

I2. User Research

Team Experience Museums Project (EMP)

Project Description

For our project, we are investigating the art museum experience in order to determine how to best improve it, especially for adults. Many interactive exhibits in museums are aimed towards children, so adults often find art museums less interesting than what they could be. Because of that, our user group is anyone over the age of 21 who might have in the past visited an art museum, or who might visit one in the future. Our user group is very broad because we believe art museums should be designed with all types of visitors in mind, and gaining insight on different types of people through the interview process would help with understanding some of those users.

Interview Questions

Personal Questions:

1. How old are you?
2. What is your current career?
3. What do you do for leisure?
4. Can you walk me through a day in your life?
5. Would you characterize yourself as a more fast-paced person or someone who likes to take things slowly?
6. Are you a visual or kinesthetic learner?

Museum Questions:

1. Tell me about some of the museums you've visited in your lifetime?
 - a. Which ones did you like? Why?
 - b. Which ones did you not like? Why?
2. Would you consider yourself to be interested in art?
 - a. Do you like art museums?
3. Who do you go to museums with?
4. How long do you usually spend at a museum? Why?
5. Can you think of a time you particularly enjoyed going to an art museum?
 - a. Why did you go to the museum?

- b. Did your visit include any special exhibit(s)?
 - c. Did you enjoy your overall experience? What was the best part?
 - d. Have you gone back since?
 - e. Was there anything you didn't like about the experience?
- 6. Can you think of a time you didn't enjoy going to an art museum?
 - a. Why did you go to the museum?
 - b. Did your visit include any special exhibit(s)?
 - c. Did you enjoy your overall experience? What was the best part?
 - d. Have you gone back since?
 - e. Was there anything you didn't like about the museum?
- 7. Have you ever seen a piece of art that particularly spoke to you? Why?
 - a. Do you think you understood the artist's intentions for the piece?
 - b. Did you feel a connection to the artist who made the work?
- 8. Has there ever been a piece that you didn't understand?
 - a. Do you think this piece should have been presented in a different way? Or with different explanations? How so?
- 9. Would you possibly be available to meet again?

Alli Hishikawa

Insights

- 1. The more personally connected a visitor is to the art museum, the more likely they are to enjoy their experience.
- 2. Context and background information about an artwork are often important to visitors fully appreciating art museums.
- 3. Visitors often find it harder to understand and appreciate artwork that is more ambiguous and abstract in nature.

Interview

Responses to Questions 1 and 2 have been omitted for privacy reasons.

What do you do for leisure?

Computer stuff? I also do woodworking.

Can you walk me through a typical day in your life?

Going to work, takes about 25 minutes. Have a breakfast yogurt, start reading emails that are backed up from the previous day, do work, mostly in a lab environment, come

home - takes about the same time coming home, maybe a little longer - watch some TV, read my email at home, take a nap, go to bed . . . there are some meals in between those too.

Would you characterize yourself as a more fast-paced person or someone who likes to take things slowly?

I'm slowing down.

Okay, so would you say when you were younger you were more of a fast-paced person but now that you're getting older you tend to take things more slowly?

Yeah.

Would you consider yourself a visual or a kinesthetic learner?

I guess I'm more of a hands on person.

Okay, so more kinesthetic?

Yeah, I mean I like building or doing things with my hands rather than just staring at something.

Tell me about some of the museums - if you can remember - that you've visited in your lifetime.

Wow, um, I mean I've visited the Portland Museum.

Okay, is that like an art museum?

Yup, art museum.

I've been to the Children's museum several times in Seattle. Um, up in Canada.

And can you recall what types of museums they were?

They were mostly just artwork on a wall or occasionally some sculptures.

Do you remember which ones you liked and why you liked them?

Well, I guess - hmm why I liked them . . . Can't remember which museum I saw, but there was more Asian art. I liked that. Maybe because I'm Asian.

So, more personal ties?

Yeah.

Were there any you didn't like? Maybe thought weren't as interesting or wasn't worth the trip?

No, there's always something to be - to like about it.

Would you consider yourself to be someone interested in art?

I guess casually - I mean I don't seek it out all the time.

Would you say you like art museums?

Yes.

Who do typically go to those museums with?

Family.

Do you know how long you usually spend at those museums?

Um, I would say probably at least an hour. The larger ones probably a little longer.

So is that just to go through the entire museum?

Um, most of the museum. For the larger ones it's probably doubtful I've seen everything.

So you usually just leave after you feel like you've seen most of it?

Yeah, usually.

Can you think of a time where you particularly enjoyed going to an art museum?

Well, there's not one that jumps out of my mind right now.

If there's nothing you can think of, that's okay too. But you were saying before that Asian art exhibits were really interesting to you.

