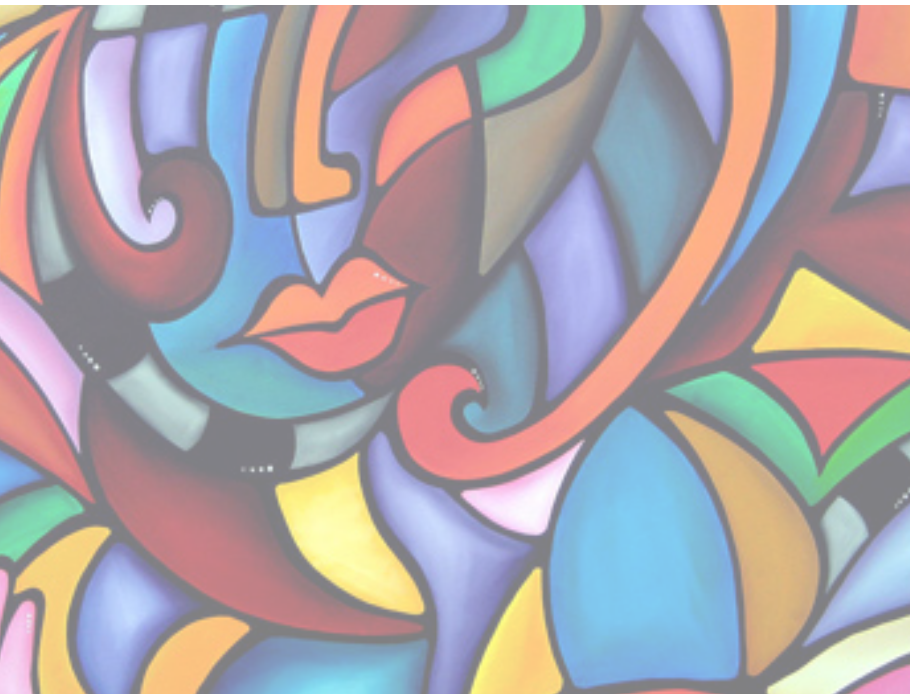
A qualitative study for Engage Scotland funded by the Scottish Arts Council titled “Mapping Interpretation Practice in Contemporary Art” used interviews and focus groups to answer the three questions: “What is the nature of interpretation practices across a range of venues? What are the perceived values of the range of practices employed? And, How is intellectual access considered by venues that exhibit contemporary art?” Although not all contemporary art is inherently difficult to understand, people as a whole felt that although there are barriers between contemporary art and the general public, this does not stop the public from wanting to view and access conceptual art and art without a clear narrative, such as many forms of modern art.

Their findings concluded that there is a desire to develop

5 “Emotions and Memory” Psychologist World Magazine

interpretation which improves the ability to connect with art. They found that people generally have a “belief that contemporary art can and should be accessible to all”. Through their research they defined the major barriers to contemporary art (meaning something that “may obstruct the wider public’s interest in and ability to access contemporary art”) as four main categories: arts culture, viewer/potential viewer, external, and space. Results indicated that the general public’s perception of contemporary art is that it is “elitist, inaccessible and irrelevant to most who are not directly involved in the arts”. The majority of people also feel that most people lack the tools to understand contemporary art, as well as the confidence. Results also indicated that representation of contemporary art in the media is damaging, as well as the belief that formal education does not “value the arts or visual literacy skills.”⁶ These findings can be

6 Dr. Heather Lynch “Mapping Interpretation Practices in Contemporary Art”



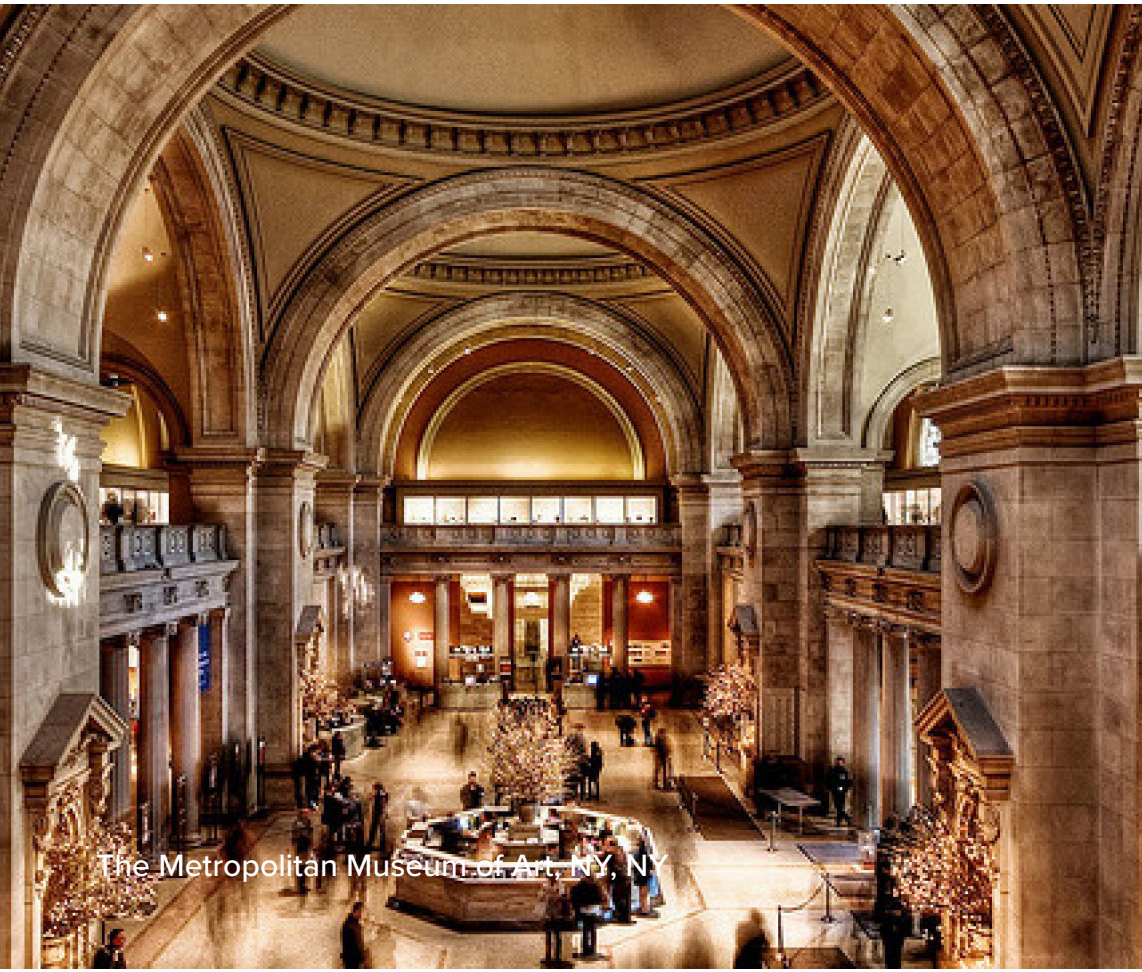
modern



contemporary

“...intended to stimulate curiosity, inquiry, reflection and creativity in guests of all ages as they connect more deeply with works of art”

–Center for Creative Connections, Dallas Museum of Art



The Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY, NY

applied to many forms of modern art as well, as the study focuses on art that does not seem decipherable.

This thesis investigation will explore how museums that show modern art can engage a wide range of audiences through “access points” provided by experiential tools/exhibit elements through immersion and creative access points. These access points will focus on facilitating internal subjective experiences and constructivist learning, psychological responses, and/or behavioral responses as visitors connect with the work and each other in new ways. The emotional response or resonance evoked through these techniques are what is happening to the visitor as they experience this way of seeing.

Laypeople without a background in art can find difficulty in connecting with more abstract or conceptual work. Preconceptions exist that art museums can be elitist. The architecture of many of these museums can also make people feel intimidated. The Art Times Journal describes this as “people [being] afraid of being ‘exposed as a newbie’”⁷ in these areas. Katherine Brooks wrote in an article for the Huffington Post referring to the art museum visit as “abnormally quiet, palatial and pristine, filled with guards and attendants who will only speak to you if you mess up” and that “there’s certainly no definite answer” regarding why something is considered art therefore instilling a sense of “chaos” when trying to understand the art. However, she goes on to say that Roberta Smith, art critic for the New York Times, “has faith in all of us” and “thinks the general public could really get conceptual art because it’s actually about ideas. What you have is this idea of creativity being able to affect things, and I think that that’s really amazing”⁸. Malash-Olson challenges this by pointing out that contemporary artists try to challenge the art world. This is why the layperson can have a hard time understanding contemporary art without being given the proper tools to assist them towards the artist’s intention or thinking. Utilizing this idea that the general

7 Katharine Schwab “Art for Instagram’s Sake,” The Atlantic

8 Katherine Brooks “How You Expect to Feel at an Art Museum vs. How You Really Feel,” Huffington Post,

public has the ability to “get conceptual art”, museums could aid this process by presenting additional “access points” into the art to better understand and connect emotionally with the work.

Access points by means of personal and social interaction in an experiential tool would have the potential to enhance the museum experience for different groups of people. In exhibits, people can connect to the content in different ways: intellectually, sensory, tacitly, and emotionally. This thesis will focus on a way to facilitate an emotional response. An emotional response can be seen as something that involves a subjective experience, a psychological response, and/or a behavioral response. The experiential experience can generate different feelings and ideas in the visitor based on their life experiences. Because of this personalized response, the visitor

then yields a psychological response where they then feel a certain way towards the art they are viewing. A behavioral response is the most measurable outcome which can manifest in as subtle a way as body language.

In “Crying at the Museum: A Call for Responsible Emotional Design” Stacey Mann addresses the complications of designing to evoke emotion and writes that “we must create spaces that allow visitors to respond naturally, resist the urge to push visitors toward predetermined emotional responses, and support visitors as they process the intellectual content of an exhibit as well as the emotional effect it may have”⁹. This can be done successfully through experiential tools. Although they are both in gallery contexts, an

9 Stacey Mann, Danny M. Cohen “Crying at the Museum: A Call for Responsible Emotional Design” Exhibition Spring 2017 90-99



National Gallery of Modern Art, India Gate, New Dehli



Post- Impressionist & Modern Art, Waterhouse & Dodd, London, UK

experiential tool or exhibit element is different from an interactive in that it is immersive and has some transportive element. In creative access points, the visitor is transported into a new layer of interpretation that includes other visitors' testimonials of their personal meanings. These are inspiring experiences which have an emotional component to them. Therefore, experiential experiences can be facilitated by interactives, but not all interactives provide experiential experiences. When leading visitors to create a more meaningful connection with modern art, it is important to focus on creating an environment where the visitor can experience their own emotional resonance as "content is not intrinsically emotional. It is our response to it that dictates its emotional resonance- its ability to elicit deeper engagement with, or interest in, a given story, object, or point of view."

It seems to be easier for people to understand and potentially appreciate art with a decipherable narrative of recognizable elements such as figures and landscapes. Many people feel that in order to appreciate modern art they must have some previous knowledge. However, art is intended to be enjoyed and thought provoking without lengthy explanations. By further developing ways to provide access points, such as investigating emotions the artwork generates in the visitor, more people will feel a deeper connection to the art. A way that art museums can continue facilitating these experiences is with in-gallery experiential tools which help engage visitors with the work and with each other in new ways in order to produce new connections and therefore a more meaningful art experience. An experience that helps the visitor connect to the artwork on an emotional level, such as understanding the feeling and mood the artist is trying to convey through the way the image is depicted, could help the visitor have a more meaningful art experience based on "research [that] suggests that our brains are more likely

to focus on stimuli of emotional significance"¹⁰ and this can be done through environments that visitors are able to manipulate to build interpretation for themselves and others.

10 "Emotions and Memory" Psychologist World Magazine



Rothko, Mark. No 10. 1950

an emotional reaction is evoked through the interactive the user will understand that art can be universally decipherable. A goal of this exhibit is evaluating the ability of experiential tools to facilitate an emotional resonance in the visitor when interacting with the artwork.

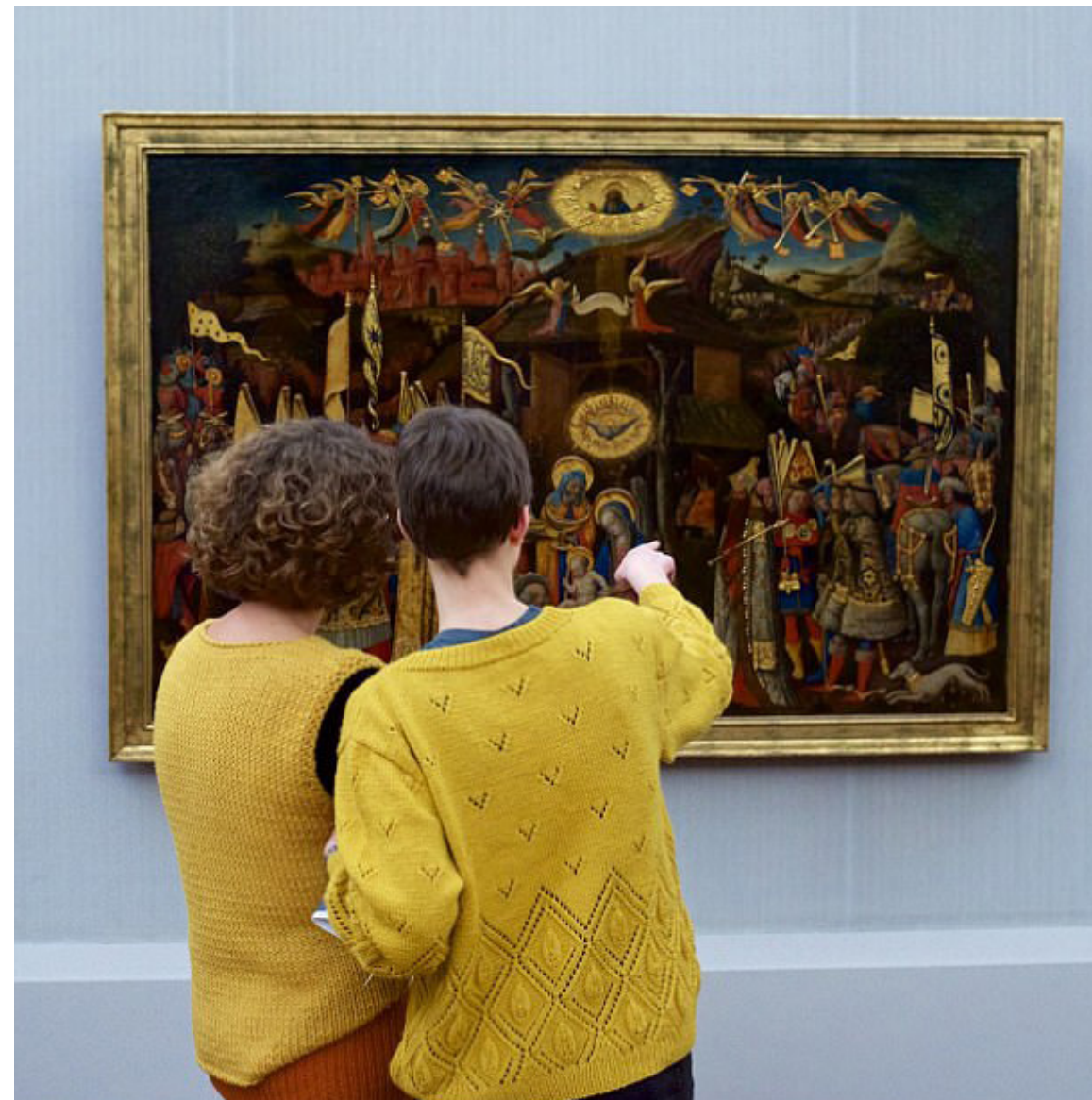
Retrieved April 7 2018

from <https://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/emotional+response>

Thesis mission and goals

Interactive experiences, specifically experiential tools, aid in creating access points into modern art by facilitating an emotional resonance into the art and therefore a deeper understanding of the art and a more meaningful museum going experience. This thesis will examine how experiential tools can facilitate emotional resonance through creative access points that allow the visitor to manipulate the environment creating interpretation for themselves and others.

The mission and goals of this thesis are understanding how experiential tools could help the user have a more meaningful connection with or understanding of modern art by enabling an emotional response in the visitor defined as *a reaction to a particular intrapsychic feeling or feelings accompanied by the psychological changes that may or may not be outwardly manifested but that motivate or precipitate some action or behavioral response.*¹¹ Though



Nomenclature

Interpretation- The action of explaining the meaning of something.

Access Point- Means of entry into comprehending and analyzing the artwork, which can be assisted by the interpretation- specifically regarding interactives.

Intellectual accessibility- A means of entry into the artwork that is facilitated by encouraging the visitor to think and access the artwork based on previous or background knowledge.

Emotional accessibility- A means of entry into the artwork that is facilitated by encouraging the visitor to think and access the artwork through reactions based on feelings evoked by the artwork.

Prototype- A written original model standard / typical example which presents a possible process of an interactive that could facilitate a deeper connection with the art through an emotional access point.

Interactive- An interactive object is one that takes user input to activate, or better yet, to generate its output. Along with artifacts, storytelling and environment design, interactive objects represent one more tool museum designers have in their arsenal as they craft experiences for visitors.

Cultural literacy- knowledge of history, contributions, and perspectives of different cultural groups, including one's own group, necessary for understanding of

reading, writing, and other media [].

Emotional resonance- A state of evoked emotion and prolonged reflection influenced by an object or experience; "a reaction to a particular intrapsychic feeling or feelings accompanied by the psychological changes that may or may not be outwardly manifested but that motivate or precipitate some action or behavioral response".

Installation- Art that is created, constructed, or installed on the site where it is exhibited, often incorporating materials or physical features on the site.¹²

Experiential tool- An in-gallery installed experience which has an aspirational reflective aspect to it resulting in emotional resonance.

Immersive- Relating to a physical or psychological experience that actively engages one's senses and may create an altered mental state.

Primary interaction- Interaction that occurs between visitors through face to face contact.

Secondary interaction- Interaction between visitors that is facilitated through a visitor viewing another's interaction and interpretation.

Perceived barriers- something that "may obstruct the wider public's interest in and ability to access contemporary art"

¹² installation art. Dictionary.com. Dictionary.com Unabridged. Random House, Inc. <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/installation-art>(accessed: February 1, 2018).

Creative Access Points- An exhibit element that by being manipulatable allows visitors to build interpretation for themselves and other visitors. In this environment, the visitor is the connector; the conduit between the visitors and the work by articulating and interpreting the work in different ways which ultimately creates meaning for other visitors.

Modern Art- An artistic movement that began around 1850 with Realism and spanned through more approaches and styles as a response to technological advances and an industrial age that caused a change in society; “aesthetically speaking, modern art is characterized by the artist’s intent to portray a subject as it exists in the world, according to his or her unique perspective and is typified by a rejection of accepted or traditional styles and values”¹³

Contemporary Art- Fine art that is being produced today starting from the late 1960s. Contemporary art movements have included pop art, photorealism, conceptualism, minimalism, as well as performance art, installation art, and street art. Many contemporary artists produce works that are stunning to viewers because of their original, unconventional approach to classic forms of art making.¹⁴

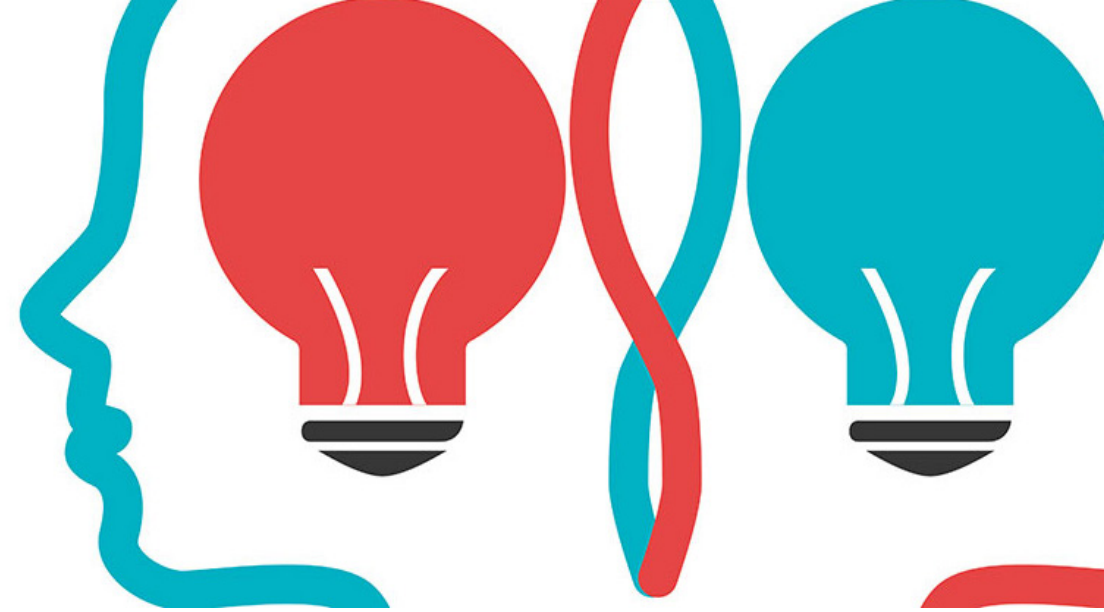
13 <http://www.theartstory.org/definition-modern-art.htm>

14 <https://mymodernmet.com/what-is-contemporary-art-definition/>



Rothko, Mark. Light Red Over Black. 1957

Chapter 2: Background



Theory

This project will consider various learning theories to assess various case studies and their ability to foster a learning connection. In recent years, art museums have progressed in ways that facilitate access points into the artwork, which allows for an enjoyable experience for a wide range of people coming from different backgrounds and demographics. Although traditionally art museums exhibit art with a short summary of the history of the work, there are many different access points into artwork including material, sensory, creative, emotional, and more. This project expects to develop criteria by which the success of an experiential exhibit can be evaluated. Experiential tools in museums around the country will be evaluated against these criteria in order to determine their effectiveness in catalyzing emotional resonance.

