Visual Art Explorers: What they love

UX Researcher: SB, January 2021

Executive Summary

Since our product is at a very early stage, our team is interested in exploring opportunities for a new type of product to engage with visual art. We interviewed 7 leisure learners to find out their needs, pain points, and how they use digital products to explore works of art.

Key Findings

Leisure art explorers enrich their learning experience by listening to diverse voices share their perspectives on a work of art. They do this by accessing video/audio content on their mobile devices outside of work hours.

Users have to use multiple digital products to find the depth of information they need. We identified opportunities to build a multifaceted product with a focus on video/audio content by diverse voices.

What did we want to learn?

Our team wanted to learn about the experiences adult learners had while engaging with visual art via existing digital products. The objective was to identify what opportunities may exist for creating new products for exploring works of art.

Key Research Questions

- What is essential for exploring visual art? [Needs]
- How do art explorers currently engage with works of art? [Behaviors]

7 Participants

The participants we recruited are art museum members.

	Frequency of exploration	Digital products they currently use	Types of visual art they explore	
Participant 2*	3-5 times a week	Instagram, Getty Foundation + MOMA websites	Painting, drawing, video/film	
Participant 3	Once a week	Pinterest, Instagram, Facebook, New York Times App	Painting, drawing, sculpture	
Participant 4	3-5 times a week	Pinterest, Instagram, Artsy	Painting, photography, street art	
Participant 5	Daily	MOMA + CMA websites, artist websites, YouTube	Video/Film, painting, sculpture	
Participant 6	Once a week	CMA website, Piggyback App	Photography, painting	
Participant 7	Once a week	SFMOMA website, Pinterest, New York Times App	Painting, drawing	
Participant 8	Once a week	Artist websites, CMA + Smithsonian websites	Painting, video/film	

*Note: Participant 1 was a test subject.

Key finding 1

Visual art explorers look for diverse points of view on artworks in video/audio content.

Finding

All participants said that listening to other people's perspectives is a way to bring art to life.

Hearing from the artist's own words—via an audio description—to learn about their artistic process. Watching a video to hear a curator talk about their interpretation of a work of art. Listening to a radio host interview an artist on a podcast.

"I follow El Prado on Instagram. They have 10-minute videos describing specific works of art. One of them was about history and they were highlighting several portraits from a gallery. I was interested in that period of history, so I stopped and watched that video."

Participant 3

Recomendation 1

Our new product could focus on using podcasts as the medium to communicate content by diverse voices.

Things to consider:

- Each podcast should be shorter than 10 minutes.
- The product should have a minimum of 2 podcasts per work of art.
- The podcasts should include a variety of voices: art experts and nonart experts.

Key finding 2

The excitement of discovering a personal connection with a work of art is the key motivation for art learners to explore further.

Finding

All participants said that they are happy to keep exploring when they connect with an artwork at a personal level.

Exploring a work of art is like trying to solve a mystery. You want to know what else is tied to it. It's not always clear where your interest is going to take you—could be artwork's history or artist's background. Users have fun connecting with art in unexpected ways.

"When I look at art it's more playful than serious. It's more like: Ooh, that's pretty! What makes that pretty? Let's look closer. Or: Oh, that's hideous! Why do I hate that so much?"

Participant 6

Next Steps

- Validate findings with surveys
- Conduct foundational studies on how adults use video/audio content to explore works of art.
- Run a design sprint for brainstorming



Data collection and analysis

Types of digital products users use			User Behaviors				User Needs	
depen	varies ding on digi. pdt.	In what media is the content users look for	Whe where explo	users	How us digital p to expl	roducts	The th discover motivate	y helps
Users use social media for inspiration	Users start with the experts: art institution websites/apps	Users search for sensory info-video/audioon various digi. pdts.	Users explore visual art in various environments	When planning to explore art in town.	For deep dives a single digi. pdt. does not cut it.	Users decide how much to drill down.	It's fun to find a personal connection with works of art	Users acquire knowledge to gain understanding
P2 You have an idea-say street art-you search on instagram and find ready pages with images and #s with 1000+ posts.	P2 Getty Foundation has good images to browse and see art you didn't know about. It has the serendipity of a library.	P3 El Prado, which I follow on Instagram, has a 10-min. video series describing specific works of art.	P2 Random. I'm walking and then I have an idea. I open my iPhone and search for a work of art.	P2 If I have not been to a town before, I want to find out where the art is.	P5 I look up something on Wikipedia, read about a work of art, zoom in to a picture of a sculpture on an artist website.	P2 My way of exploring art online is very intuitive because it is my passion.	P6 I look at art to gain something emotional, to feel something: the angst or peace or whatever.	P2 If someone mentions an artist I don't know, I quickly want to see the artist's work before I comment.
P7 I do a decent amount of poking around on Pinterest which gives you a different style of art in a kind of design world.	P5 When I find a contemporary artist I go to the MOMA website first before I check out Wikipedia or Google.	P4 You can also take in information via a podcast or an audio-book.	P4 Use Pinterest when I'm in a brainstorming type of mood at home in my studio.	P6 Looking for something cultural to do, I pull up Plggyback app and look up museums-what they have, hours + ratings.	P2 I use social media to pick out the sources to expand my search.	P4 I follow a lot of #s on Instagram, so I get exposed to art without necessarily seeking it out.	P4 Exploring a painting can be an experience, you get a 1st impression and then it brings thoughts or feelings.	P3 Learn about the artwork's history, what it represents, what it is about, somebody's interpretation.
P4 I go to my patterns board in Pinterest if looking for ideas for doodling or for a color palette.	P8 I try to find some reliable websites like the Columbus Museum of Art, the Smithsonian and take off from there.	P5 I look for as many YouTube videos as I can find about the artist.	P5 While traveling I use one of my mobile devices, usually in the airport.		P7 I hear about an exhibition from friend or see link on FB or on news app. This triggers a quick Google search.		P5 I like when a film is open-ended for the viewer to decide because it's like a painting; you don't get all the answers.	P8 After I've heard the artist talk about his or her process, it may have more meaning to me.
		P8 I have a vision impairment and digital products bring art to life to me through audio descriptions.	P3 Look up artwork at end of day at home with my iPad, looking mostly at Instagram.		P8 I read about an artist or place, get a link, find history about it or about a technique. I'm all over the place.			P7 I fell for the "Take the SFMOMA quiz!" I learned interesting things about the museum!