Yeah, those were interesting.

Can you think of a time where you really didn't like going to an art museum?

Um . . . I don't think so.

Have you ever seen a piece of art that particularly spoke to you?

That's deep . . . there's some paintings and stuff like that where I thought, oh that's nice and pretty, but nothing that really struck me I guess.

In a more general sense, when you're looking at artwork, do you think you understand the artist's intentions in the art? Or do you try to understand on a deeper level what they might've been trying to communicate?

Um, yeah, maybe a little bit.

Do you think most of the time you're able to understand them?

I mean I don't think about that for each artwork, but yeah, I think I can.

Have you ever felt, just by doing that process of trying to understand the art, a connection to the artist himself/herself?

No.

Never thought of connecting in that way?

No, cause I'm not an artist myself, so I don't feel like I would have a connection, really.

Has there ever been a piece of artwork that you didn't understand?

Oh, sure.

Is that most of the artwork you see or?

Some of them, certainly. I mean some of them have - actually most of them have a brief explanation of the artwork and at least a title to the artwork so it kind of gives a little information.

Do you find yourself reading those descriptions and titles or do you typically just look at the piece?

I typically read at least the first or second sentence to at least get an idea of what it's about.

Do you recall a particular piece of artwork where you had no idea what it was representing?

Certainly there's certain artists that I just don't like at all.

Do you know the name of the artist?

Oh, gosh. Kind of that impressionist kind of stuff.

Oh, like very abstract stuff? That doesn't depict anything in particular.

Yeah, I cannot get into that at all.

So for those types of art, is there a better way that you would like them to be presented in? Like maybe if you could see the process; more than just the description?

That possibly might help.

In general, is there - typically what is your motivation in going to art museums or museums in general?

It's typically in a place that I'm visiting, so it's out of town and it's just something to do.

So it's usually not something where you visit for the museum specifically?

No, not necessarily.

Are there particular museums where you can see yourself going back to and visit again even though you've experienced them before?

So these are exclusively art museums?

Um, if there's other types of museums, that's fine too.

Well there's like aviation museums that aren't really art, but.

Yeah, so more museums that aren't quite static?

Yeah.

I guess in general, is there anything else that you would want designers to design regarding the art museum experience?

Certainly something that's more interactive, kind of like the aviation museum. I mean a lot of aviation museums, there's something interactive there - not all of them - but some of them. But, yeah, that's not really - couldn't really call that art.

Yeah, but I guess, since you work in aviation, there's that personal tie?

Right, sure.

And you were saying before, that with art, you're not much of an art person, so.

Yeah, but it's not like I don't enjoy looking at it, I just cannot look at it and think I've come up with something from that, you know, cause I'm not an artist.

You said usually when you go to art museums, it's cause you're visiting a new place and it's just something to do, but is there a time, or can you see yourself going to an art museum now? At home?

Sure!

Usually when you go to art museums, is there something in the back of your mind where you're thinking you want to experience a certain type of situation?

I guess it depends on what's in the museum. I mean, cause I'm probably more drawn to more Asian art - seeing all the different types of art throughout Asian history.

Would you open to meeting again?

Sure.

Alex Banh

Insights

1. Close proximity to the primary source material of an exhibit seems to impart a more lasting emotional impression. This proximity may be lost through translational errors or exhibition forms which may seem dense or repetitive.
2. Co-visitors can sometimes provide an unique enriching experience that exhibits may not be able to provide. Conversation, questioning, and observations/comments can provide deeper reflection and therefore a stronger impression for various exhibits.
3. Conversely, interaction with other visitors may detract from some experiences. This may be an uncontrollable factor, but mechanisms to guide participants through exhibits in a fashion which reduces the chance of disturbing others may be an avenue to explore.

Interview

Responses to Questions 1 and 2 have been omitted for privacy reasons.

And what do you do for leisure?

Leisure...I like reading...and being outdoors, so like hiking and camping, and biking. And watching a lot of movies so not the outdoors

It could pass for it

Do you do any like...When you're outdoors do you take a lot of pictures?

Generally! I feel like I generally take pictures of a lot of things

Like on your phone or on a camera..

On my phone, but I also do like film photography a little bit

Ohh yeah, I remember you mentioning that...could you walk me through a typical day in your life?

A typical day?...that's kinda

Yeah..it's probably very

Hard cause like right now I'm transitioning work life

Yeah..I guess if you have like down time, what that looks like ...