Explorer

The need to satisfy personal curiosity & interest in an intellectually challenging environment

Facilitator

The wish to engage in a meaningful social experience

Experience Seeker

The aspiration to be exposed to the things and ideas that exemplify what is best and most important within a culture or community

Professional or Hobbyist

The desire to further specific intellectual needs in a setting with a specific subject matter focus

Recharger

The yearning to physically, emotionally, & intellectually recharge in a beautiful and refreshing environment

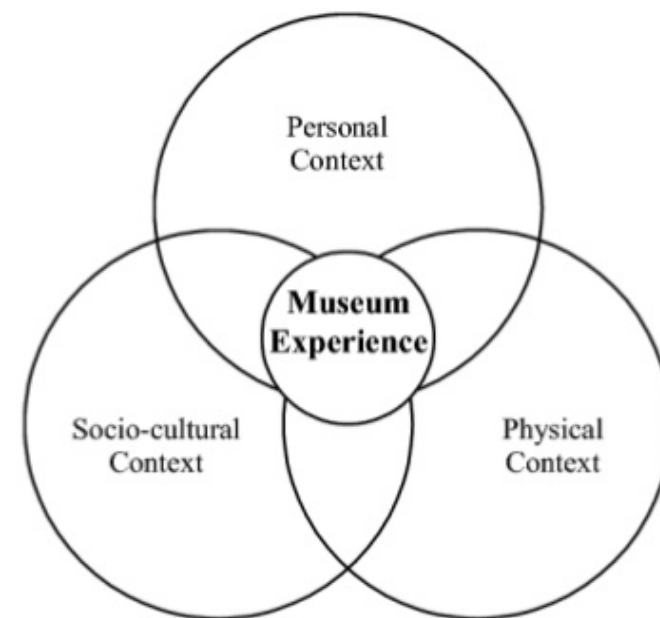
John Falk's "Identity and the Museum Experience" states that "visitors' life stories, emotions, imagination and cognition are important resources in heritage consumption"¹⁵ and also reasons why each person has an individual experience and individual takeaways from a museum visit. In his book, he "provide[s] a practical model that encourages museum institutions to interact with visitors in a manner that is tailored to their needs and identity" and examines visitor experience from different types of museums and institutions. He emphasizes how the "museum-going experience" is different for each individual and that there are many factors which can affect the experience but "the ticking of emotional boxes can make a museum visit memorable for years to come"¹⁶.

¹⁵ John H. Falk, 'Identity and the Museum Visitor Experience'

¹⁶ John H. Falk, 'Identity and the Museum Visitor Experience'

Falk and Dierking's Contextual Learning Theory "emphasizes that in order for visitors' museum experiences to be satisfying, museums need to cover the needs of all groups of visitors"¹⁷. Howard Gardner outlined the different types of visitors in his Theory of Multiple Intelligences as visual-spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, intrapersonal, interpersonal, linguistic, logical-mathematic, and ways to engage these visitors such as utilizing visuals, printed words, sound, motion, and color. Falk theory states a framework for optimal learning in the museum context based on the inherently social nature of the museum going experience. The eight factors in this theory involve: 1. personal context (motivation and expectations, prior knowledge-interests- beliefs, choice and control) which focuses on personal factors individual to each visitor; 2. Sociocultural context (within- group sociocultural mediation, and facilitated mediation by others) which focuses on meaning built by others' perspectives in a visitor's group or gallery space); and 3. Physical Context (advance organizers and orientation, design, and reinforcing events and experiences outside the museum) which focuses on the importance of a comfortable physical environment, design, and continuing the learning experience after the exhibit.

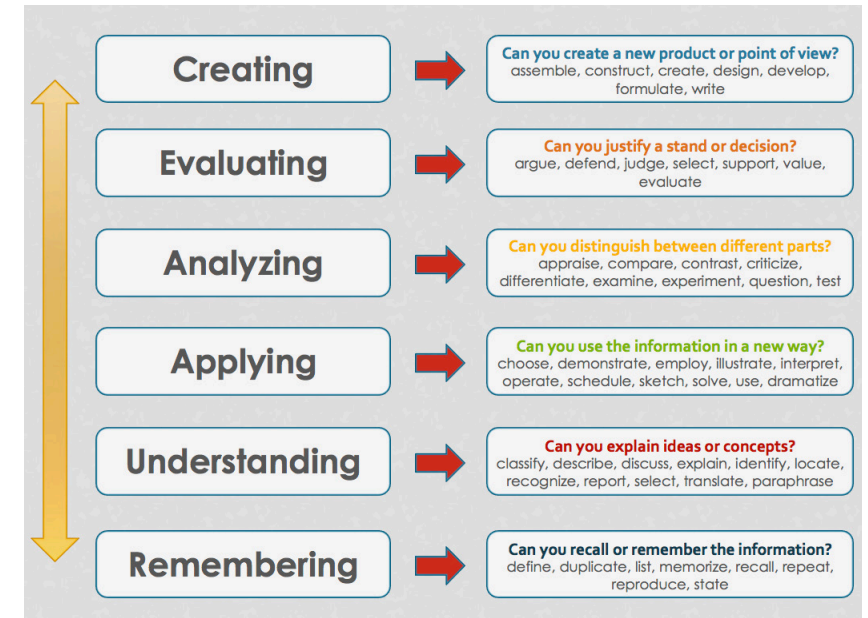
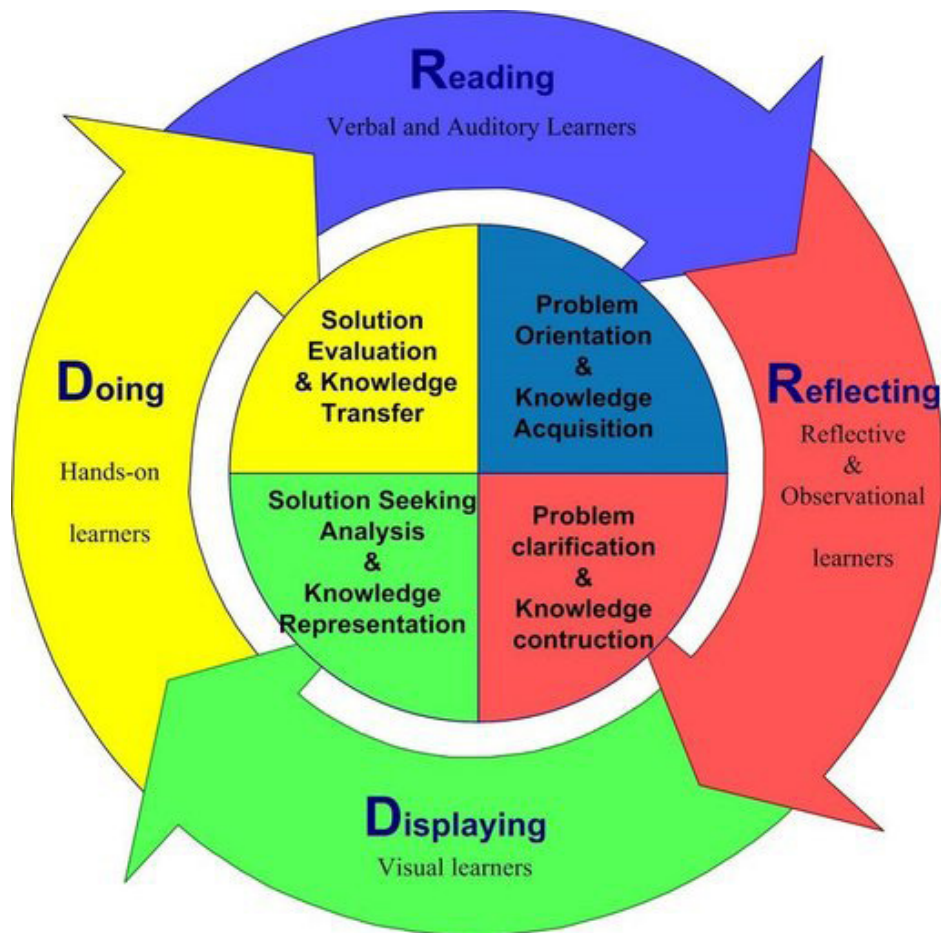
¹⁷ John H Falk and Lynn D. Dierking The Contextual Model of Learning



The Constructivist Learning Theory states that to optimize learning museums must “provide learners with the opportunity to: a) interact with sensory data, and b) construct their own world.”¹⁸ It “refers to the idea that learners construct knowledge for themselves- each learner individually (and socially) constructs meaning- as he or she learns”¹⁹. Constructivism is a philosophical position that views knowledge as the outcome of experience and others’ experience.

18 George E. Hein “Constructivist Learning Theory: The Museum and the Needs of the People” Exploratorium

19 George E. Hein “Constructivist Learning Theory: The Museum and the Needs of the People” Exploratorium



Bloom's Taxonomy of the Cognitive Domain was revised in 2001 and offers a hierarchical taxonomy of successive levels of understanding. The levels start at “remember” then “understand” then “apply, analyze, evaluate” and finally “create” stating that the final level of understanding is being able to build and understand interpretation for oneself, concluding in some type of output.²⁰

Using these various models, this thesis will explore how interactives can promote new forms of visitor experience in museums of contemporary art. As visitors create meaning for themselves and those around them, they create connection with the work and act as a conduit between other people and the work. In an environment that is manipulatable, connections will be made for others as they understand the work in different ways.

20 Huitt, W. (2011). Bloom et al.'s taxonomy of the cognitive domain. Educational Psychology Interactive. Valdosta, GA: Valdosta State University. Retrieved [date], from <http://www.edpsycinteractive.org/topics/cogsys/bloom.html> [pdf]

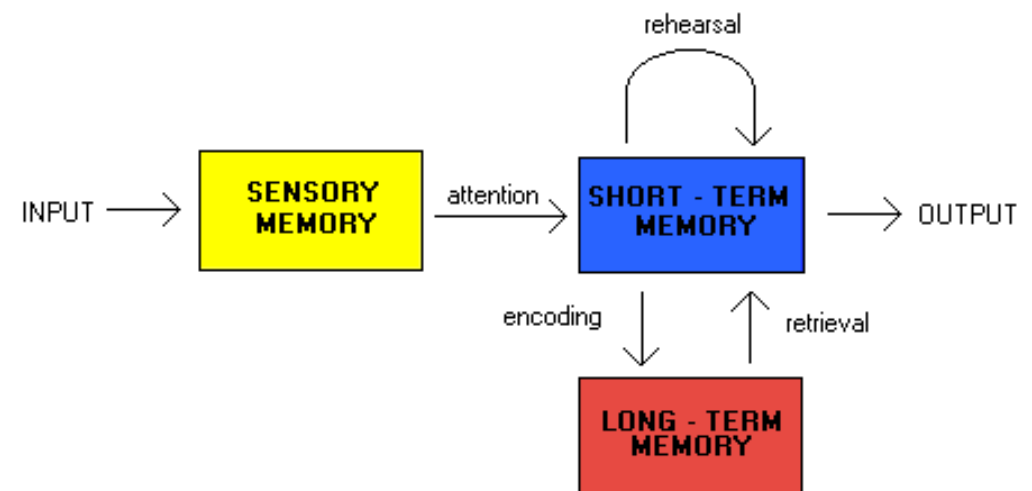
Emotional Resonance through Creative Access Points

When considering the museum, one must remember that it is an inherently social space. It has the ability to provide information in layers; one of these layers deriving from its social aspect being the ability for visitors' interpretations building on one another. Looking specifically at interpretation with art, curators have long known that the messages in contemporary art are rarely obvious, "in the first half of the twentieth century, museum curators and directors from Alfred Barr (director of the MOMA in 1929- 1943) in New York to Grace McCann Morley (director of San Francisco in 1935- 1970) in San Francisco knew that the meanings of the art of their time were far from self evident, even to the educated Americans whom they hoped to cultivate as an audience." With this in mind, and using Peter Sami's theory that "content can also provide an opportunity for introspection and reflection about...life and experiences, such self-knowledge is sometimes constructed in interactions with the others in their visiting group, and those introspections and reflections can be

rewardingly shared."²¹ It can be inferred that a valuable interpretation tool is the presence and reactions of other visitors in the gallery space. Ultimately this experience aims to lead to a more memorable experience and deeper connection with the work. A space where visitors connect to the art and also gain insight into other visitors' reactions and perspectives creates another layer of an access point. Visitors may relate to or be familiar with a visitor's interpretation, leading to a pathway to build a connection. Studies have shown "once a single chunk of information enters short term memory (STM) it has between 3 and 20 seconds to reach long term memory (LTM)" our window of opportunity is assuredly small. However "nothing enters LTM from STM unless it can be related, however tangibly, to something already in LTM". A human correspondence, recognition, or challenge could be a catalyst for the memory entering the LTM.

A creative access point is one where as visitors interact with the space and build their own interpretation, meaning making is done for others also. This facilitates an immersive environment where people are experiencing art, as well as others' feelings and interpretation

21 Peter Samis New Technologies as Part of Comprehensive Interpretive Plan



“nothing enters LTM from STM unless it can be related, however tangibly, to something already in LTM”

of the art. This creates another layer as it becomes an interpretive element. In “Making lasting memories: Remembering the Significant” James L. McGaugh’s findings conclude that “much evidence indicates that emotional arousal enhances the storage of memories, thus serving to create, selectively, lasting memories of our more important experiences.”²² Therefore, it can be concluded that something the visitor feels is emotionally resonant will be more inclined to make a lasting impression.

*Designing for Emotion*²³ by Aaron Walter talks about the important factors in creating an engaging and positive experience for website interface users due to the branding and design of the website. It is important for visitors to relate to what they are using on a human level and feel that their personality as the user is reflective of what they are using. This can be applied in exhibition design by focusing on creating an emotionally engaging experience as “emotionally charged events persist much longer in our memories and are recalled with greater accuracy than neutral memories”. The space can offer facilitation in creating “surprise, delight, anticipation, elevating perceived status”. These are all stimuli that aid in building associations, leading to the visitor being more likely to remember the experience.

22 James L. McGaugh Making lasting memories: Remembering the Significant

23 Aaron Walter, Designing for Emotion

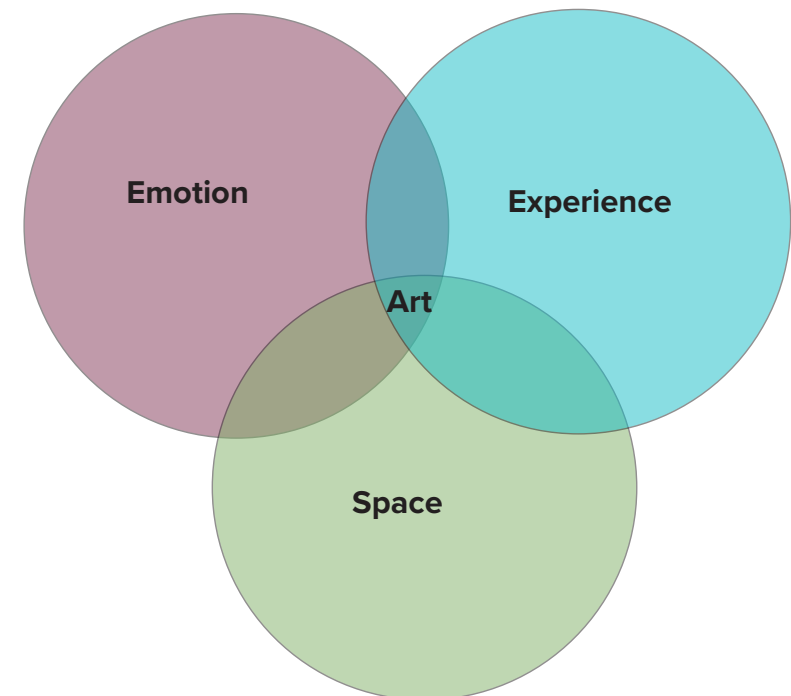
Chapter 3: Methodology



build interpretation for themselves and others. Elements and techniques of these exhibits could be adapted and applied to the exhibition design of a modern art exhibit. In these exhibits, visitors are given the tools for building their own interpretation while experiencing the art in a new way. As the visitors interpret the art for themselves, other visitors are also building interpretation, as emotional experiences resonate when we share them with other people. In these exhibits, the visitor is at the center, and able to manipulate the experience, affecting the experience of other visitors by creating interpretation. As we respond to something on an emotional level with the help of an access point, we then are able to build more meaning for ourselves. As each person has an individual perspective, while other visitors manipulate the space and convey their interpretation, more opportunities for meaning making is presented to other visitor. These cases will be evaluated based on the criteria presented on page 72.

Case studies: overview

This is an overview of the criteria, and the interviews, research, and theories which helped in determining them, for measuring the ability for an experiential tool to facilitate an emotional resonance leading to further connection with the artwork. These criteria will be synthesized through research about how emotions and memory are correlated, visitor response as well as interviews with museum professionals.



Following are examples of different types of exhibits where visitors

Case studies

Minneapolis Institute of Art- Minneapolis, Minnesota: “Institute of Hearts” Valentine’s Day at the MIA:

This is a program the MIA offers around Valentine’s Day. Upon entering, each visitor is given a paper heart to place in front of their favorite artwork. This engages visitors to think about the work and what is their favorite, leading them to think why it is their favorite and facilitate this engagement. Visitors can share their choice with the hashtag #ArtsMia, which lets visitors share and read about other people’s experiences and favorites. When walking through the

gallery, visitors can observe which artworks people tend to connect with more, which builds interpretation for other visitors. The end product in the gallery offers a new layer of interpretation.

In this exhibit visitors interact with each other through creating physical interpretation in the space by means of the hearts indicating which artworks people connect with the most. Viewing these would be considered a secondary interaction. By choosing to view #ArtsMia and contribute or comment on someone’s story, the visitor is choosing to have a primary interaction. This study offers tools for visitors to understand the artist’s intent by encouraging visitors to contribute their experience, thoughts and interpretation about the artwork on social media. There, visitors can read various interpretations, relate, agree, or disagree with a visitor’s story, and decide their own meaning of the art. For a large majority of contemporary art, artists challenge viewers to create meaning based



on their own experiences and perspectives so being exposed to other people's views and interpretations is a tool in itself for visitors to understand the art.