What that looks like? Okay

.. what happens when you go to work, and also what you choose to do in your free time

Yeah...okay....I guess..the last two weeks my routine has kinda looked like..if I work during the day I typically am listening to music on the bus, like on the commute to work. Like that's a pretty big part of my downtime too is just listening to music. So the music, listening for me is both like multitasking while I'm driving and doing things, but sometimes in my downtime I'll sit down and lay on the floor or my bed and really focus on the music. So that's like an activity itself for me where I'll really isolate the music listening

Do you remember your songs and playlists pretty well? Like is it usually the same

No I usually listen to something different every time

So you like to explore

Yeah, I tend to change not only like day to day but if I listen to something in the morning like on the way back, depending on my mood, like I need something else. So changes frequently

Any podcasts too?

Podcast? Yeah, I do listen to podcasts

Sweet..and then any other activities?

Activities? So then after work, I'm listening to music coming back from work, and then I usually play with my cat and then..yeah, even with reading I guess my reading habits are similar to music in that I start all these books and I tend to not finish them for a long time. Like I eventually get there but it takes a long time because I'm interested in so many different things that I'll check out a bunch of books, or I'll buy something or I'll borrow a book from a friend, and I have a bunch just lying around and so..I'll begin several and then once I really am committed to finishing it then I'll finish that one. But I tend to have a lot just lying around. And I also subscribed to the new yorker so I have all these magazines by them, so I've been reading that and that's been kinda nice cause I can just grab it and it's not heavy

Grab and go

Yeah, read a short story and it's like I read something from start to finish.

Cool! Would you characterize yourself as more of a fast paced person or someone who likes to take things kinda slowly? Like go with the flow

Latter...more of a go with the flow person

Okay! And this one..would you define yourself as a visual learner or a kinesthetic learner?

If I were to choose am I more that or that?

Yeah, or even just in between

It's both. Yeah.

Okay! Now we're going to start into the museum questions, I'm going to ask you to recall some of your museum experiences and just general questions about those. So first of all, tell me about some of the museums you've visited in your lifetime..ones you've liked, ones you remember..

Yeah..I guess like chronologically the most recent ones were the ones in Amsterdam. I went to two. I went to the Anne-Frank house and their national museum which I believe was like pronounced...butchering it, but I went to those two and I had a great experience going to both because my friend, reason why I went to amsterdam is because my friend lives there and she's Dutch..and not only is she Dutch but she's also the most Dutch person you can get, and she studies history, so she's completely nerding out about the whole I need to visit museums thing. But I think that even if somebody isn't interested in history, just the average tourist in Amsterdam knows that there's a lot of cool museums to visit, particularly Anne-Frank. Like my friend definitely hyped it up and she..

Talked about it a lot?

Talked about it a lot and like we so many meaningful conversations going to the museum and while we were there together we had a lot of great..um..she shared a lot of cool things I think I wouldn't have gotten if I had gone myself.

Yeah..so she kinda like, what kind of history does she study?

I think it's a general history track but she tends to focus a lot on European American history. Like the stuff she's been studying the projects have mostly been 20th century stuff.

Okay! And was she with you at the National museum too?

Yep

Was that like a history museum too?

Yeah, definitely

And she explained a lot of stuff

So that one, they have this nice cafe, we had some beer and were like super tired. We actually went to both in one day...kind of a mistake, but not really cause we were out there and we wanted to maximize our time so..we went to that one second like in the afternoon, and so by the time we were like "Okay let's do the exhibit" [inaudible] It's kinda like the met where it has everything, it's like the history of everything that the museum has its hands on. So they cover so much time period and like it's like not just the Americas it's like Asia and everywhere. History of the world..I think every country has that, like a natural museum that covers everything. But of course it focuses on their country.

Ours is like the smithsonian? Or like the met? I don't know. It sounds like you really like those two, were they free? Just curious

No, it was free for my friend because she was a history major but I did pay.

And were the displays, like the general exhibitions, were they static? Like what you'd expect in most museums

Yeah

Like a painting with a description next to it

Yeah

Did you spend a lot of time reading the descriptions? Or was most of it talking with your friend

No we spent a good amount of time reading things. Okay so the national museum I can't really speak for because we were tired, and we went to the cafe, so I we kind of ran through that one. But the Anne-Frank it's..it's a unique museum experience because the museum itself, it's the house and just..being there in itself is cool.

What aspects besides it being the house made it cool? Was it designed a certain way?

Yeah, you start um..So the family, where they were hiding, it's basically a hidden space behind the home and so we started out in like the downstairs area of the home and we kind of made our way up. And they obviously reconstructed and maintained it to make sure it lasts a long time. At the same time it was literally the house as best as they could keep it the way it was. So it's very small..I guess what I'm trying to say is

Like intimate?

Yeah..it's a very intimate setting because it is the home and it's quite a tight space, so even as we're going up the stairs only one person at a time can really access in and out of the different rooms and the levels. So I think it was three or four levels. So what you do is that you go through the front of the home and then there's like a secret exit/bookshelf and so that's where you enter the hidden part and then from there on that's where you navigate the hidden part. So it's very interactive throughout. What was the question again?

Oh it was just what did you like about it, what made it unique

Something I remember was that they didn't have a lot of things to read, like they did but compared to other museums I can think of, most museums the way they, even like the purpose of the museum itself is like they always have rotating exhibits so for me it tends to be too much information so you don't know what to really look at, like where to direct your attention but the house is like natural kind of way of taking in that information because you start in a particular room and in that room they would tend to have photos of the family members or they'd have like a small actual artifact? And so you'd look at that and there was a small caption but there wasn't a lot of information

There weren't walls of text and stuff

There's not yeah, so you could really spend your time in each little part and kind of like..it was almost meditative, like quiet, and there's a sense of awe of just being in the house I think. I noticed that there wasn't a lot of information so my friend and I had a chance to talk about what we saw and what we were reading rather than just be busy reading and reading and reading. So I really enjoyed it. I definitely got emotional at the very end. Throughout it I was like okay, it definitely feels surreal cause it's actually the house they were hiding in, and at the very end, the last part before you get to the gift shop is, as we're exiting the house they had the actual diaries. And so we're reading the diaries, I'm reading the captions but my friend is reading it in Dutch, she's actually reading the diaries and explaining more of what's not in the translation on the sides, so that was cool. The handwriting was kind of difficult to read but my friend really did her best to read it and tell me what she was reading. But the part we got emotional about was when a woman wrote to the father saying that, saying to kind of confirm the death of Anne and her older sister Margot, and that woman what's interesting is that I'm reading it, I'm looking at it and it's like a framed letter to the father and I thought "Oh that's incredibly sad", having to hear that news about the daughters and then my friend was reading the letter and something that wasn't in the translation, on the side, was that the letter itself talks about how the woman basically became friends with Anne and the sister in the camp that they were in. So there was this sense of personal "I knew them" like I'm not one random woman who's delivering this. So when my friend read that part,

since she's able to directly read the dutch, we were like so taken aback. So that was cool, my friend reading the primary source was an experience I've never had before. I enjoyed that a lot.

That's interesting..and just curious, have there been any museums you've visited that you didn't like?

Oh yeah. So in Germany actually earlier last year, I went with a group cause it was a school and we sorta did a mission trip. And so our mission trip team, there were like eight of us, and one of the activities we did was that when we were in Nuremberg, we went to the one of their famous museums that was located where they did the trials. So we went to that museum and honestly it was disappointing because the audio translation into English sucked, and everything was just the same. Like every room you walked through was just kind of huge picture panels and they just had a gigantic essay or description. And we're reading them, listening to them, we're reading them, listening to them. The way they kind of displayed their photos and all of that information was just overwhelming and just dry. So that was a disappointing experience. And I think that was also contrasted too later when we went to the concentration camp, maybe because the camp itself, kind of like the Anne-Frank house, you're in place where the history occurred, but then within the concentration camp they had museums, like specific kind of, they had an art gallery and then a more kind of informational history, general history of the camp, the exhibit. So then going there, I couldn't help but compare it to the other one. I guess technically the nuremberg one was in place, they created the museum in the actual museum but the concentration camp one was far better.

Is it because they had less walls (of text?)

The way they displayed things was totally different, it was much more interactive. So I remember the art gallery was cool, but the general information one had these huge kind of drawers, and so there was an angled desk where you're looking at the photos, you're looking at the captions but then you could pull out the drawers and look at other artifacts and stuff they had, like clothing of the people at the camps and all kinds of things that made it more interesting. So you could kind of pick and choose what you wanted to see. It was also a brighter space I remember, there was more lighting so you weren't sleepy. Being at a concentration camp is also just sobering, so you're alert and attentive.

Gotcha..and so transitioning from those types of museums, would you consider yourself interested in art? Specifically like art museums

Yeah! Yeah

Are there any that come to mind?

Probably like MoMA (NY), MoMA's definitely one that if I had spent more time there, then I would've maybe spent an entire day at MoMA. Because I took my time, it was me and a friend, we took our time in the first two levels and by the time we got to the 3rd or 4th we had to rush through cause we had to get to other places. That's a fun one for sure, all the famous artists and time periods. Classic Van Gogh and all that, Andy Warhol, yeah. And in Seattle I got to SAM, not regularly. I'm not a member or anything but if there's a famous exhibit I'll go. Two that come to mind are Picasso, many many years ago, and then that one Japanese Lady

The infinity mirrors?