Analysis

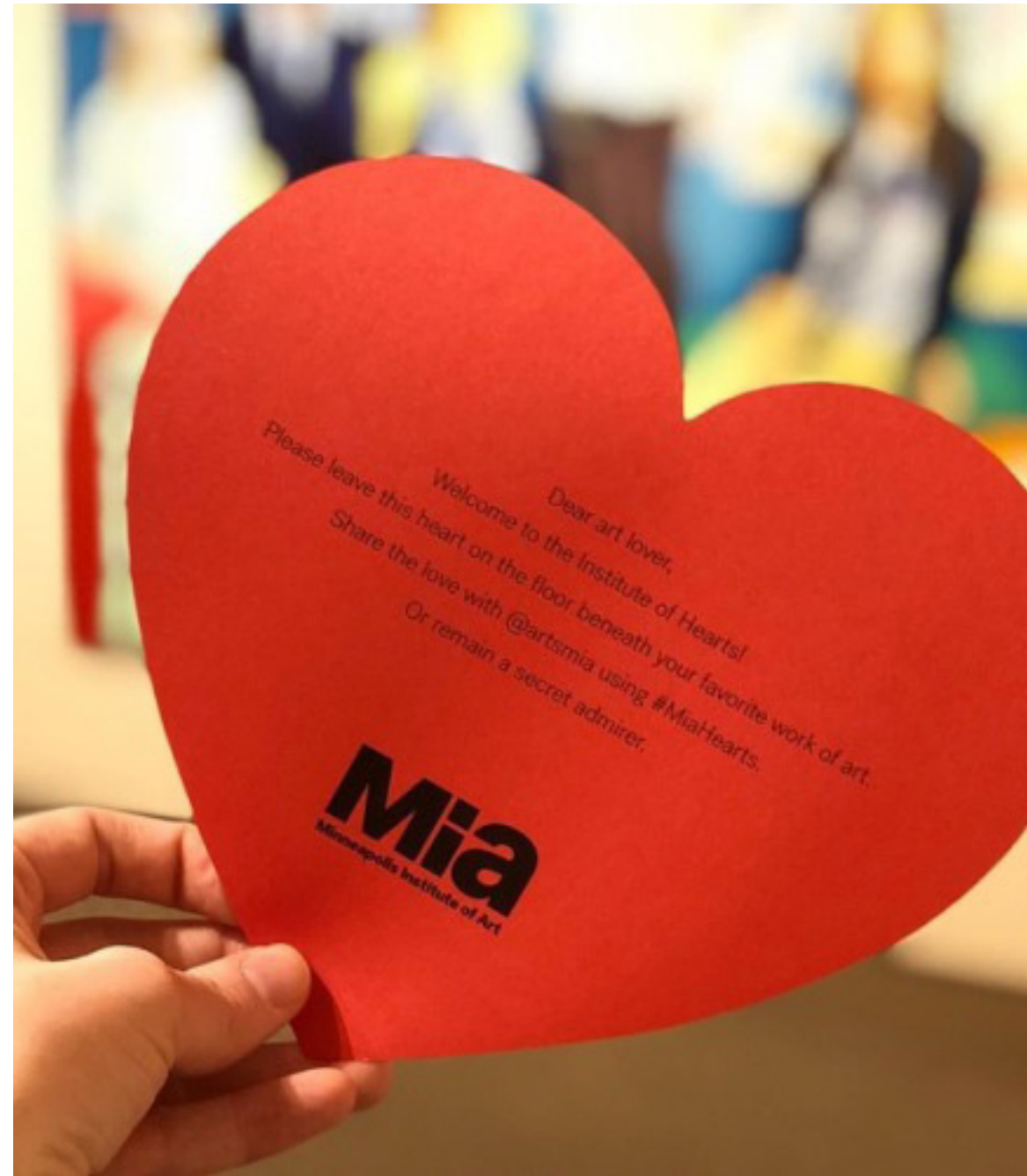
When evaluating the success of this program based on Falk's Theory, this seems effective in meeting the key factors that are fundamental to the museum learning experience. This is an optimal way to take advantage of the social aspect of a museum and facilitate engagement experiences by guaranteeing that visitors are sharing experiences and providing each other with "collaborative learning". It also creates a physical environment that promotes comfort in visitors sharing their personal stories.

When thinking about Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences, this creative access point would be beneficial to some types of learners, but not all. The types that would benefit from this would be visual-spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, and linguistic because of the visuals, printed words, motion and color. Most exhibits do not engage all types of learners, so the ability to reach those three different types of learners deems the program successful.

Based on the constructivist learning theory, this system offers advantageous information to visitors. By seeing others' constructed meanings it aids visitors in constructing their own.

Considering Bloom's Taxonomy, this is successful in facilitating a learning experience by having visitors analyze their thoughts and ideas. Visitors remember, understand, apply, analyze and evaluate their feelings of the art before choosing what piece to give their heart to and why. If they then share their story or add to the conversation on social media they are creating a visual of their story, which is interpretation for others.

This program occurs due to the correlation between enjoyment and emotion. It asks visitors to mark and share which piece they enjoy and like the most, not which one they think is the best.



Seiko Mikami “Desire of Codes” Ycam/Yamaguchi Center for Arts and Media 2010- Yamaguchi, Japan and ICC/ InterCommunication Center 2011- Tokyo, Japan

This contemporary art exhibit mimics the workings of human memory in modern society by robotic sensors responding to the presence of visitors and mixing together audio recordings from the present and past. The installation-based exhibit creates an environment where as visitors continue to interact with the space the message is further conveyed. The Atlantic Journal argues that installation-based works

such as this have “the spectacular emotional nature of festival works... [that] ultimately makes them more accessible to viewers who may feel excluded from the conceptually aloof art found in many institutions”²⁴. This case study is a contemporary art exhibit by a contemporary artist, not an exhibit designer who designed the exhibit with the intent to give tools to interpret the work; however it is an example of an exhibit that creates and reveals meaning as visitors interact with it. Aspects of this exhibit could be borrowed and utilized in exhibition design.

Visitors interact with each other, but through a secondary interaction-catalyzed by the environment, giving evidence of other visitors in the vicinity. The exhibit facilitates interaction by creating video and audio from surveillance of the visitors which creates an integral part of the exhibition. The visitors become an element of the exhibit by means of inhabiting the space. In this exhibit about memory, visitors are offered the tools to understand the artist’s intent by playing an active role in

24 Jenny Filippetti, “Seiko Mikami: Desire of Codes Installation” Design-Boom

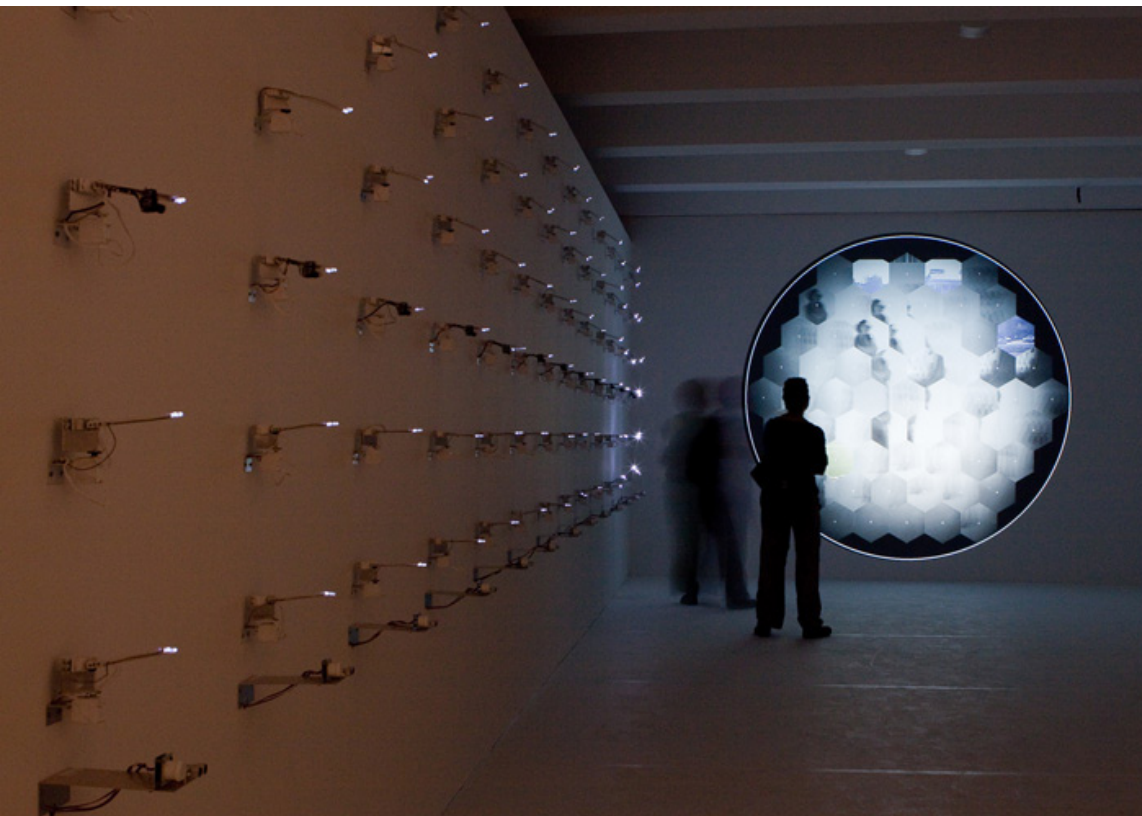


the exhibit and having the environment react to their presence. This active role and immersion in the exhibit could make visitors feel more engaged, leading to a deeper analysis and connection. This type of exhibit could also be used to start conversations between visitors as a person's environment will be affected by the presence of another person. This produces an environment that interprets its surroundings to develop into the final product and allows the visitor to see their role in the space.

Analysis

When evaluating this exhibit based on Falk's theories, the nature of the exhibit is successful in satisfying the needs of the visitors. By having sensors respond to a person, that person then has an individual experience. On a larger scale, all visitors also have a collective experience based on the social construct of the exhibit,

which could help lead to conversations among the visitors. By being in this exhibit, one is fully immersed in the environment, even becoming a part of it which could lead to lasting impressions. However, in order to determine if this exhibit was physically and emotionally comfortable, one would have to conduct visitor surveys. The dim ominous room with cameras from the ceiling on sensors moving towards visitors and the sound of robotic audio may not make for the most comfortable environment. If these are the results we must deduce why the artist intended visitors to feel a certain way inside the exhibit, which leads to the purpose and artist intent. As this is not a museum exhibit design with interpretation about a collection, this does not consider the different types of learners put forward in Gardner's theory. However, this type of immersion could be beneficial for visual spatial learners, bodily kinesthetic, musical possibly because of the audio, interpersonal by relating visitors and intrapersonal by bringing awareness to the visitor of how they affect their surroundings. This exhibit also does not explicitly respond to Bloom's Taxonomy, rather standing as a metaphor for visitors to analyze and contemplate its meaning. By entering this exhibit, the visitor becomes an active participant and will be further engaged based on if they are enjoying themselves or not.



Dallas Museum of Art- Dallas, Texas: Center for Creative Connections:

This is a program implemented in May 2008 “intended to stimulate curiosity, inquiry, reflection and creativity in guests of all ages as they connect more deeply with works of art”²⁵. This case study is an example of programming that aims to help visitors find access points into the art and is targeted towards families and children, however Jessica Fuentes, educator at the DMA states that “many people within our institution assume that we mostly have visitors that are families and young children because this is often seen as a “kids space”. However, we are learning that the largest group of visitors we see is Young Adults and over 50% of visitors that come in groups come in adult only groups”. This evidences that this type of interpretation fosters emotional connections into the artwork with an interactive space for a wide range of people.

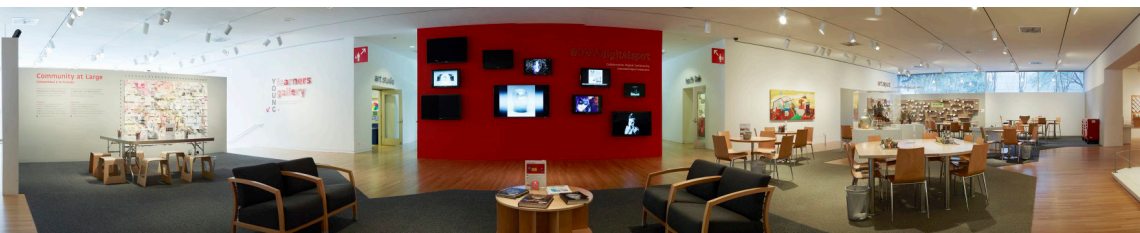
The engagement in this space is mostly facilitated by prompts which encourage visitors to think, write, and draw based on themes presented in the artwork. Fuentes determines which prompts are in the gallery by deciding which will “get visitors thinking or talking about works of art”. Based on the themes and ideas the curators

25 <https://www.dma.org/press-release/dma-opens-center-creative-connections>

and educators want visitor to take away, they “create activities that will appeal to various leaning styles and ages, and offering social/communal experience”. These experiences are tactile and mimic the content, which is painting and drawing. Visitor analysis is collected through observational data collection multiple times a week which helps determine what type of prompt is attracting the most engagement.

Analysis

In this space, visitors interact with one another. Prompts are set to ask visitors to partner up and do an action or start a conversation- for example, in the portrait section, visitors are asked to partner up and “pose” their sitter before drawing them. This type of prompt facilitates a primary interaction. Visitors can also find a type secondary interaction in being in a shared environment with other people responding to the same prompts.

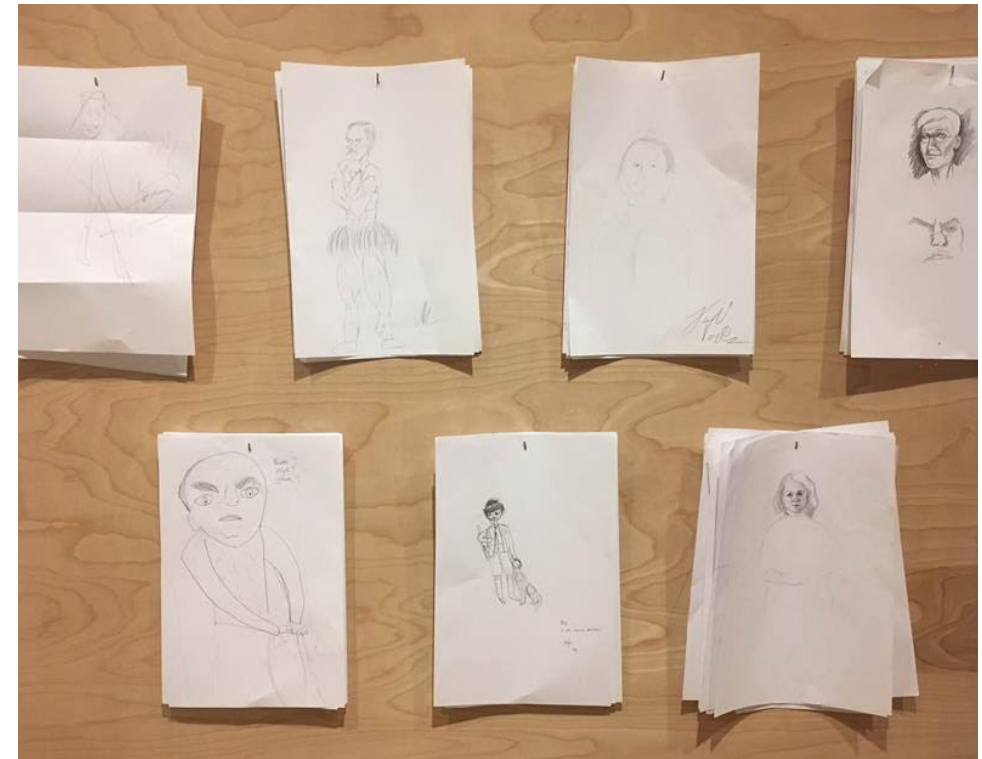
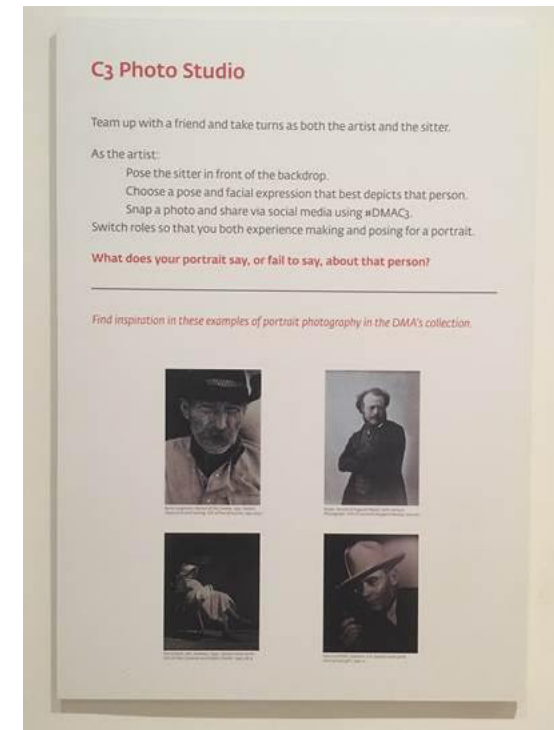


This type of programming definitely offers tools for visitors to understand the artist's intent. The prompt is created to facilitate understanding of what message the curators want to be received from the work. The “end product” of this space is evidence of visitors engaging with the work and engaging with each other, as some prompts ask for visitors to team up.

When thinking about Falk's Theory in this environment, it can be seen how a person would want to physically engage by answering or following the steps of a prompt. Someone who does not have previous interest in the subject may be less inclined to take the steps to engage with various prompts. A range of varying types of prompts could help ensure different types of people and interests are likely to get involved. The social nature of the prompts, which ask people to work together or share their opinions, improves the sociocultural context of the visit. The engagement of other visitors can be beneficial in a space such as this which could help other visitors feel more comfortable engaging and not feeling like they would feel out of space.

This space can aid many different types of learners, as different prompts ask the visitors to perform different tasks which include drawing another visitor, or drawing the works on view. Fuentes adds that “the activities... offer[ed] in the other gallery spaces are intended to appeal to other learning styles/interests like narrative writing or building.” When thinking about Bloom's Taxonomy, considering that most of the prompts ask the visitor to create something, this space would suggest an optimal learning environment.

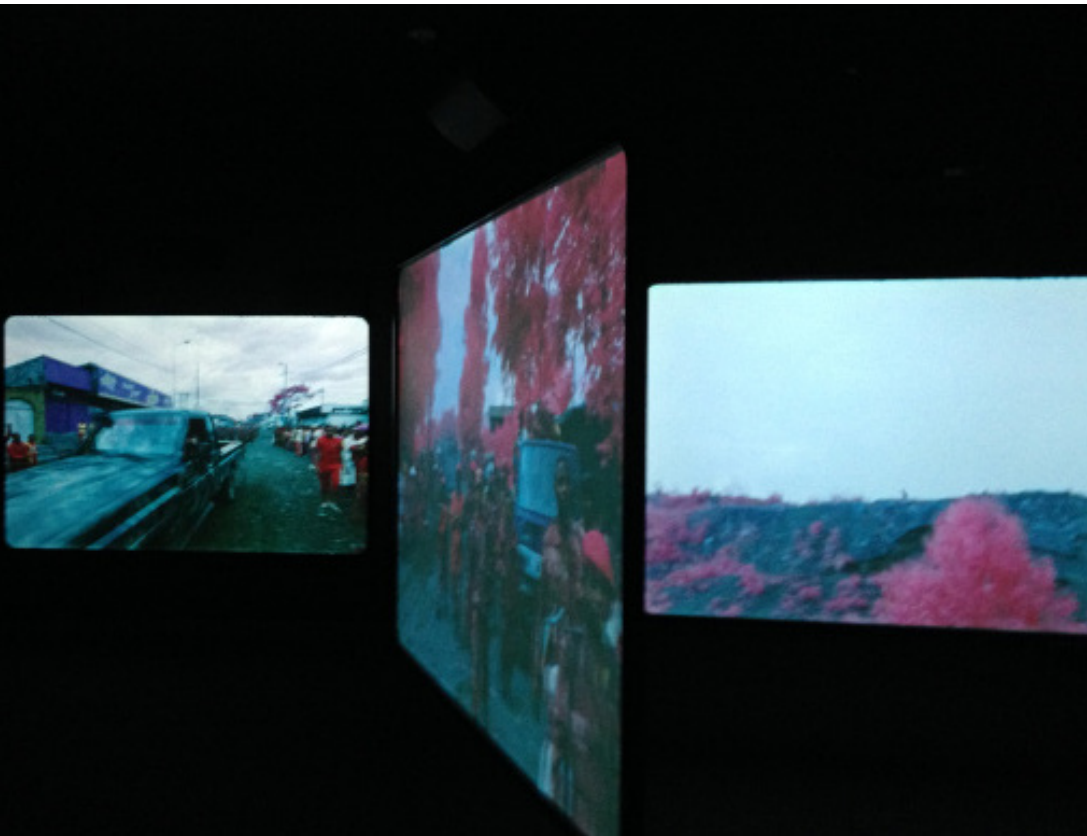
In this space, the correlation between enjoyment and emotion exists in the fact that visitors are more likely to engage with prompts that they deduce will end up with them enjoying themselves. The idea is that if someone enjoys observing or doing something, they will have a higher probability of participating in such an activity or observation.



Portland Art Museum- Portland, Oregon: “The Enclave”

This is a contemporary art video installation on view from 2014-2015 by Richard Mosse. The video consisted of military footage documenting the “humanitarian disaster in the Republic of the Congo”²⁶. The exhibit consisted of an area of the gallery devoted to visitor personal interpretation and response, along with postcards to invite written responses. Exhibits like these allow visitors to interpret the art based on “I saw, I heard, I felt”. This is a successful

26 Mike Murawski, Kristin Bayans, Phillippa Pitts “Building Meaningful Interpretation around Unsettling contemporary art” *Art Museum Teaching*



way to create access points into the artwork and have visitors share experiences and ideas. Visitors may relate to other visitors' responses and find emotional resonance with others.

Analysis

This type of prompt encourages personal engagement with the art, as well as engagement among visitors. Visitors are led to interact with others in a secondary way, being able to read each others' responses. This could be more beneficial when dealing with issues such as this exhibit does, as sometimes people have a more introspective response about horrific human acts such as genocide and would not like to be approached to converse about it. “The Enclave” is a non linear video set up on six double sided screens, forcing the video to be immersed in the exhibit. When dealing with issues such as genocide, each person has the tools inside them to interpret the work; to think about morality. By having prompts that say “I saw, I heard, I felt” it validates whatever visitors may choose to share, as feelings cannot be “wrong” while also encouraging the visitor to analyze what the videos made them feel in order to have a more meaningful experience. Based off the end product, a visitor can go through the exhibit and then view other visitors' reflections and thoughts, leading to another layer of interpretation in the gallery. It does not explain the work, but it offers multiple viewpoints and perspectives.