The infinity mirrors, yeah I went to that. Crazy wait. The wait was definitely longer than the actual time in the exhibit. But I think that goes to show that I'm willing to wait a ridiculous amount of time.

What was the infinity mirrors exhibit like? Was it like you walk into a room and you're surrounded by

All the lights. Like you walk in and there's all the lights and sculptures as she does. She has kind of these crazy abstract, phallic looking sculptures, but everything is mirrored so it kind of feels like you're in this almost Dr. Seuss like universe. Yeah, everything's very colorful but also modern and kind of minimalist at the same time?

Did you walk through largely or did you take a lot of pictures? And were there descriptions?

Descriptions..there were a few but not that much. There was maybe like, I think we got a pamphlet and it talked about her as an artist. But the actual rooms themselves didn't have too many descriptions other than "She made it using this material, this is the name of the room" but no description. So it's kind of like you figure out that experience.

And did you take a lot of photos there?

I didn't take a lot, I guess I took a few on my phone. So we were only allowed to be in the room for half a minute but I guess people take as many photos as they can during that time. But my friend bought a camera, two friends, and she took a lot of photos. I didn't.

It's nice to have friends who take photos on trips

Yeah

So following up on that, do you usually visit museums alone? Or with friends

Usually with people..I'm trying to remember if I've ever gone alone. At the met I was alone but that was because my friend left. So I had two days alone in New York and so I went to the Met. Yeah, there's pros and cons. It's just like travelling like it's nice travelling alone, it's nice travelling not alone. Most of the time though I've gone to the museum with friends

Is it usually with 2-3 or 1-2? Like a small group

Yeah, 2 at most. Like 2 other friends.

And then..do you usually talk with them at the museum? Or does it vary?

It varies..I think the friends I generally go with, you know when it's the right time to talk about things. Cause one experience I remember that happened, sometime after I came back from Africa so it was like late summer last year, my friend messaged me, so I have like several friends who are into museums, so one friend told me to go to this one that's called...Laurens? I can't remember, making it up now. It's near Capitol Hill but it's a free museum and we went there. And they did like impressionist people. And that one was the friend who invited me and another friend so there were three of us and I recall it was such a natural pace that we had, like we would look at something and then we would..one of us or two of us would then make a comment, and then it would be like "Oh yeah I saw that" or "I don't see that" whatever that question or comment was, and then we'd move on to the next one. So there was this unspoken rhythm to how we were spending our time in there. And for the most part I would say that's how my museum experience goes. I'm with a friend who understands me and my pace and vice versa.

Just curious, have you ever gone with family?

I feel like I have but I can't remember right now...I don't know..oh, I've gone with my mom. My mom and I went to Korea, just the two of us. So we've been to, we've gone through several museums. And I'd say my general love for museum comes from my parents. My mom loves art, my dad loves history, he loves art too.

Do you know how long you usually spend at a museum?

Minimum an hour

And is there a reason to that?

I think just like, most places I pay for it and so I want to see everything that I paid for. Also I think it goes back to the whole my pace of learning. Like I'm slow at taking in information and I think it's just the personality i have. I like to kind of wander around and look at things, not only read things but also sometimes stare at things and soak it in.

And you mentioned that if you could, you would spend a whole day at MoMA. Is there a reason why, something certain about it?

I think cause it's so big, there's just a lot that I couldn't get to, so what I did is that I ran through one of the floors. I didn't get to really remember the floors I ran through but yeah. That one I took a lot of photos in and then my phone died. I was with my friend that day so thankfully she had a phone.

Cool! Can you think of a time when you particularly enjoyed going to an art museum?

MoMa is one..I also really like, one that I haven't mentioned, is the Seattle Asian Art Museum, the one that's in volunteer park. I really like that one too because it's much smaller and it's devoted to asian art so something about is so unassuming and like not very many people know about this so I kinda like that. That it's not in a busy location and that it's not high traffic. I also realize I enjoy my own space while I'm there and yeah there was this one Japanese exhibit that was there..or was it Korean? I've seen Korean but I also saw this one Japanese one that was super cool.

What made it cool?

There was one specific one that I cannot forget. It was about bathrooms, like public restrooms in Tokyo or something, and just the way the artist described it, it was a video montage that she created of people coming in and out of the stalls of the public restroom and you can see what they're doing in the stalls.

Wow, that's interesting

It sounds weird but the purpose of it was to show that in a public restroom, there's so many private things happening. So it was like a juxtaposition, like a paradox you know? So there'd be a woman crying in her stall, another woman throwing up, another one peeing..so just kind of, that one's one I can't forget. That one's at the Seattle Asian Art Museum, I really like that place. It's closed, I think they're renovating. I usually recommend that one. It's cheaper.

So why did you choose to go to the museum?

Hmmm...why did I go? Why do I go. I think I go to a museum because...I like learning new things. It's not only history but it's also art. I like anything and everything, also learning new things. And museums are a different form of learning, it's like more focused. I really like it and I enjoy being in museums.

Okay! And when you visited, were you visiting a special exhibition?

That one (The Japanese restroom one) was temporary. So when you enter the SAAM, the left side is tends to be the one that's always there and then the right side is the rotating one.

You've kind of already covered this but did you enjoy your overall experience?

Yes..Yeahh

Have you gone back since that visit which stuck with you?

I don't remember if I've gone back after that one but I think I have. Now that I've been to so many I've lost track.

Ah okay..and how frequently would you say you visit museums? Like in a month maybe?

Monthly is hard...maybe in a year, out of the four seasons, three times? So like three times a year.

Gotcha. And was there anything you didn't like about your visit to either MoMA or the SAAM?

With MoMA what I don't like is just that it's popular, so there's a lot of people in your way. Sometimes it's just distracting when there's kids or really annoying people who are just standing in front and have no body awareness. You can tell they're just bored and are like "Why not go do something more fun than? Why are you here? But for the SAAM...it would be nice if they had a bit more. It is small, it's very small. Like you can go through that pretty quickly.

I guess hopping to the inverse of that, can you think of a time when you didn't enjoy an art museum visit as a whole? Like just detested the whole experience.

Mmmm...art museum? Specifically?

Yeah! If not then it's alright too

If I recall...the Picasso one that I saw at SAM. I remember it being..I didn't dislike the entire thing, but there were elements of it that I didn't like.

Which elements?

I think one of them was..I went with a boyfriend at that time and I felt like he didn't really enjoy it. And I remember it was his idea to go, so we went and it was a date or whatever, and I don't think he particularly cared about Picasso and it's not like I was crazy about Picasso either but..we were both there, and there was just the vibe of "Let's not spend that much time here". So I think the person that I spend my time at the museum with

has a huge influence on me. Which is just who I am. So I remember one of the specific things I learned about Picasso was that he had a lot of mistresses..and a lot of really young ones, illegally, and..he drew a lot of naked pictures of him. That was kinda the big takeaway, he had a lot of lovers. But there wasn't really anything else about it that I recall, it was an 'eh' experience.

Okay! Going back to the Japanese one, the videos, did you feel while watching the video that you understood the intent of the piece? Like the artistic intent or why it was displayed.

I think so yeah. That one specifically made sense especially since that wasn't the only video one. There were a couple other ones that were video format. And that..SAAM tends to display a lot of kind of...different forms of mediums. Mixed mediums, I remember they had one that was just a lot of sound in a dark room and all you heard was audio.

Oh! Was there any supplementary stuff with the video?

Just like a blurb

A blurb..okay. And did you feel any connection with the artist who made the work?

I think so..yeah. I think the museum itself being an Asian Art Museum and them being asian artists. I think with the Japan one, I've never been to Japan, it's kinda close to Korea and I understand the messages that they're trying to deliver. That made sense to me.

Okay! And has there ever been a piece that you didn't understand?

Oh yeah..so many

Do you think it had to do with the piece itself? Or was there like a lack of information given

Probably both? My lack of understanding of the person who made it and yeah

Is there a specific one you can recount?

I think it was at the SAAM. I went to this one exhibit a few years ago in the summer and the...it was a very spontaneous visit and I don't remember the name but it was something having to do with the theme of the color indigo...something indigo by some asian american artist. I don't remember if it was literally an indigo colored themed exhibit or...see, even trying to remember what it was about I was confused. I remember being confused throughout most of it.

Just a bunch of indigo colored objects? Or like

There was a bunch of paintings..that had..I think references to indigo. Yeah. So it might've been original pieces that this artist had made but also the artist was interested in this thing of indigo so the artist collected other pieces from artists.

So did you not really understand the entire message

Yeah I don't think I understood what that exposed about...I just remember indigo

So how was it presented?

A lot of typical art..

So like painting then caption

Yeah

Was it all in one room?

There were several rooms

They're trying to get you to connect the theme across the rooms

Yeah that one was like that..the SAM is usually like one long hallway and then 5-ish big rooms you walk through

Okay! And would you possibly be available to meet again?

Yeah! I'd love to do that!

Cool! I guess that concludes the interview, thank you for coming out and spending time to do this.