When considering Falk's theory, this use of collected viewpoints is beneficial for museum goers to build connections. They are able to put forward their beliefs, which speaks to the personal context. Socially, the introspective nature of the prompt allows meaning built by other's perspectives in a space where all views are validated. The actual video installation is set up to make the visitors feel engrossed and almost overpowered by the large video screens. However, the area of creative access points via others' reflections allows the visitor a little more space to think clearly about the video exhibit. This type of space also benefits multiple types of learners. With this space, the exhibit utilizes visuals, sound (videos) printed words (reflections)



P

REFLECTING ON THE ENCLAVE

November 8, 2014 – February 15, 2015

To learn more about this piece and the ongoing conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo, visit portlandartmuseum.org/enclave

Waters and pink
shrubs. Men and
women with guns.

Grass that
hid the soldiers
from death.
Death found
them anyway.

a lullaby over
the water.
I don't know
the words, but
they sound
hopeful.

a deafening
buzz, a heavy
screech,
approaching,
foreboding
darkness.

anxiety and
sadness upon
knowing
what was
inevitably
coming.

and this death
is on loop.
One lives to die
and dies and
dies. Reunited but
not long.

Image: Richard Mosse, *Platon*, North Kivu, eastern Congo, 2012

Farm near Bihambwe, Masisi Territory, North Kivu. This rich pastureland is fiercely fought over in an escalating territorial conflict. Originally owned by indigenous Congolese tribes, who subsist by growing crops and hunting bush meat, this landscape was seized by pastoralist tribes, such as the Tutsi, who have cut through the primordial forests to create pasture for their cattle. Farmers are dispossessed through intimidation and human rights violations. Image courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery.

color (neon lights) and motion (videos move throughout to view the continuous video). These elements together are ways to captivate audience of all learning types.

This type of creative access points/reflection space allows visitors to create, reaching the highest level of comprehension in Bloom's Taxonomy. Although simple, asking "I heard, I saw, I felt" prompts visitors to recall the basic concepts, understand them, and apply them outside of being immersed in the video exhibit to this new creative access point environment. They then analyze their ideas by being exposed to other peoples perspectives and evaluate their stand. Finally, they then create by authoring a postcard and adding it to the exhibit space.

When looking at the correlation between enjoyment and emotion here one can see that "enjoyment" has been replaced with another emotion. As the exhibit is about genocide, "enjoyment" as a visitor response is inappropriate. The emotional response for the content that would rise would be indignation, outrage, or shock. However the more intense a reaction is felt, the person is more able to remember what they are seeing. Therefore, by facilitating an emotional access point, people will be more interested in the content which can transfer to an "enjoying" experience.

Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum- New York, New York: Immersion Room

The Immersion Room is an interactive room that allows the visitors to “view Cooper Hewitt’s extraordinary collection of wall coverings as never before”²⁷. Visitors can browse through the extensive collection of wallpapers, and project them around the room from floor to ceiling. This allows visitors to view the wallpaper in a relevant context while also offering a hands on experience. Visitors can also decide to design their own wallpaper to project onto the walls. The person

²⁷ <https://www.cooperhewitt.org/events/current-exhibitions/immersion-room/>

currently interacting with the interactive controls the experience for the entire room, creating a collective experience for the visitors. This shared experience facilitates a type of secondary interaction with the visitors as they are all viewing the same artwork collectively. This type of space where visitors have a communal experience could help facilitate conversation between visitors. Furthermore, visitors are able to create meaning through viewing other visitors’ responses and reactions.

With visitor interaction, the room constantly goes through changes by different wallpaper being projected on the walls. With each changing projection, visitors can view the images how they were originally intended to be viewed. Visitors can then identify elements that are successful in creating wallpaper, and utilize these elements in their own design which can then be projected. The visitor designs can be evidence of general likes and dislikes, what color and pattern choices people were drawn to and technically it could be determined if the visitors were understanding the main elements of wallpaper design.

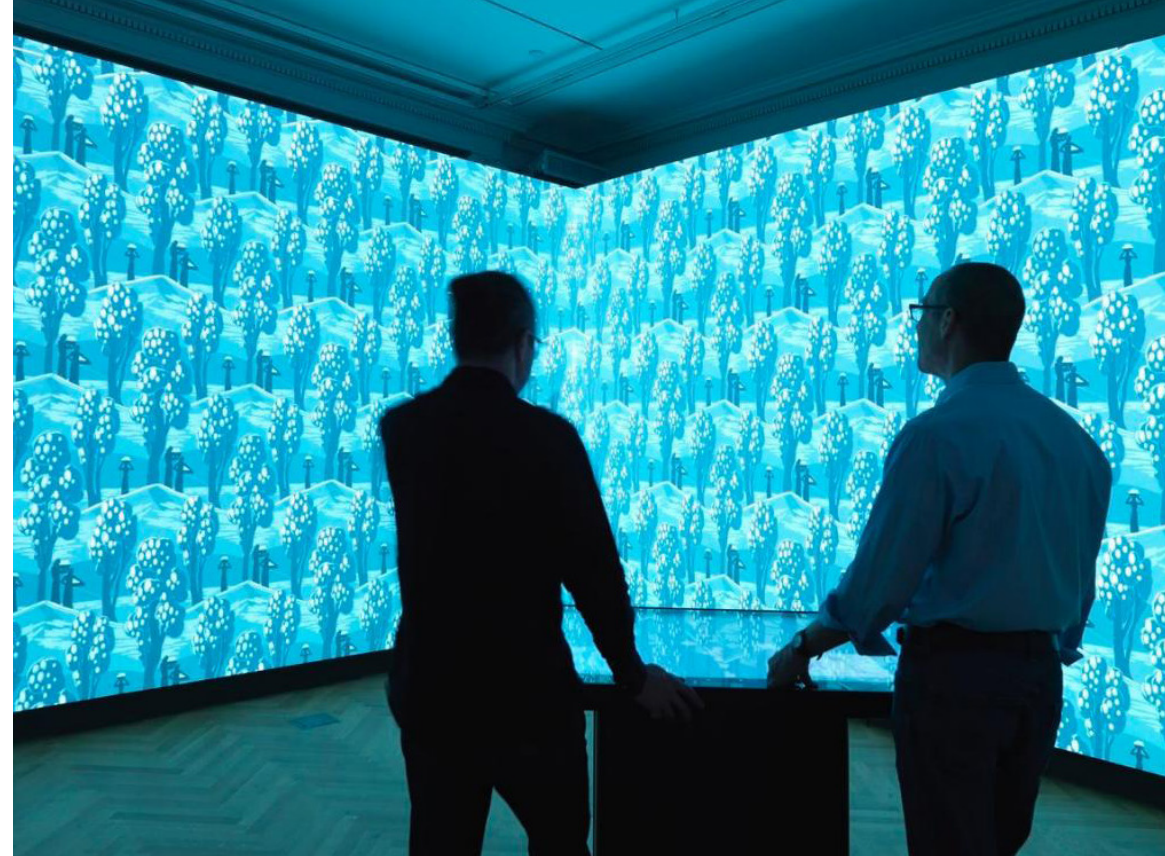


This type of space speaks strongly to the sociocultural context of an exhibit experience and focuses on the mediation of others as a central aspect and a byproduct of the interactive.

An immersive space which surrounds the visitors physically in the content appeals to multiple intelligences in Gardner's theory as these types of spaces use visuals, color, making and creating elements to engage the visitor. Different visitors can choose to control the interactive or be a spectator, depending on their learning type. Constructivist learning theory states that an optimal environment allows visitors to "construct their own world" which is a strong element of this type of space. Visitors can choose which wallpaper to use in their environment and showing an audience their style can facilitate an emotional connection with the work.

This space adheres to Bloom's taxonomy by allowing visitors to scroll through the wallpaper which could help spark a memory or personal connection into the context-which follows the steps of remembering then understanding. It then asks them to create their own based on their personal preferences which adheres the to next steps of applying, analyzing, evaluating and creating.

In this space, there is a correlation between enjoyment and emotion as people are controlling the wallpaper and creating their own based on what they like. A driving motivation of this experience is that a person will find enjoyment by controlling the floor to ceiling projections, engrossing the visitor in the wallpaper of their choosing and design.



Yayoi Kusama “The Obliteration Room” Queensland Art Gallery’s fourth Asian Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art, 2002, various locations since, including David Zwirner Gallery, New York, New York 2015

Yayoi Kusama’s “The Obliteration Room” is a contemporary art exhibit by Japanese artist Yayoi Kusama which was featured in The David Zwirner Gallery in “Give Me Love” 2015. Previously “The Obliteration Room” had been exhibited in Japan since 2002. In this exhibit, a traditional suburban American house was fabricated, furnished with typical furniture and painted completely white. As visitors entered

they were given a sheet of stickers with dots of varying size and told to put them anywhere inside the house. The result of this is a room that changes over time because of visitor participation. Eventually the room becomes a blur of colors put down by visitors over time. It becomes a collective process of visitors leaving their mark on the exhibit and together creating a space that evidences use throughout time. Visitors’ human mode of operation brings visitor participation into a central topic of the work.

Analysis

Visitors can interact with each other primarily or secondarily here. The collaborative nature of the process could lend to more conversations started between visitors. However, throughout the process the exhibit is evidence of what has happened over time, people who co-inhabited that space at different times can think about other people’s marks- why did they put it so high? So low? Was it a child? Visitors collaborate on patterns, placing smaller dots in the center of bigger dots. Putting visitors in a space where they are a part of the



environment and where their presence and actions are a part of the artistic process, makes visitors more engaged. It also gives visitors the tools to understand the artist's intent because having a part in the creation of a space allows visitors to think about the message in relation to themselves. The artist uses visitor collaboration to create an exhibit that evidences the participation of visitors throughout time. This exhibit is a collaborative process over time, and allows the visitors some authorship in the end product of the exhibit. This could lead to the visitor having a more personal interest in the exhibit. This type of collaboration lends well when evaluating the sociocultural context, as the entire experience becomes a collaborative process which forces visitors to work together and consider the space as a whole with the other visitors inhabiting the space. Being able to completely walk around this environment, which looks like the interior of a house, something universally related to, puts the visitor in a physical environment that alters their perception and ultimately is exciting.

This does not explicitly consider Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences. There is no clear interpretation, only visitor participated immersion which resonates with most people. However, being able to touch and create in this exhibit speaks to a variety of learners- visual-spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, and uses colorful visuals to entice the viewer.

The constructivist learning theory can be applied when thinking about this exhibit. Its open-ended nature allows for visitors to construct their own meaning based on the exhibit around them and how people are interacting with it. This tactic provides users with the "opportunity to: a) interact with sensory data, and b) construct their own world" which is the basis of this theory.

Bloom's Taxonomy of the Cognitive Domain could be loosely applied here when considering the thought process of the visitors. The recognizable interior could cause visitors to "remember" and then as they move throughout the exhibit begin to understand, apply, analyze

and evaluate- ending with creating by placing their stickers on the interior. However, it could also be looked at that after the first step of association with the home interior, the act of creating helps the visitor then analyze and evaluate the art.

In this exhibit there is some correlation between enjoyment and emotion. Although there is no recorded evidence of visitor experiences and thoughts, the art exhibition has a sense of being awe inspiring and meaningful to visitors who have experienced traveling through a participatory exhibit, adding their mark and viewing the marks of others. This experience can be meaningful to remind people of their insignificance in the vast world around us.



Rothko Chapel- Houston, TX

Mark Rothko was commissioned to create a space the goal of which is to be “a sacred space open to all, every day, to inspire people to action through art and contemplation, to nurture reverence for the highest aspirations of humanity, and to provide a forum for global concerns” that would house his large scale abstract expressionist paintings. People come to this space as a spiritual destination for all faiths and it is regarded by its creators as a “religious building”. In spaces such as chapels, people adhere to social norms and are generally more solemn. In every space people enter, there are design cues which indicate to people what type of behavior is acceptable in the space such as noise level, materials used, lighting,

other sensory experiences such as smell, and the way spaces are set up. Because of the design, people in the Rothko Chapel are already feeling spiritual and emotionally resonant as they move through the space, helping them to more likely be in a contemplative state when approaching the artwork.

Analysis

In this space the interaction between visitors can be seen as respectful, as one inherently knows how to act in a chapel, or a church. The interaction is an overall connection which happens from being in a sacred space. By feeling and observing other people being reflective, one is influenced to also be affected by the atmosphere and have a spiritual or reflective experience. Just this atmosphere can influence visitors to access the tools inside them necessary to interpret and think about modern art. In this circumstance, the “end result” or product of the space is that it does become a sacred space where visitors act differently than they do outside of the space. This type of design conveys an indication to visitors that the mood is pensive and the work should be reflected over.



Considering Falk's Theory, the spiritual nature of the chapel is an ideal space for people to ponder their own thoughts and motivations. A chapel is a place where universally people have a reason to go. The sociocultural context can be looked at as a positive, where people go to access the same mindset. However, this type of design does not facilitate as much conversation and interpretation building between visitors as much as other case studies. While a spiritual space can be a universal access point into thinking about art, this space does not include ways to involve various learning intelligences. The space allows visitors to construct their own meanings. In this case, the "sensory data" visitors interact with would be utilizing the tools given to arrive at a transcendent psychological state. Bloom's Taxonomy cannot be applied here, because the visitors are not creating anything tangible.

The correlation between enjoyment and emotions in this space relies on enjoyment coming from relaxation and a meditative mindset. Spiritual spaces create enjoyment in that they are mentally reviving and rejuvenating.



Chapter 4:

Project Application

Criteria

This thesis aims to explore in-gallery experiential tools which create access into the art through emotional resonance. This project will put forth criteria on how to evaluate an optimal experience in a environment where visitor interpretation manipulates other visitor interpretations. The criteria developed could be utilized by others who are looking at ways to help visitors understand modern art through experiential tools. A successful model which incorporates all criteria will resonate with the visitor and make them feel like a deep connection was facilitated through use of creative access points.

It is important that all people have access to view art, this thesis focuses on access into modern art. In this genre forms and imagery is abstracted while artists use painterly techniques such as texture, color, and brushstrokes to convey their feelings and viewpoints. These techniques and way of painting was adopted into contemporary art as well. In a contemporary art exhibit, the artist is usually living and therefore designing every aspect of their exhibition.

Any type of interpretation would be developed and designed by the artist as a part of the exhibit. Therefore this project focuses on modern art which gives curators and exhibit designers more ability to work together to convey to the visitors what the exhibit is about.

Questions to be considered for case studies:

1 Do visitors interact with each other? Is this through primary interaction or secondary interaction ?

2 Does this offer tools for visitors to understand the artist's intent? This must be evaluated considering for a large majority of modern and contemporary art, artists challenge viewers to create meaning based on their own experiences and perspectives.

3 What can be understood and deduced based on the end product? Does the end product in itself become interpretation? Interpretation can be defined as a conception or explanation of another's work. Does this consider Falk's Theory of "Identity and Museum Experience"

4 Does this consider Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences

5 Does this consider the Constructivist Learning Theory?

6 Does this consider Bloom's Taxonomy?

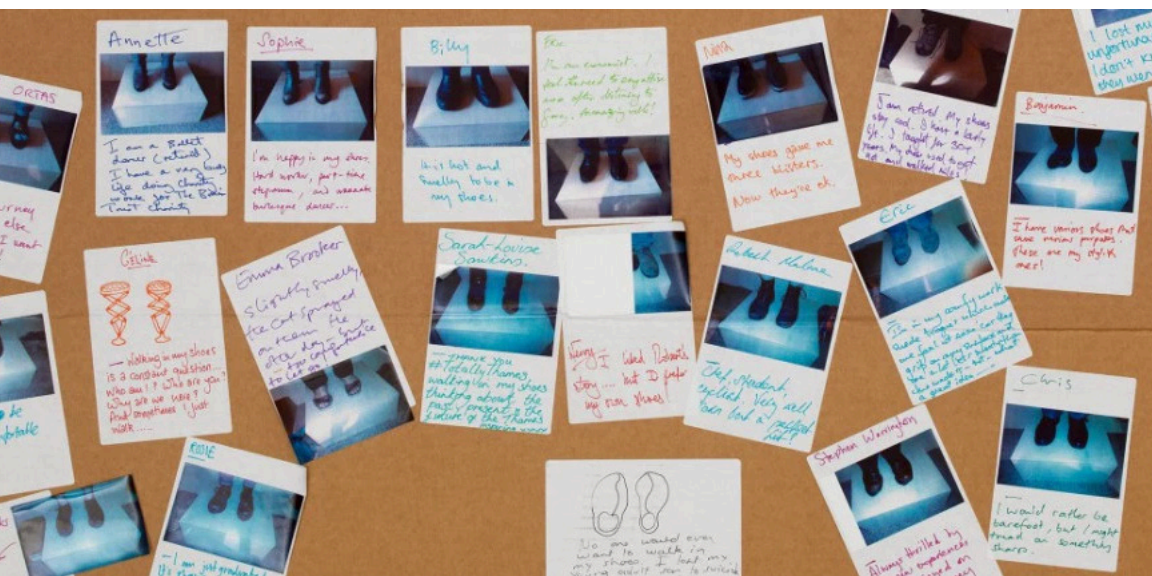
7 Is there a correlation between enjoyment and emotion?



Pollock, Jackson. Number 3. 1952

Summary

Findings conclude that several elements contributed to the success of creative access points as access points into modern art. Many contemporary art exhibit practices could be applied to the exhibition tactics of modern art to set the tone which can evoke more emotional resonance with the work. With contemporary art, the artist has a large role in the exhibit process of their work and elements such as lighting and architecture around the work provide insight into the artist's intent. Using the optimal exhibit design elements is important to how the visitors perceive the space to determine what elements of the exhibition should have more attention.



74 Stories written by visitors participating in the *A Mile in My Shoes* exhibit, Empathy Museum.

When dealing with difficult topics, creative access points can be extremely beneficial in displaying modern art in order to evoke an emotional response. Being exposed to other people's thoughts and ideas expands the visitor's ability of meaning making for themselves. This is most beneficial when the prompt asks visitors to share their feelings and thoughts based on how they feel. Modern art can benefit from elements of immersion- in that it utilizes various aspects to involve the visitor which can be a more engaging experience for some people than trying to understand a two-dimensional painting. A type of immersion is an area of visitor responses which facilitates connection and meaning making for the visitor.

Visitors tend to interact with each other secondarily because of the nature of the space: that people will view other's interpretation and meaning making. This could facilitate primary interaction by aiding in starting conversations between visitors. This space evidences the visitor response over time. Spaces that accumulate visitor response can be used as a way to measure engagement and success of the exhibit. This raises some questions such as: does this become interpretation? This can offer tools to understand the artist intent based on shared responses visitors can grasp a more well-rounded view point and see what resonated with other people. Considering for a large majority of contemporary art, artists challenge viewers to create meaning based on their own experiences and perspectives a large range of readable viewpoints can be a very beneficial way to increase understanding of the art.

This analysis strived to understand if there is a difference for the visitor between commenting on an exhibit and actually participating in the exhibit and which would be remembered as more meaningful- or if they are meaningful in different ways. In the "Institute of Hearts" exhibit at MIA, visitors participated in sharing their paper hearts which created the program. They participated in altering some type of interpretation for other visitors and in community creating a network of people sharing their favorite works of art and giving ownership



Pollock, Jackson. *Mural*.

to the visitors for the final product of the program. In the “Desire of Codes” as the exhibit reacts to the presence of visitors, visitors become an integral part of the exhibition which also gives visitors a sense of ownership or ability to change the course of the exhibit. The effect is similar in the “Immersion Room” and the “Obliteration Room”. At the C3 gallery at the DMA, visitors participated in various activities based off of prompts which can help them remember the experience more. In “The Enclave” visitors comment on the exhibit by sharing their feelings in a designated area. This could be just as effective as being remembered as meaningful if the visitor is triggered emotionally by reading other responses. In Rothko’s Chapel, the visitor’s involvement is their presence and changed demeanor in response to the atmosphere.

Considerations

Budget

Many of these experiences are extremely costly to produce due to the rise in use of technology such as Virtual Reality and projection mapping. However there are ways that these types of experiences can be developed and designed to be less expensive, such as something like MIA’s “Institute of Hearts”. In The Rothko Chapel, the experience is created with design choices that act as signifiers to visitors which shows that the right design choices can be guide to what you should focus on and how to act in a space.

Artist’s Intent

Working with the artist from the conception of the exhibit process is critical in being able to determine what type of creative access points are appropriate for any given exhibit or pieces of art in contemporary art. When dealing with modern art and artists that are no longer living, the exhibit designer must keep the intent of the artist in mind when creating a way to facilitate interpretation.

Curator's Viewpoint

In art museums, curators are responsible for developing all content for the exhibition. Amanda Sroka, Curator of Contemporary Art at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, elaborates on this process, saying that the curator works closely with the artist if the artist is living. For exhibitions where the artist is no longer living, curators determine the best way to exhibit the work based on contextual knowledge of the time and artist. In the most optimal case, the curator and exhibition designer would work together from the beginning of the development process to determine the “why” and “how” of the interpretive element and how it can be seamlessly designed into the space.