Annie Xia

Insights

1. Some visitors are more interested in museums with varying content that appeal to their personal interests
2. In order to understand context of art and to gain an appreciation for artists, it's better to physically engage with art and materials
3. The structure of museums and the placement of specific art pieces is important for the engagement of visitors
4. Art is more interesting and engaging when it builds off of other pieces and artists and is presented as a collection of information rather than a stand alone
5. Some visitors want to spend more time in exhibits to develop an understanding and appreciation for art

Interview

Responses to Questions 1 and 2 have been omitted for privacy reasons.

What do you do for leisure?

I write and compose music

Can you walk me through a day in your life?

I wake up, I go to work, after work I go home and work on my EP

Would you characterize yourself as a more fast-paced person or someone who likes to take things slowly?

I would say it depends on the context. I think in terms of -- well how would you describe someone who's fast-paced vs slow paced person?

I guess depending on how many things you like to do in a day and how active you like to stay. In your free time do you like to go out to do things or rather relax and stay by yourself?

Well I consider work to be intense and mentally draining but I also find writing music and other creative tasks to be equally draining but I still kind of do it either way. I think I

manage to do more with my personal time than others but on weekends I try to unwind rather than do things.

So in terms of fast-paced or slow-paced for things where you're not actively doing things. Which one would you characterize yourself as?

I figure slow. I prefer slow-paced

Are you a visual or kinesthetic learner?

Let me think about this. When I play instruments, I feel like I check that- I focus a lot on technique as result of moving my own body. I can- it's like I'm responding to an audial input with changes to my body. I think it's difficult to categorize as one or the other.

So would you rather watch someone play, maybe look at the music how it's written or would you rather try it yourself? Is there a preference?

I think you have to try things for yourself. It's harder to gain a deeper appreciation for something if you don't do it on your own

What about for activities that aren't as active?

I think I would still prefer to be more engaged than watching something visually.

Now tell me about some of the museums you've visited in you life time.

I've been to Seattle Art Museum. I've been to the spy museum and holocaust museum in Washington D.C. What other museums have I been to? I've been to Bellevue Art Museum. I went to one in Princeton in New Jersey. Not too many but I do enjoy art. We went to the MET in New York City. There's a few.

Which one's did you like the most and why?

I think - oh I also went to one on - what's the island near- Bainbridge. I went to that museum on Bainbridge Island as well. The ones that I like the most... I did enjoy the Seattle Art Museum but I think a big part of it is I was just an older and more appreciative towards art as a whole so I don't really know if there's anything specifically that Seattle Art Museum did that other art museums didn't.

Were there engaging museums you went to when you were a kid that you liked more?

Not that I particularly remember. Nor do I think I appreciated them as much when I was a kid.

Which one's did you not like and why?

I think that some museums don't have as much content inside of them like the one on Bainbridge Island. I thought I kind of lacked more of a cultural connection to the ones there and I also felt like they didn't have as much diversity among them but I do feel like it's important that they take into account the cultural surrounding area. It just wasn't that interesting to me personally at the time.

Do you think you connect more with museums that you have a personal interest with?

Yeah. I think that when I go to the Wing Luke Museum in Chinatown and do things related to Asian American history. Because I'm Asian American I feel way more connected to that

Would you consider yourself to be interested in art?

Yes, very much so

Do you like Art Museums?

I would say so.

You mentioned the Seattle Art Museum. What was your favorite part about that?

I don't quite remember. I just remember having the impression of it. I remember liking looking at pieces outside of just Dale Chihuly even though he was native to the Pacific Northwest, I feel like there was more to tell from the other pieces. I don't remember though.

Who do you go to museums with usually?

Just whoever is with me at the time. I went with some friends a few times. I've been to museums by myself, with my sister. Wait let me think about something. I've definitely been to - do art shows count as museums?

Sure

I like going to art shows when I was in college with my friend's art pieces there

Do you think it changes your perspective and experience when you're with specific people you enjoy being around?

I think when you're going to something with some people who don't necessarily appreciate art as much as you do, you feel like the time you're spending feels borrowed if both people aren't interested in something so it can hamper your enjoyment of it. But if you really enjoy looking at art with someone else, if you feel like you can talk about these things with other people in a creative context, it makes more sense.

Do you prefer going with other people or solo to art shows?

I like going alone because I have more time to experience things on my own without feeling rushed for other people.

When you go to art museums to you often sit or stand and stare at pieces to understand them for yourself or do you enjoy looking at the little blurb and talking to other people to try and understand things differently?

I think you can't fully separate art from artist so it's important to understand the context which each art piece was created in. So I almost always read the blurbs. I feel like sometimes I can't quite understand the context of something. I thought something that was really interesting was when we went to see the Picasso Museum in Barcelona that you can see his development as an artist in his entire life that I thought was really interesting. It was nice to just put the pieces in context. Sometimes I do feel like it isn't enough context and I didn't understand what the artist was going for. Which is kind of the worst feeling you can get from an art museum.