Space Availability

Space for additional elements may be limited in small museums or galleries. These creative access points may be most suited in a separate room or area depending on the specific project. The example for Landscapes Behind Cézanne at the Princeton Art Museum is best suited in its own area, which visitors experience before entering the main exhibit. In this example, this space is used as a transition space to give visitors the tools they need to assist the way they are thinking about the art. The proposed design for Léger: Modern Art and the Metropolis at the Philadelphia Museum of Art is an immersive element inside the exhibit where as visitors view the art they are able to see differently and therefore add their thoughts and feelings to this creative access point.

Audience

When designing interactive elements, it is important to keep your visitor in mind. An interactive element that may be ideal for adults may not be for children or families and vice versa. The best way to approach determining the design is to correspond the targeted audience to the targeted audience of the museum or gallery.



Brooklyn Museum of Art, Brooklyn, NY

Chapter 5:

Evaluation Schema

Findings

This thesis will put forward examples of ways the findings can be used to create a creative access points, and an optimal modern art viewing experience. These examples will be developed based on three tactics that were determined to be beneficial aspects in creating access points. These tactics are Response Area, Immersive Elements, and experiential exhibit design elements. These examples may be adaptable to other exhibits and artists depending on the content. Ultimately, they provide examples of ways you would create access points for visitors to understand the content.

Response Area

Exhibits that utilized response areas benefited from visitors being able to observe others' thoughts and experiences while also being able to share their own. In this type of space, visitors build meaning off of other interpretations. This tactic is especially useful in exhibits that deal with difficult topics such as genocide. Topics such as these correspond to prompts that ask the visitor to share their feelings based on prompts such as "I saw, I heard, I felt" demonstrated in "The

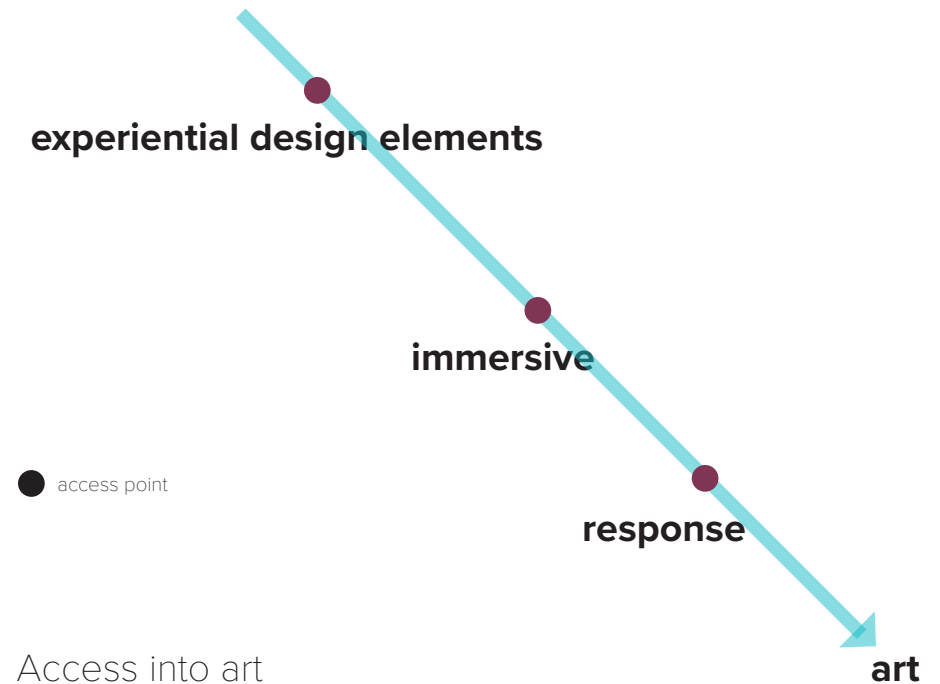
Enclave”. Some response areas are clearly marked as so, while other responses are more subtle, such as the “Institute of Hearts” which urged visitors to share on social media.

Immersive Elements

Various contemporary artists have begun to use immersive elements in their art in order to engage the visitor such as “Desire of Codes” and “Obliteration Room” and many more that captures the visitor through different sensory aspects. These types of spaces utilize various aspects to involve the visitor during their experience. This could include sensory elements and/ or elements that ask the visitor to interact physically or mentally with the content.

Experiential Design Elements

Experiential design elements are critical when aiming to create emotional resonance with the art and should be used with designing the creative access points and also when considering the complete gallery space. Exhibit design sets the tone of the space and can provide cues for visitors to understand what elements are the most important, where one should pause and observe, where one can relax. Lighting can guide visitors and act as visual cues. These types of cues are practiced in the exhibition of contemporary art, as the minimalistic approach stresses the importance of simple but clear visual cues. The comfortability of the space is conceived based on the way the space is designed. A way creative access points may be integrated into a gallery space could be through transition areas leading into the main gallery. Therefore, the space will lead visitors to begin thinking in a way that promotes achieving access points into the art and begin to understand the intent of the exhibit. This term is used here to influence people to engage and immerse in the artwork, not about being environmentally immersive.

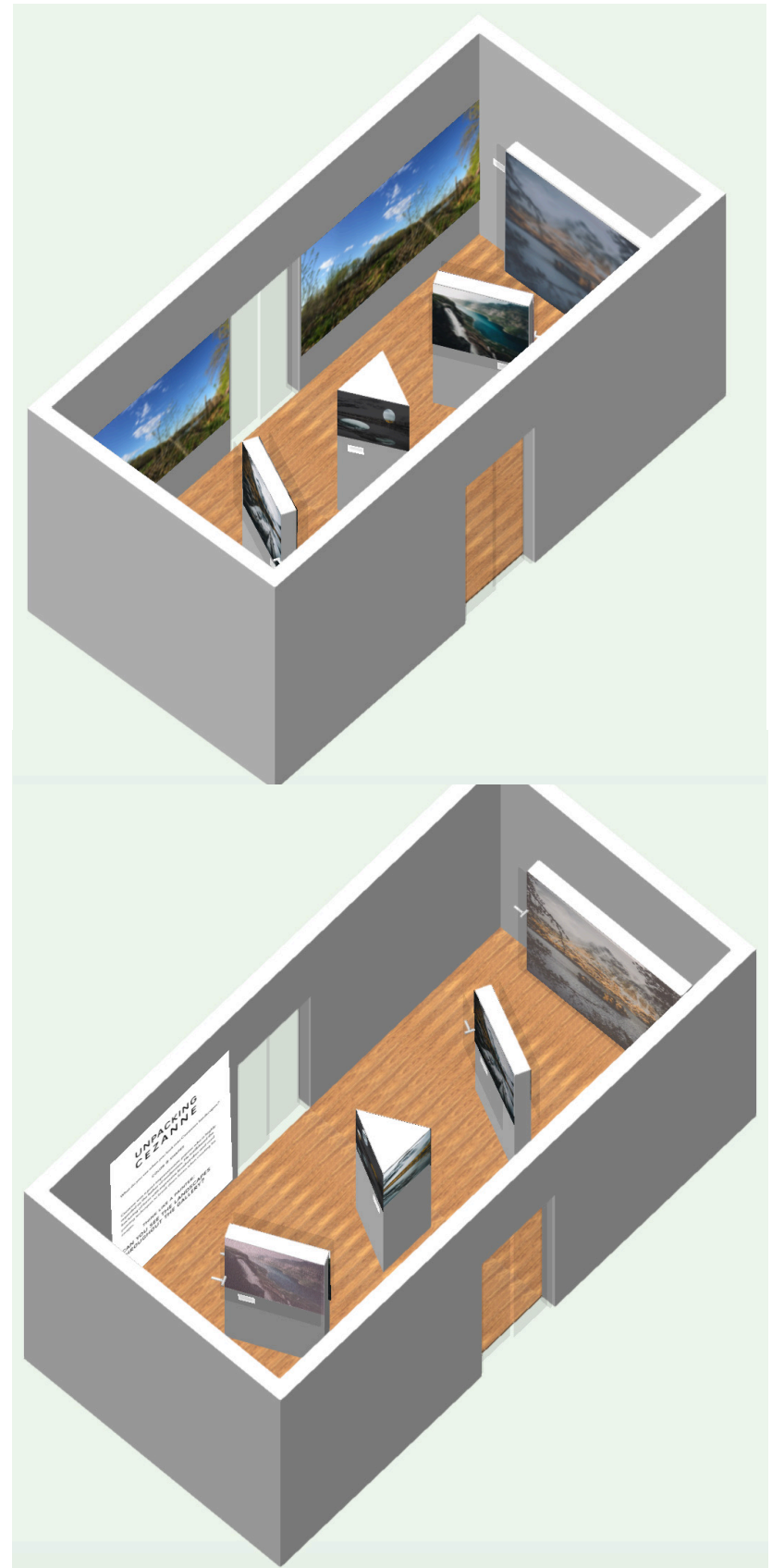


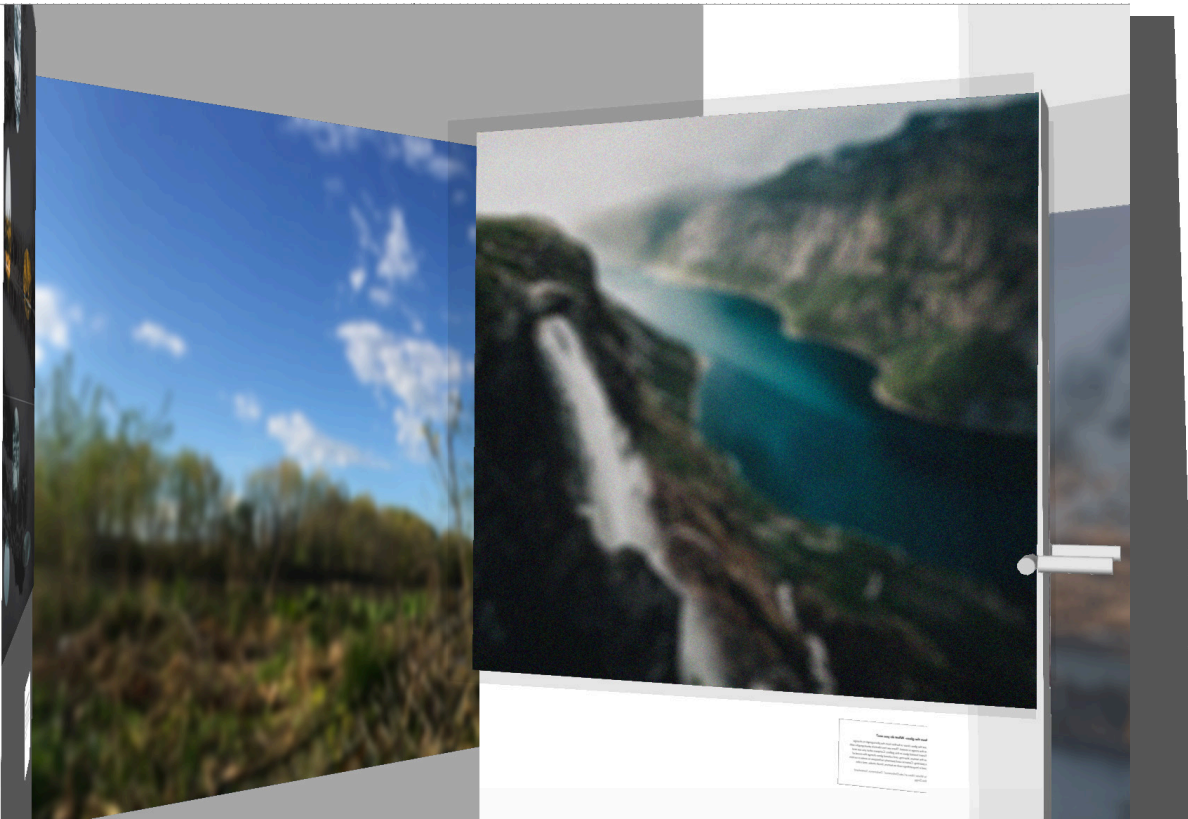
Schematic Design

Landscapes behind Cézanne; Princeton Art Museum

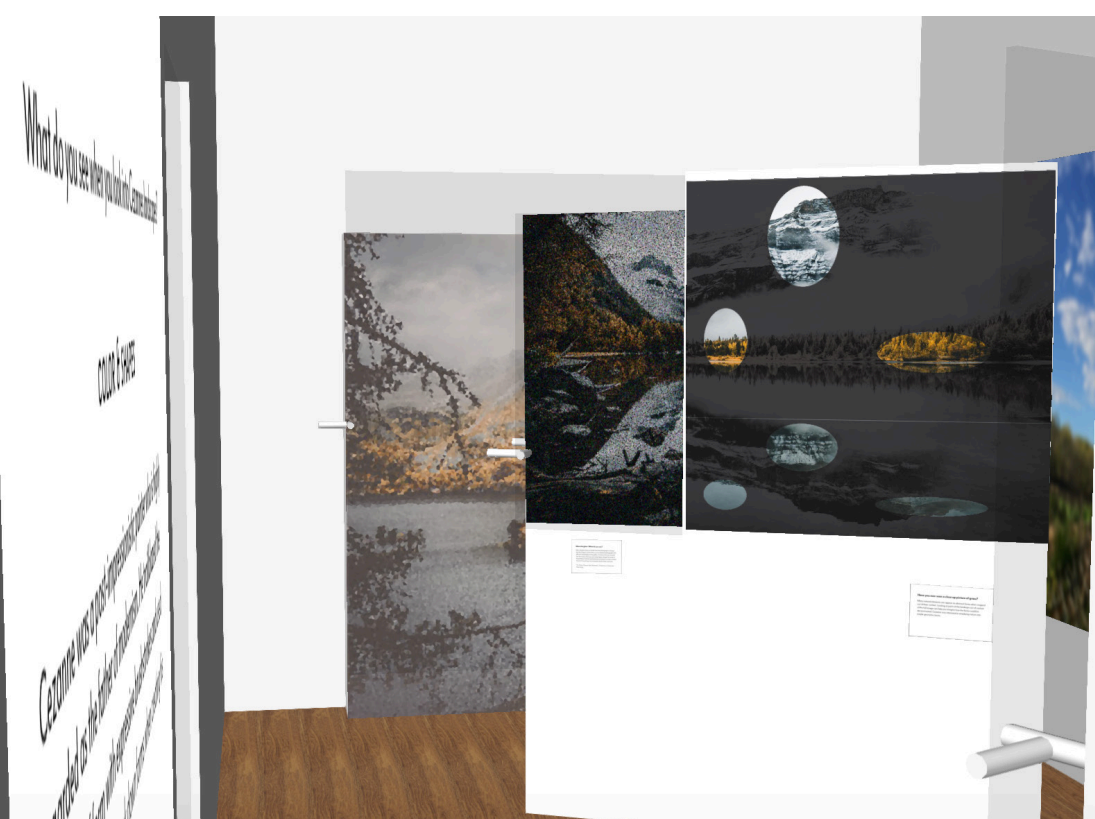
This exhibit showcases still lifes by Cézanne, a post-impressionist painter who is largely regarded as the father of modern art. The museum describes this exhibit as “reveal[ing] the extent to which Cézanne made use of standard types of landscape depictions... but also suggests that Cézanne goes a step further, explicitly acknowledging that what is real in art is different and independent from the actuality of nature.”²⁸ In this space, visitors are presented with the tools in order to “see” through the artist’s eyes and to think about painting techniques as the painter would.

This space is in a smaller room “transition” space where visitors walk through before entering the gallery. This space will ask visitors



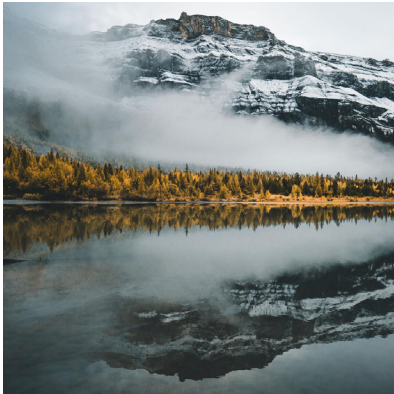


to look at photographs of landscapes similar to the ones Cézanne painted through obscure glass. This obscure glass has different finishes including finishes that have both a blurring and distorting effect. This helps visitors begin to think about landscapes abstractly and understand the forms and painting techniques that Cézanne used. Visitors can adjust the distorting glass by a knob that pulls the glass closer or further from the painting, as the glass gets further from the image, the image becomes more blurred and distorted. The two largest photographs on either side of the room will introduce the visitor into how to interpret the mood of a painting through elements such as color and form. There will be two versions of



each photograph, each behind a different treated glass to convey how texture, color, and brushstrokes contribute to the mood of the painting. Visitors will also look at a photograph behind a piece of dark matte glass which has laser cut cutouts for visitors to look at cropped areas of the photograph out of context. This helps the visitor begin to understand how forms can be thought of individually, and deconstructed. This way allows visitors to become comfortable with a new way of looking and seeing these paintings before they go into the exhibit. This provides them with the access points to have a meaningful art viewing experience. The access points provided are through understanding art and painting techniques and begin to help

Objects A-D



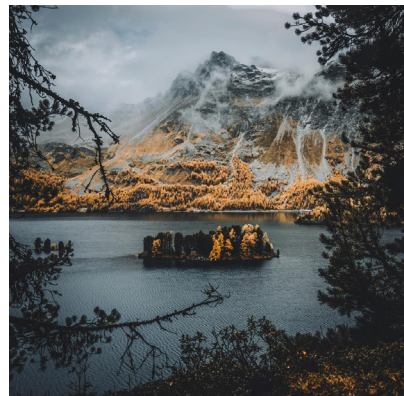
A



B

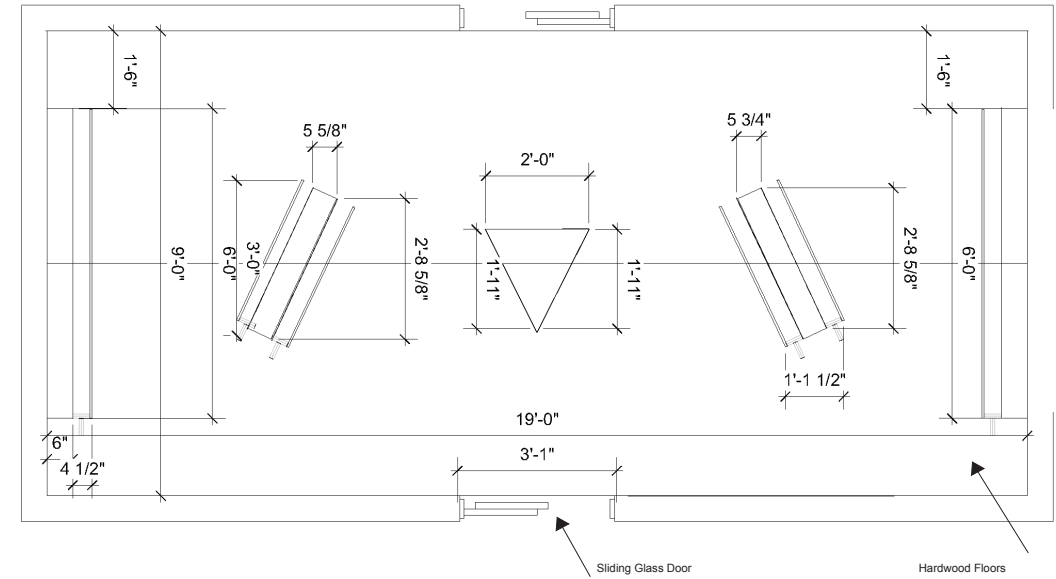


C

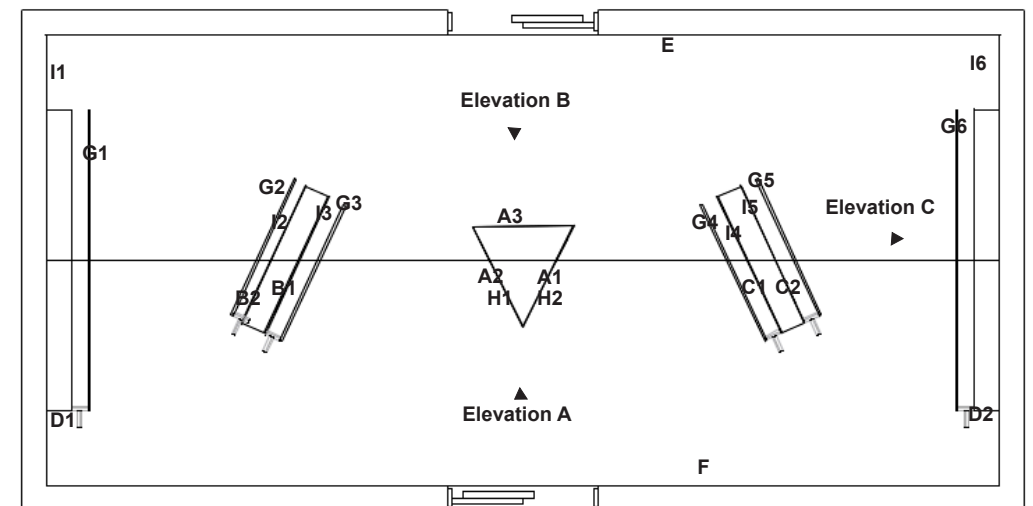


D

Annotated Floorplan



Element Key



visitors see that what is real in art is not necessarily the same as what is real in nature - a main take away of the exhibit.

Walkthrough:

The visitor is walking through the Princeton Art Museum where they have viewed a wide variety of types of art so far on their trip. Upon approaching “Landscapes Behind Cézanne” they acknowledge

D1



that before entering the main exhibit they are entering some type of transition space. They read the introduction panel where the visitor is prompted to think about the color and shapes in Cézanne's landscapes, and that he used expressive forms of painting to convey moods from his paintings. The visitor sees photographs on the walls of landscapes, and knows this is a common theme Cézanne painted. Looking around the room, the majority of photographs have a piece

D2



of glass in front of them at varying distances from the photographs. As they look around they notice two of each photograph is being exhibited with a different treated glass in front of it. The visitor looks at the two largest photographs at either side of the room and realizes they are actually the same photograph. The one to the right has a textured glass effect and “happy” brushstrokes and tinted a peachy color. The overall mood of this image is calm and happy. However, the same image on the other side of the room is much more blurred, dark, and ominous. Although the same image, the moods are very different. There are two more free standing walls with identical images with different glass treatments on either side. They see

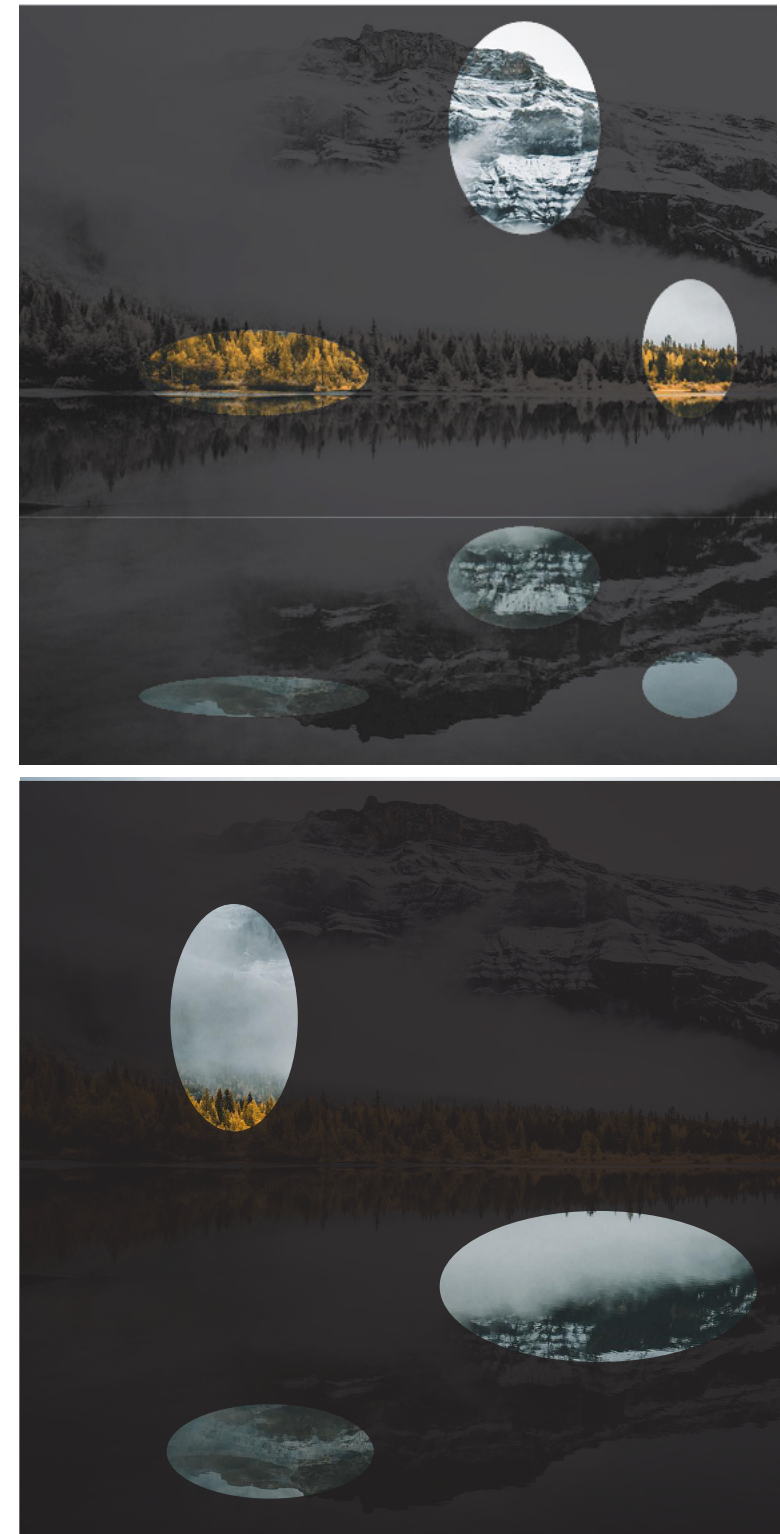
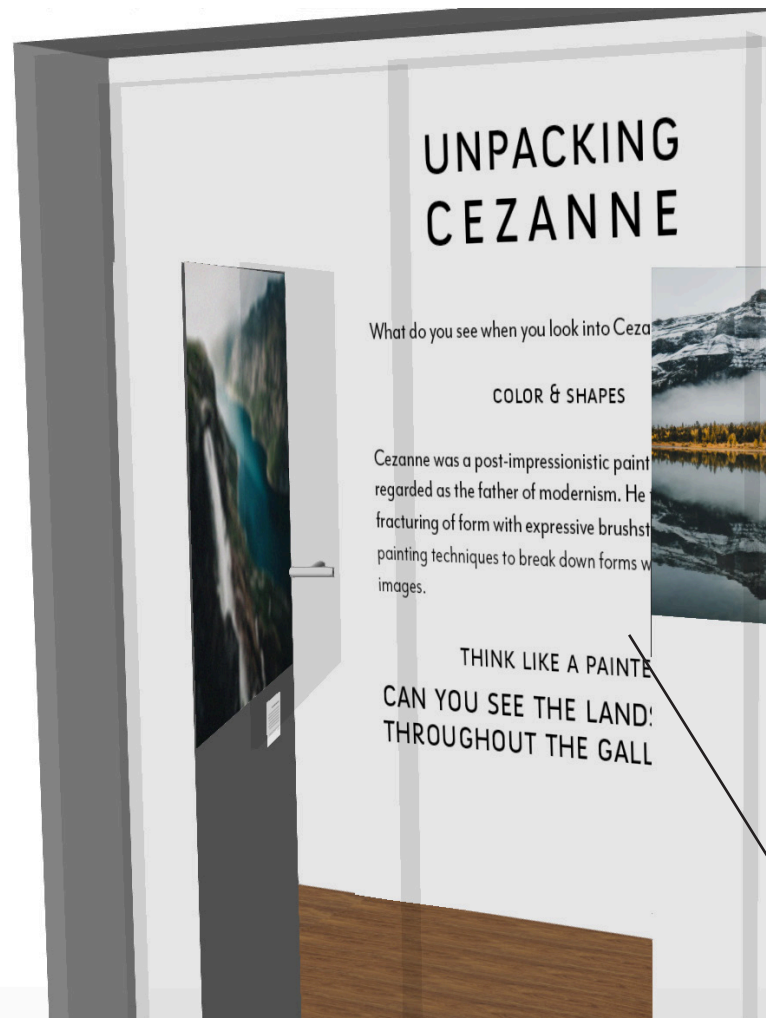


Figure 1

G2/G3/G4 Adjustable Obscuring Glass



people cranking the handle of the glass which makes it goes back and forth. From watching other visitors do this, they get a good view of the forms blurring and distorting as the glass goes further out, and becoming more readable as the glass goes in. The visitor marvels as the forms blur together to look like a collage of colors and marks. In the middle of the space, a triangular podium holds photographs with an overlay of matte glass with laser cut holes. Walking closer they see this is exposing cropped views of the landscape out of context. They feel that the space looks very aesthetically pleasing, like little shards of greens, oranges, and blues. Upon walking to the other side, they see they were looking at a far off view of trees. "Hmmm," they think,

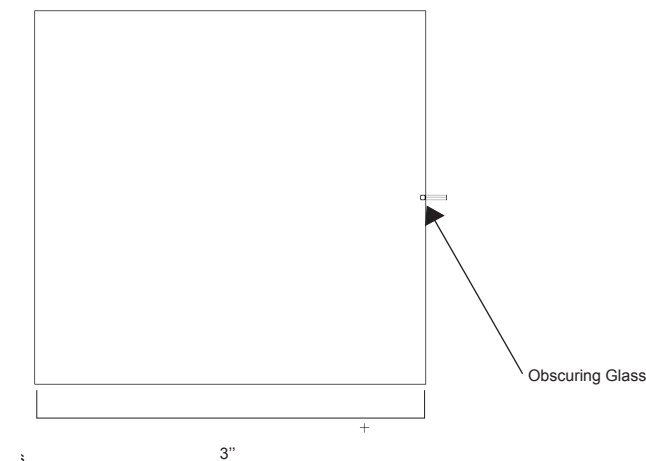
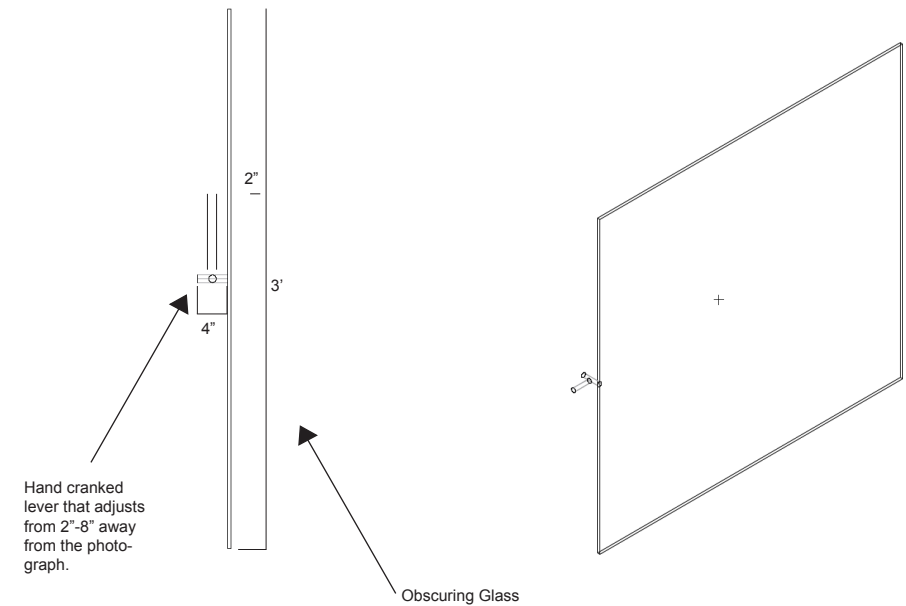


Figure 2

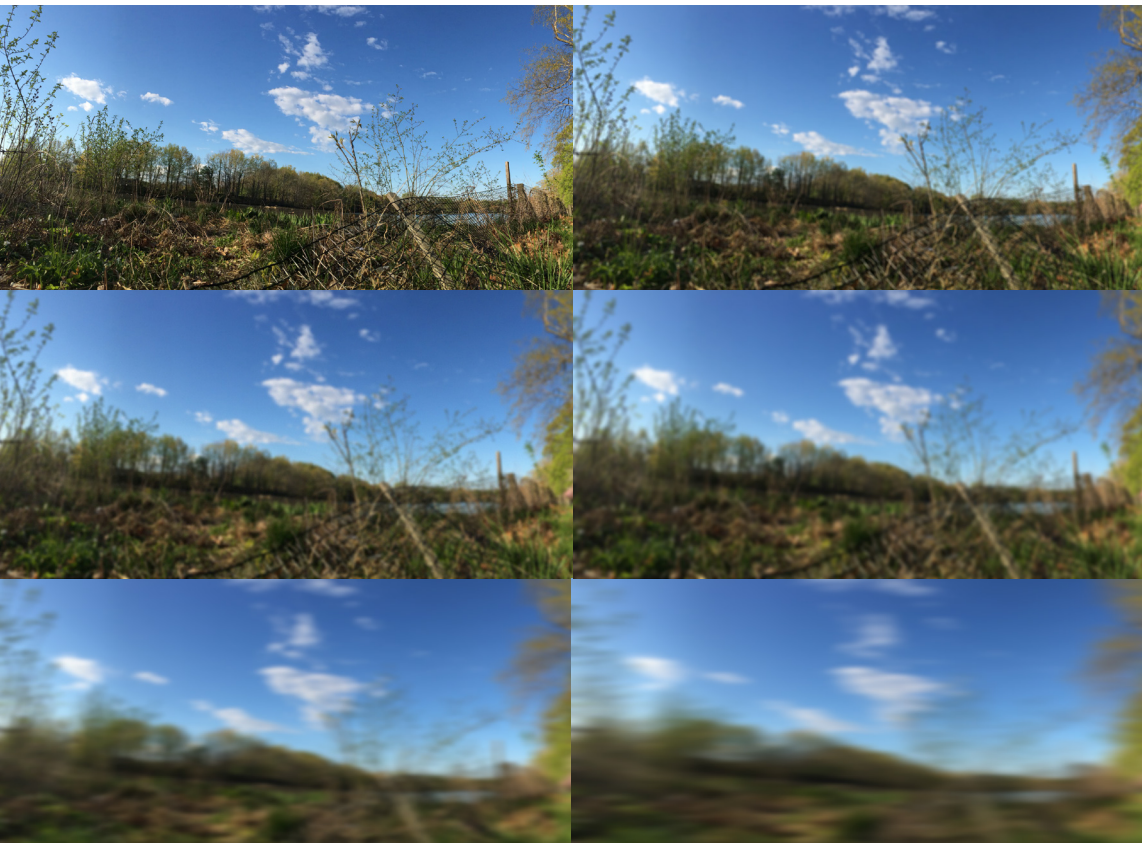
as they would not have guessed what they were looking at were trees.

People seem transfixed watching the projections on the far wall blend photographs in and out, beginning with an image and slowly blurring it to where there are no recognizable forms. The prompt asks visitors to send in their own landscape photography (which has to be pre-approved) before being used in the projection on the walls. They send in one of their own pictures of their backyard. Ten minutes later they watch as their photograph is projected on the walls, and blurs outward to a blend of greens and blues. As they move on, they now feel they understand the techniques that Cézanne used to paint the world around him.

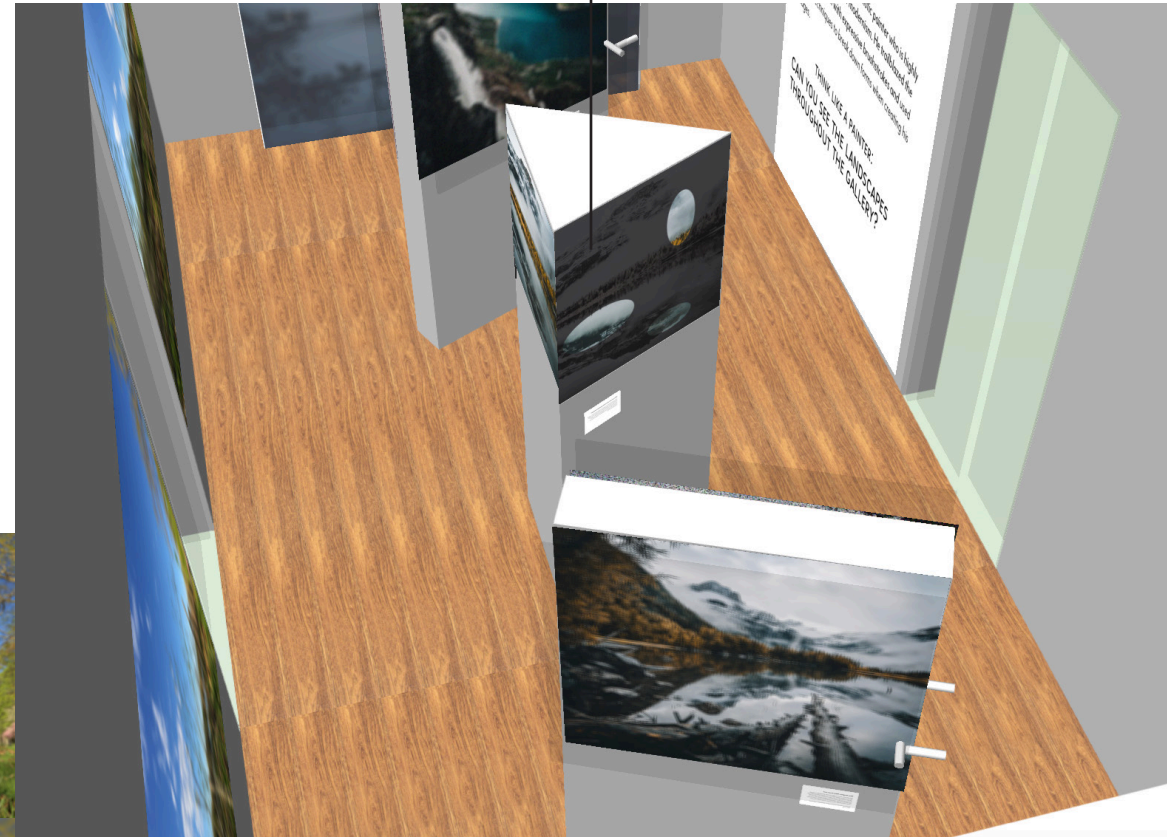
Analysis

Visitors interact with each other through secondary interaction in

E- Projection



See Figure 1
pg 93



this space. As a visitor adjusts the obscuring glass closer and further away, other visitors are observing the process. This type of maneuver in the gallery space combined with the small space of the transition space could lead to primary interaction by facilitating conversation.

This space offers visitors tools for understanding the artist's intent by facilitating access points for the visitor to understand why Cézanne painted landscapes the way he did using brushstroke, texture, form, and color. By having the same photograph behind two differently



See Figure 2
pg 95

treated glass, the visitor is able to see how these changes can effect the mood of the image. The visitors can understand how images can be abstracted or blurred and the thought process of the artist.

Based on the end product, visitors can observe at what distance other visitors preferred to view the adjustable glass from the image and can infer what level of abstraction people have viewed the image at. The end product becomes an evidence of the visitor's process.

Evaluating by the framework put forward in Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences, this space uses a range of intelligences. Visual-spatial and bodily-kinesthetic learners will respond to the use of the



adjustable obscuring glass. Interpersonal learners will be able to benefit from the secondary interaction, while intrapersonal learners are able to reflect inwardly. Overall the space is more visual-based which makes sense for this type of art exhibit.

This space allows visitors to construct meaning for themselves, considering the Constructivist Learning Theory. They are able to interact with sensory data, the obscuring glass, to alter the images and space around them. By being able to control this aspect, visitors formulate understanding about how and why these types of paintings are created.



C1



C2



B1



B2



Figure 4

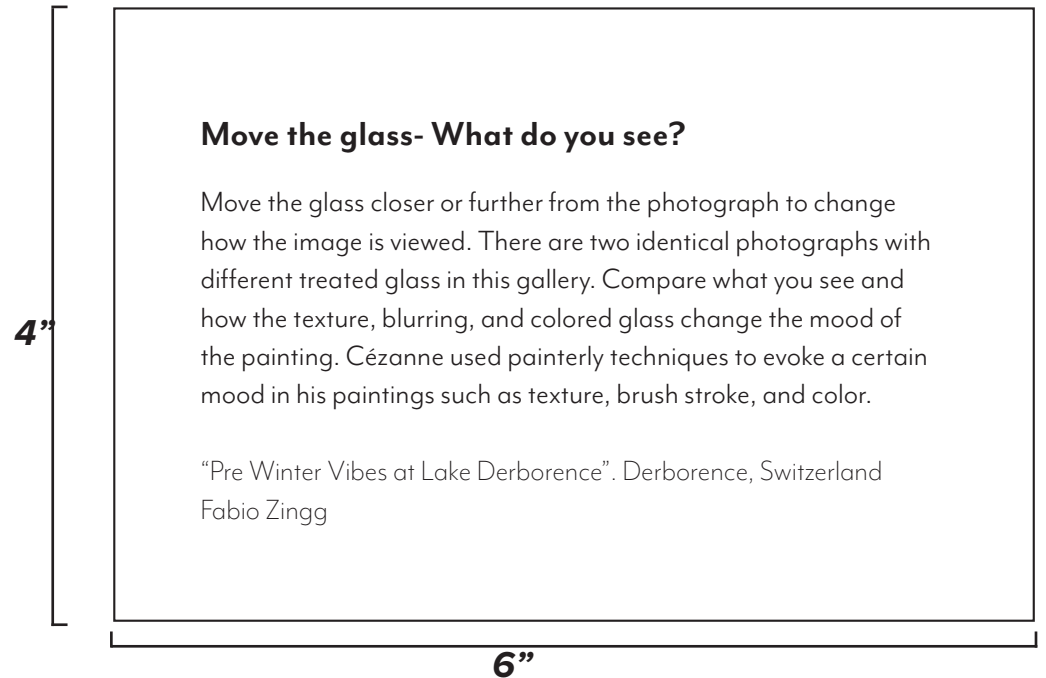
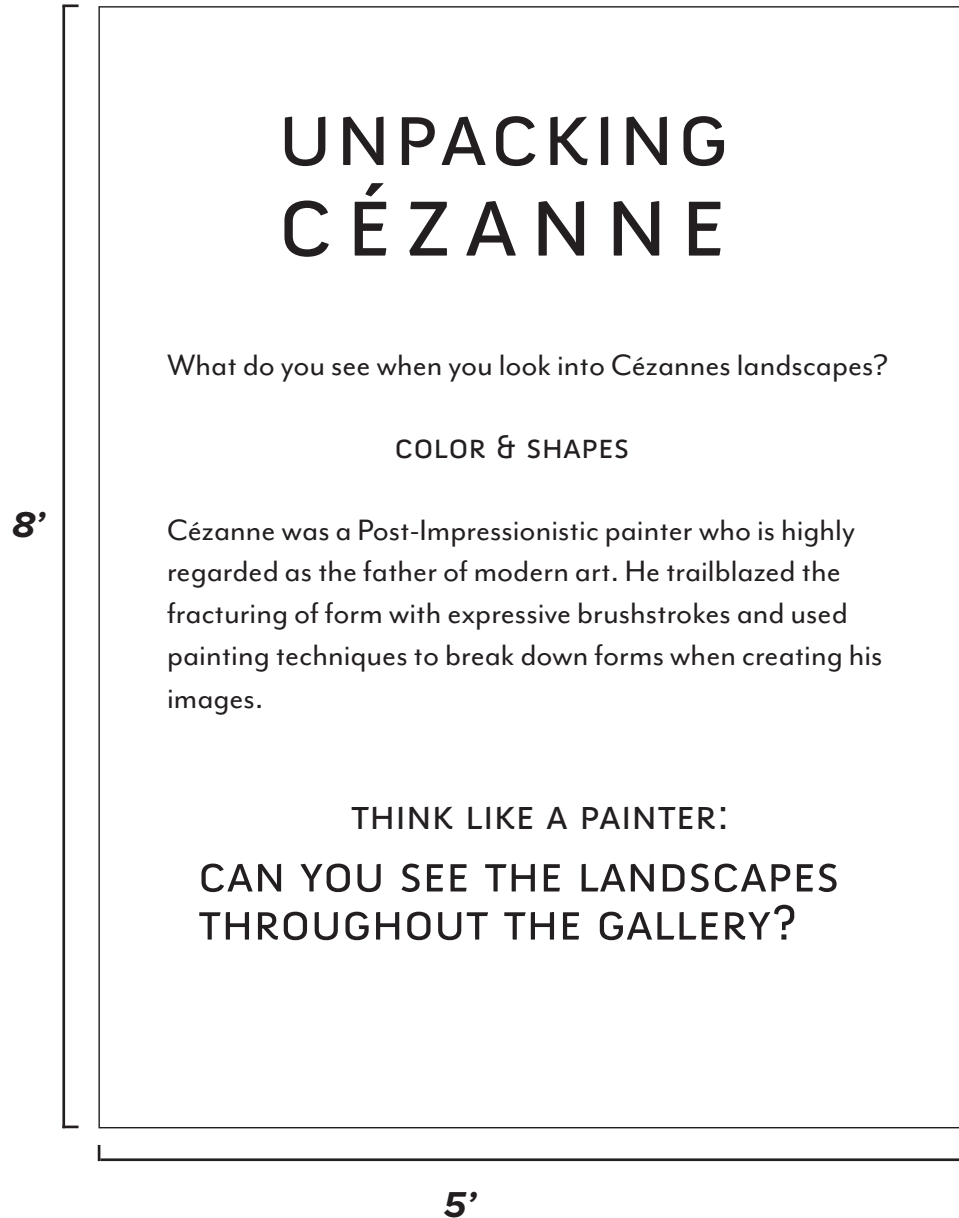
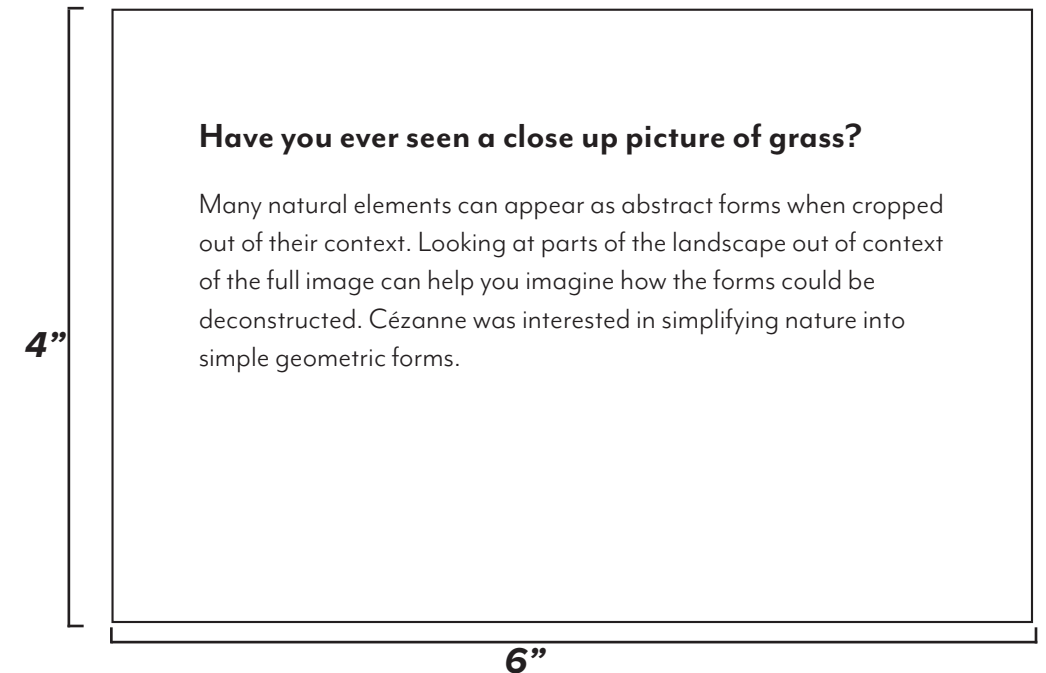
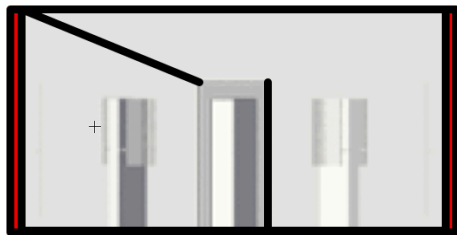
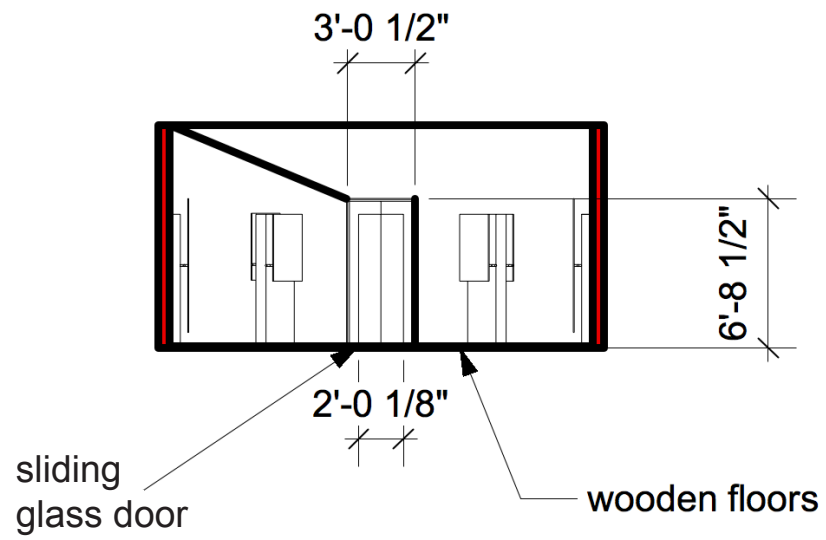


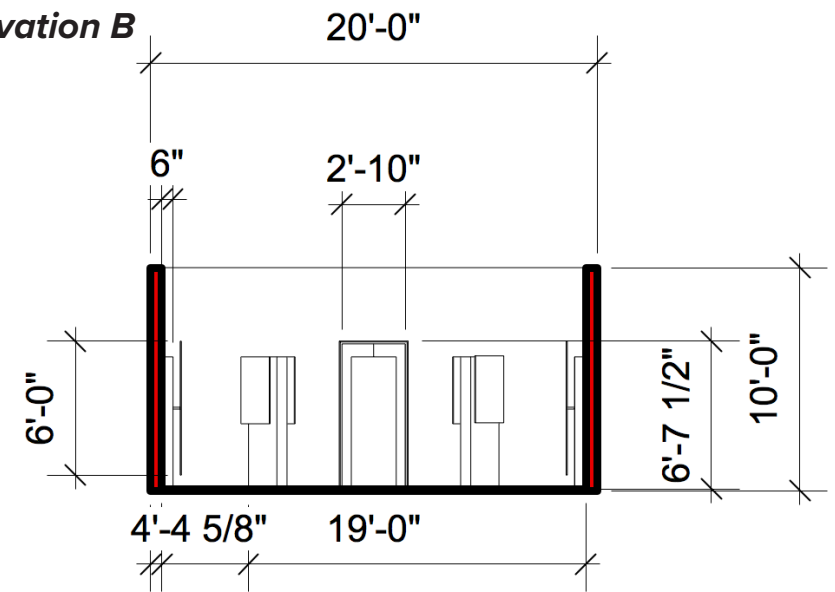
Figure 3



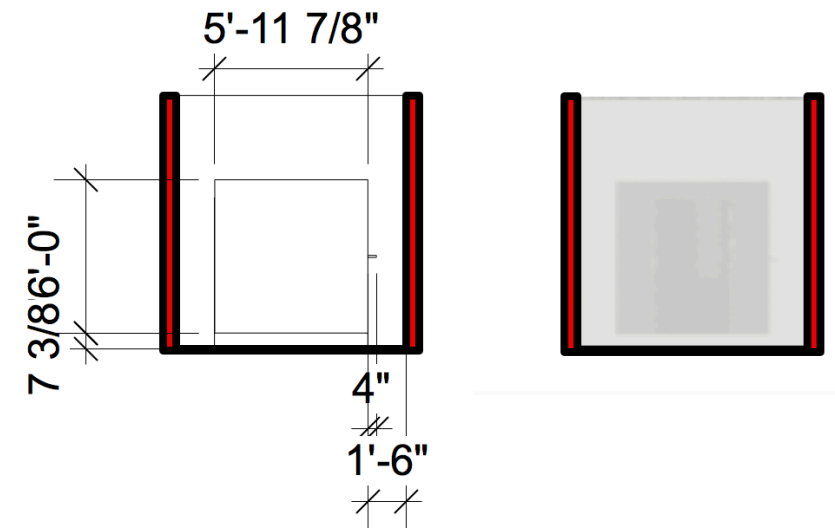
Elevation A



Elevation B



Elevation C



Bloom's Taxonomy states that visitors must recognize first to achieve understanding. In this transition space, visitors are recognizing a photographic image of a landscape and then understanding how painterly techniques could be applied to alter the way it appears. By understanding this they can then apply, analyze, and evaluate what they are seeing. Visitors can partake in their own creation by sending images in to be projected onto the wall.

Visitors may enjoy this space because of the presence of the access points, creating opportunities for them to understand why the artist created the work the way that he did. This enjoyment could lead to a more memorable experience.

Léger: Modern Art and the Metropolis; Philadelphia Museum of Art

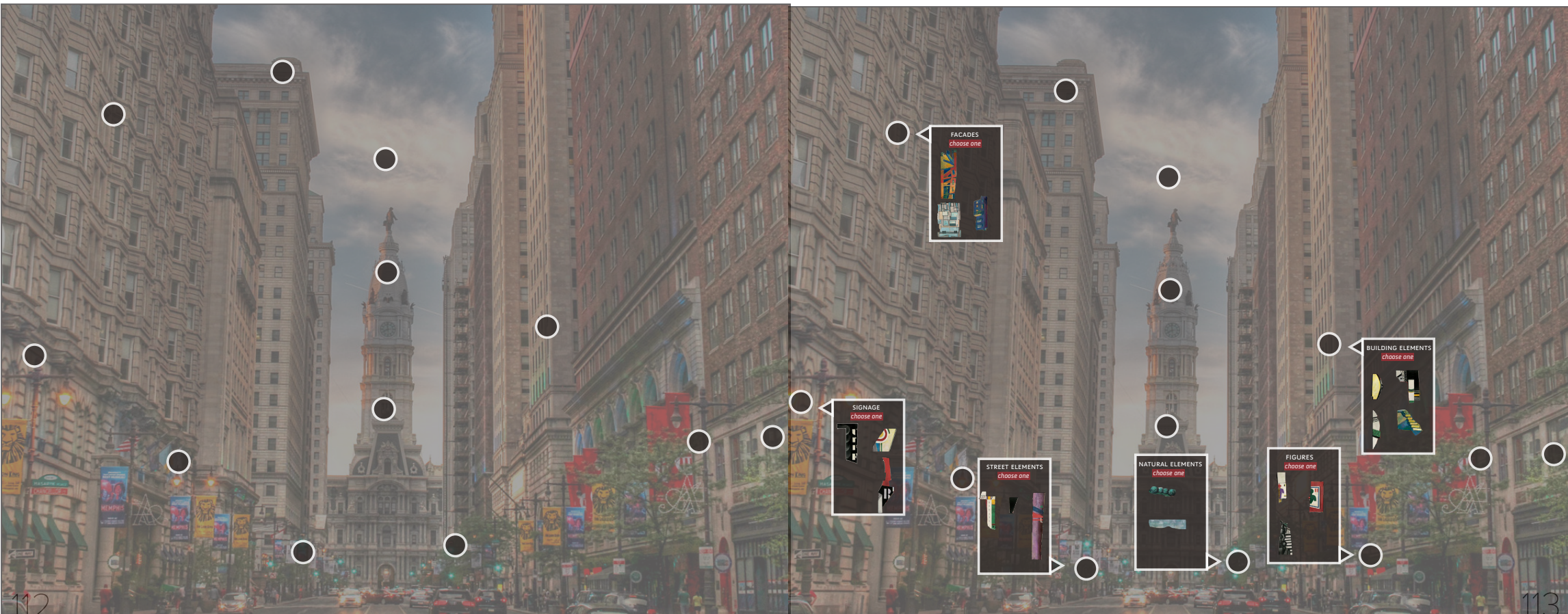
This exhibit showcases the art of modern artist Fernand Léger and his colleagues in France in the 1920s. At the center of this exhibit is the 7' x 9' painting *The City* described by the artist as a street mural more than a painting to be held in a gallery. The composition of this painting is a cubist rendition of a city, which can be deciphered, but may appear like an arrangement of colors and shapes immediately to some visitors.



Léger, Fernand. The City, 1919

This creative access point within the gallery is meant to help visitors understand cubism. Léger painted various cityscapes, influencing other cubist artists depicting cityscapes as well. Visitors can collaborate on creating a city mural asking people to deconstruct Philadelphia. This is a 7' x 9' touch screen, the same dimensions as The City, where multi-users can choose elements used in cubist depictions of the city by Léger and other cubist artists resulting in a cubist depiction of Philadelphia. Since it is a wall-mounted touch screen, this design is sleek and unobtrusive, perfect for an in gallery creative access points experience that does not disrupt the traditional minimalistic gallery aesthetic. The goals of this space are to: 1. Get visitors to see the city through Légers eyes, and connect to Philadelphia through a painterly gaze 2. Get visitors to make sense of

cubism 3. Get visitors to see the composition of cityscapes differently. Visitors will be prompted to “Deconstruct Philly” by touching the screen and replacing an element in the photograph with cubist examples that will appear. When the visitor touches the example they wish to replace in the mural, information on that image will come up such as the artwork it appears in and the artist. Visitors can manipulate the element by changing the perspective and rotation in order to replace it as an element of the mural. Aside from Léger, other cubist cityscapes included are Michael Fray Cubist Cityscape, John McHugh Untitled Cubist Cityscape, and Mondrian’s “Composition No. VI, Compositie 9 (Blue Facade). Visitors can keep replacing elements, but once all elements have been replaced with cubist renditions, the image resets.



Walkthrough

The visitor enters the exhibition space and looks around. They consider themselves an appreciator of art, but not entirely familiar with various genres and movements. As they walk throughout the exhibit they think that cubism looks cool but they don't really get why it looks the way it does. They think some images can be deciphered but others look abstract. A very large painting, The City, clearly feels like the centerpiece of the exhibit, spanning 7' x 9'. They examine this painting and can identify some basic elements of a cityscape. On the opposite wall people are crowded around a touchscreen hanging on the wall, the same size of the large painting. They walk over to it and see a large photograph of the Philadelphia cityscape that they recognize from walking past City Hall every day, which is grayed out a little bit letting touch points be seen clearly. Wall text instructs the

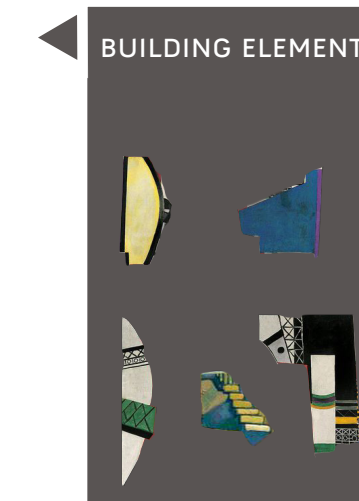
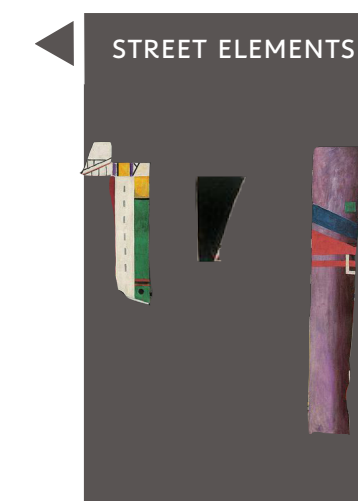
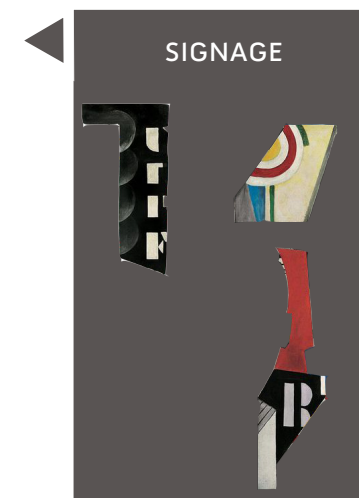
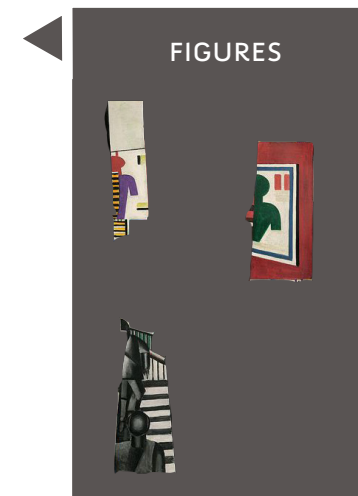
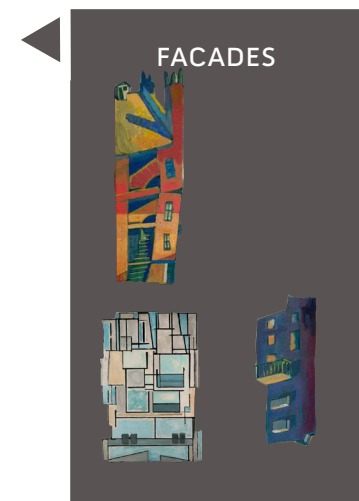
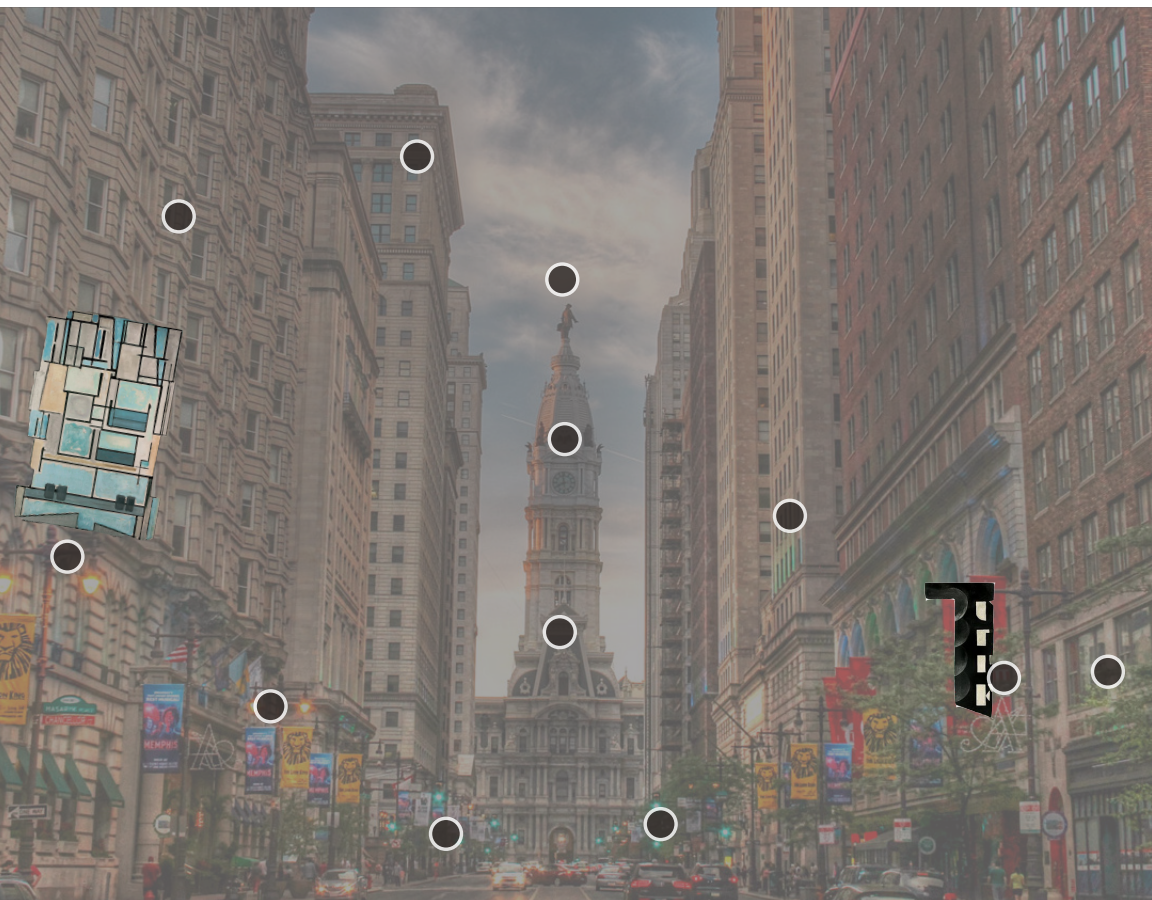
visitor to “Deconstruct Philly”.

They press a button on a building facade. A box pops up that says “facades” with examples of building facades which have appeared in cubist paintings.

Upon pressing on one they like, another information box pops up with a full image of the original painting the facade appears in and information on the title and artist. They read about Mondrian’s “Composition 9 Blue Facade” and see how the element fits into the original photograph. Now they can “see” it more and the way it was painted makes more sense.

After tapping this element again to select it, options to rotate, delete,



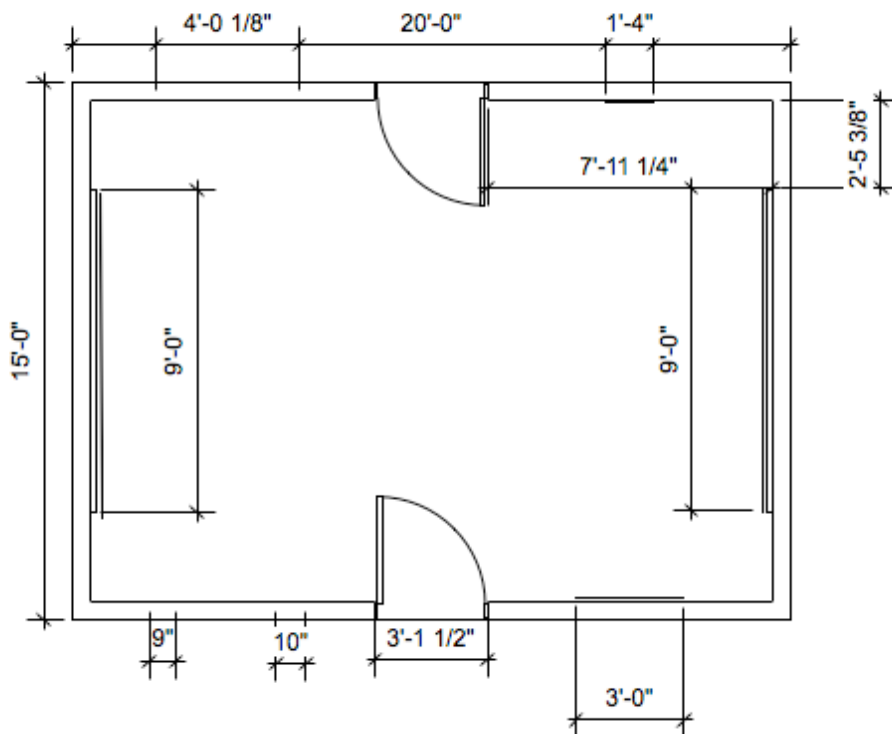


adjust perspective, and flip appears. They play around with the controls which help the element fit in the photograph. They select the adjust perspective button and drag the edges of the facade to align with the edges of the facade in the photograph, just as Photoshop does, so that the dimensions fit. Taking a step back from the large screen in front of them, they can take in the full image that visitors are collaborating on, constantly changing the landscape in front of them. From scrolling through the different elements, they know understand more of the theory behind cubism, mostly that the artist tries to simplify the image into geometric shapes.

Analysis

In this multi-person digital interactive, visitors are collaborating on this cubist mural at the same time resulting in secondary interaction. This type of space and interactive where multiple people can view options to create something can encourage people to talk to each other.

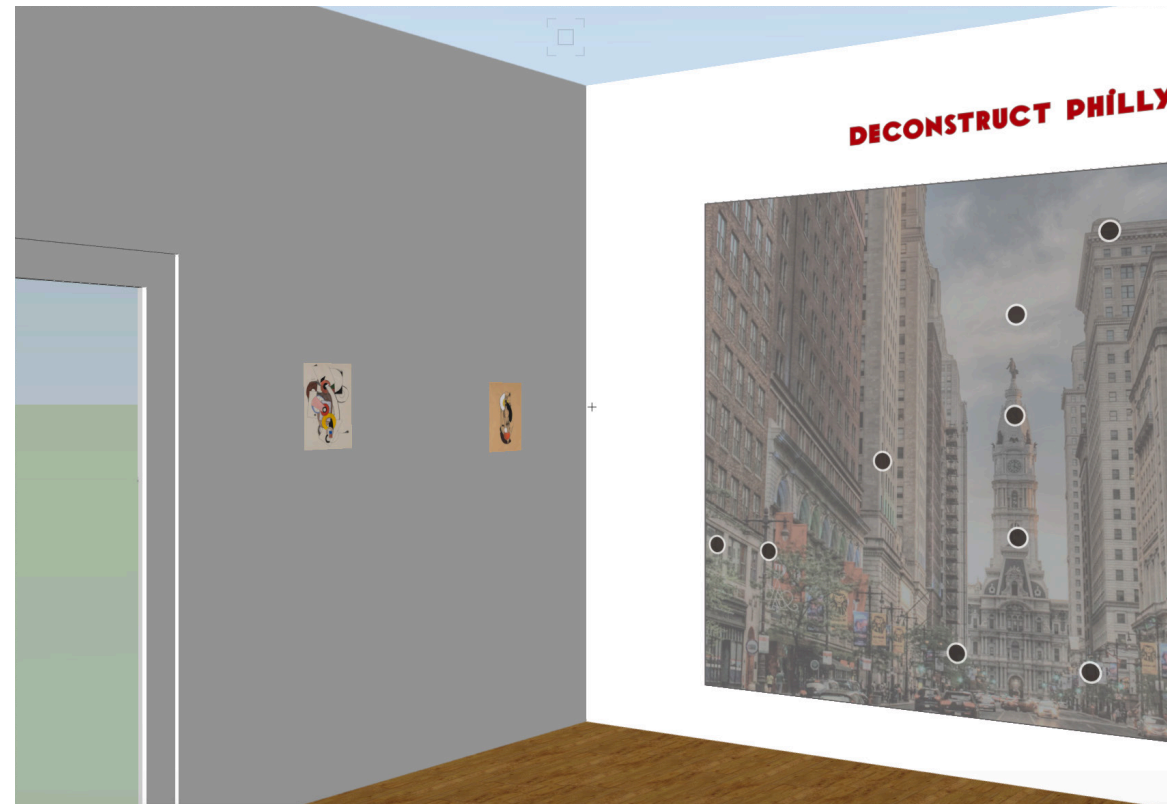
FloorPlan



This interactive offers tools for visitors to understand the artist's intent by giving them examples of how different elements of a city scape have been abstracted into this type of cubism. It leads visitors to discover that they can understand the different abstracted shapes and what the way they are abstracted tells us about the meaning of the painting.

The end product of this shows the process the visitors went through to understand the abstraction of forms. Each element placed into the image is proof of an access point where a visitor understood the abstraction of a sign post, a facade, a street, etc. The end product is also evidence of participation.

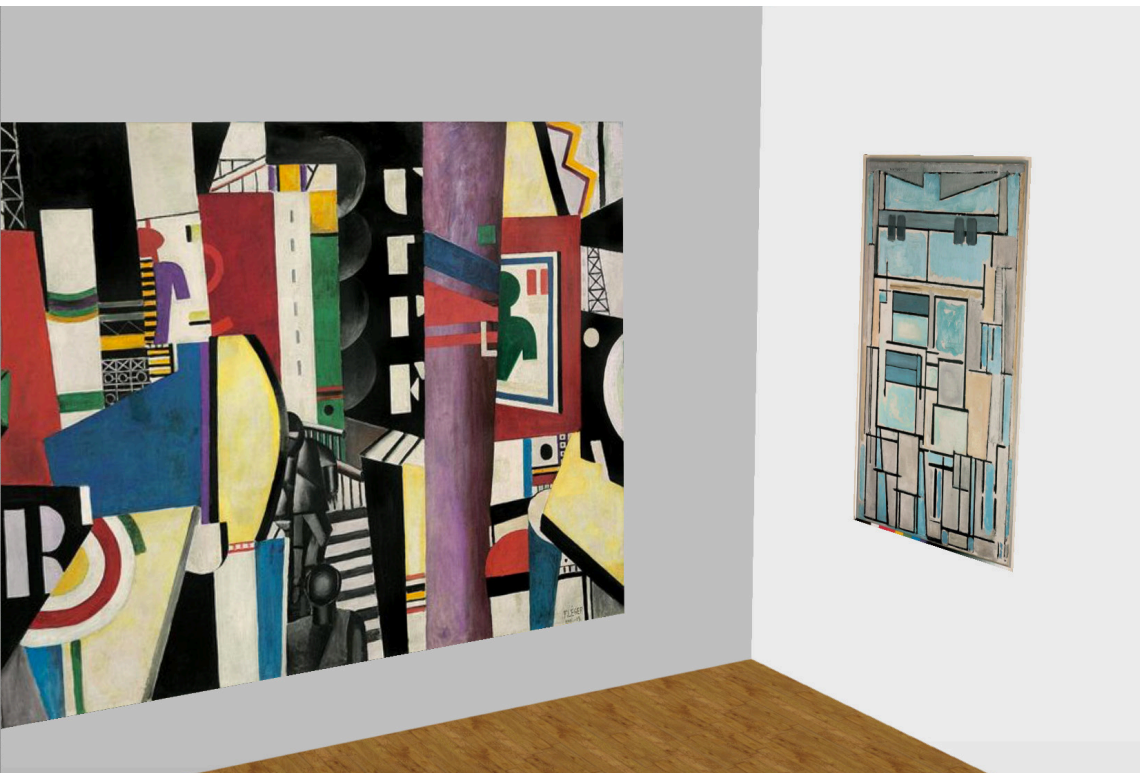
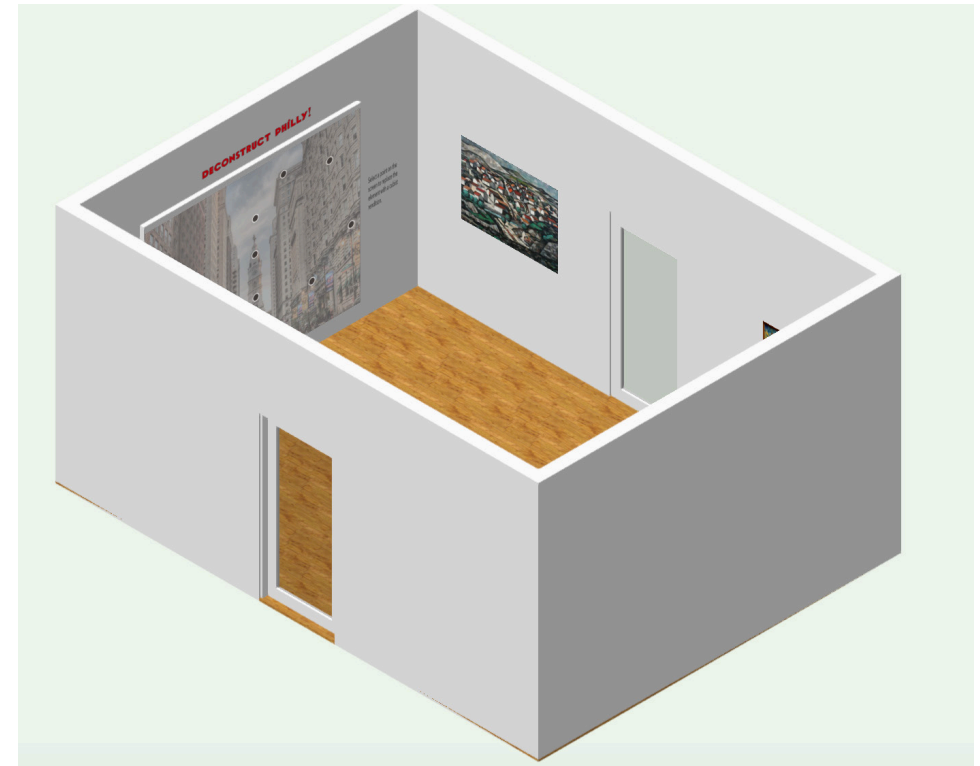
Regarding Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences, this interactive space is very beneficial for visual-spatial learners due to the puzzle



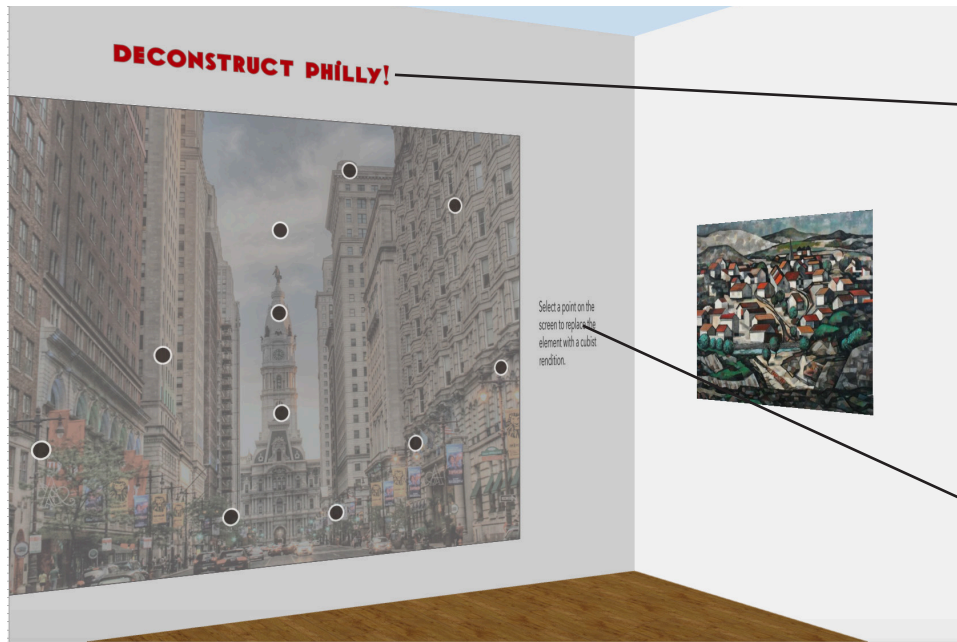
like quality of dealing with a space. Interpersonal learners may benefit from working closely with others, and even if visitors are not having full conversations, they are still observing what others are doing. By giving visitors the opportunity to view isolated elements in cubism, they are able to recognize patterns to be able to decipher cubist paintings. This could be beneficial to logical-mathematical learners.

Constructivist Learning Theory states that the interactive must focus on creating opportunities for the visitor to learn about expanding their understanding. In seeing how elements are obstructed the visitor is able to recognize the elements of this style, constructing meaning.

Bloom's Taxonomy is applicable here and follows the hierarchy of learning. The visitor starts by connecting elements to their cubist forms and understanding how to decipher this style. After reading about the content they then are able to insert the cubist element into an image, overall creating a new image.



Here there is a correlation between enjoyment and emotion while interacting with the element. This interactive is meant to be engaging while creating opportunities for visitors to achieve their learning goals.



DECONSTRUCT PHILLY!

Figure 5

5'

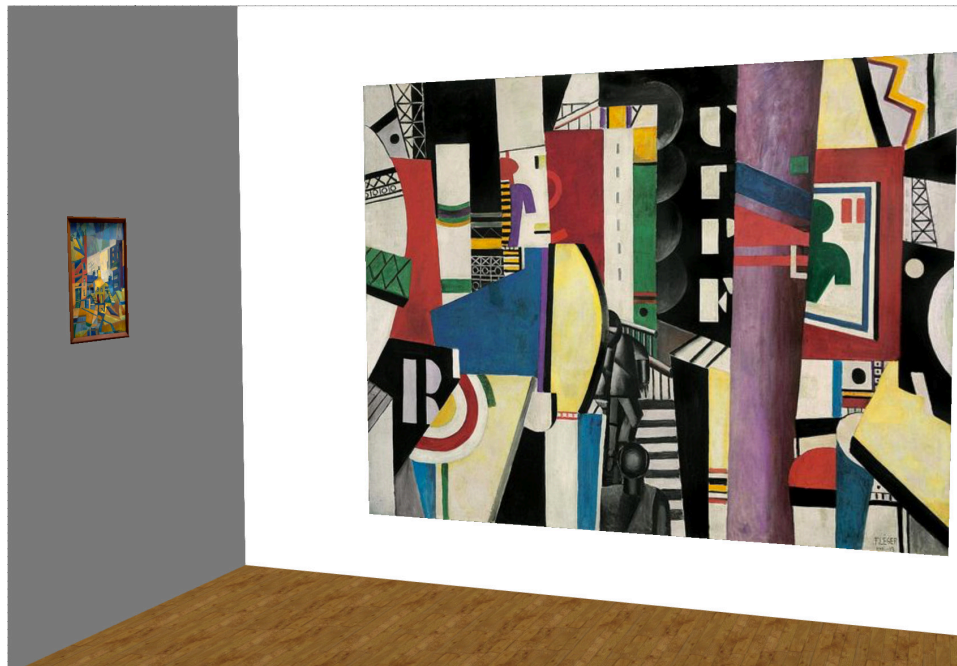


Figure 6

Select a point on the screen to replace the element with a cubist rendition.

1' 6"

as a photographic image.

This framework could be extended to other types of art to facilitate access points as to why something is created the way it is. This thesis explores how to lead visitors to understand art by encouraging visitors to see and connect to the art to be able to understand abstraction. This could be applied to exploring art from different cultures and times, as many themes and aspects of this type of work are foreign to someone living in our day and time. For example, a creative access point into Egyptian art could be a way of facilitating a connection in the visitor between iconography being portrayed. Visitors may discover a personal association with this notation and find resonance in this aspect. This framework could assist visitors into achieving access into why objects and art were created the way they were by facilitating a connection between the visitor and the process.

Moving forward

This thesis can be implemented in museums in order to develop or evaluate creative access points and experiential tools to strive to achieve the highest amount of access into modern art. Conclusions were formed after evaluating cases throughout the country that help visitors attain access points into art by using spaces where visitors can manipulate the space, creating interpretation for themselves and others. It was determined that there are three main tactics which proved beneficial in creating a memorable experience. These tactics are: Response area, Immersive elements, and Experiential design elements which can be used alone or more optimally congruently to create the most access into the art.

Here, access is facilitated into this type of artwork by giving visitors the tools to understand why the artist portrayed the image the way he did. In modern art, artists use techniques involving paint and textures to evoke a mood and portray a scene a certain way, and are not seen

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Interview: Jessica Fuentes, Center for Creative Connections (C3) Gallery Manager, Dallas Museum of Art

Interview: Louise Barrett Visitor Logistics Coordinator at Princeton University Art Museum

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