Is there a specific reason why you do go to art museums?

They're unique representations of the culture and the area surrounding them. So if I have an appreciation for an area that I'm in I think it's important to understand the cultural context of the piece is. I think it's important to go and understand what kind of culture a place brings out too conversely.

Do you often go to art museums to visit any special exhibits or is it mostly for the information that's already there?

I think that since I haven't been to one in quite a while, I haven't seen any special exhibits as an excuse to go to one. I just find myself going to them as a means to pass the time.

Think of any art museum you've been to before. Have you been back to it?

No.

Why's that?

I just haven't - actually I have been to the Wing Luke museum multiple times but that's just for different events for Seattle Asian American Film Festival.

Is there anything specific about art museums that you don't like?

Sometimes I feel like I'm not well connected to the culture around me. I feel like sometimes there isn't enough content at times but that's just like anything you know. Just the diversity of content, specificity of content, as well as the amount of content all

widely differs. And I don't know the greatest you can get from all those without diluting the others is.

Do you like going to art museums where there is a little of everything? Or do you like it more when it's a specific artist or a specific culture or genre?

I think seeing something like Pablo Picasso's development was really interesting because as you saw it seemed like he always - I felt like I didn't really understand art really well at the time. I thought it was really interesting to see his art become way more stylized over time and become more deliberate. It kind of made me understand that he had to first develop all the technique first before becoming super hyper-stylized and making his points about things. So I thought it was interesting watching someone - development of becoming someone who was creative. If that makes sense.

When you see the development of an artist or art, do you ever wonder about how it was made or created, the specific context of it beyond what's given to you?

Yeah. I also feel that since it was centered around one artist so much it was able to build on its context with other people around it. I kind of don't like it when art pieces just have one piece and it's just - they don't have any context on it and it's just kind of like a local. They just - it seems like it was just put in there like what is this piece doing among everything else. How does this fit in? You know what I mean?

Do you think the structure of how art museums are created affects your experience?

Absolutely. I think the placement of something- you're creating a collection of things as a whole. Like when you listen to an album, the song ordering is very deliberate in the album. Why did these pick these songs? Why did they go with this ordering? How does everything fit as one whole thing. It's all extremely deliberate and if something feels out of place it kind of ruins the experience of the whole.

Has there been a specific moment that you can remember that there's been a piece that has thrown off your entire experience?

Not that I can recall, no.

Have you ever seen a piece of art that particularly spoke to you?

Yeah but I can't quite remember them from art museums much.

Is there anything from a different museum that spoke to you?

I mean not inside of museums. I think that things that really speak to me are in the context of - you know - things that mean a lot to me to begin with. I really like collecting album art - physical CDs and records from bands I really like because they add a visual

element to music I already enjoy. I also feel like art on it's own is a product of someone's like - it's inherently worthless and I think that you can only - art can only be judged on whether how deliberate it was and it's not enough to say this art exists, it feels like it has to have a purpose and reasoning, context for existing you know? I think it's just kind of weird when you - just because you have something visual on some medium, it doesn't necessarily mean that it told a story or had its place in something. It's difficult to categorize.

Do you think there are better ways of explaining artist's intentions and the context without reading a blurb or getting information given to you?

Yeah, I think you can - sorry can you repeat the question?

Do you think there are other ways to understand context and art pieces and artists without the little blurb or having an audio understanding of in? And if there are other more interesting ways you think of where you're presented information about art or about music in general?

I think that there's interesting mediums for art outside - sometimes it doesn't need a blurb - I'm thinking specifically of having a painting and blurb to give it context. I think if - any kind of like visual or audial or anything you consume with your body or that makes you think in a certain way can be interpreted as art. I think that giving something - presenting something in a way that makes you stop and wonder like why it exists in a certain way is important. But I think it's difficult when - all the elements as a whole have to match together among multiple pieces to have a kind of cohesive message. If that makes sense - without being extremely explicit about it. I think you can do that to show rather than tell so much but I think that's asking a lot because sometimes you have limited things to work with

Do you ever feel connections to artists of paintings you see or of other mediums when you go through museums?

Yeah of course.

Is there a specific experience where you've seen that?

I think that recently looking at art paintings, they've made me feel a certain way. Like for example the album that recently came out Effloresce, the picture is a woman whose face is replaced with flowers and I thought that it kind of had a really interesting - it told a story of personal growth inside the complex of something. I think given the context of the artist at the time, it was something that they feel - that they reflected really strongly on their own personal growth and I thought that it was particularly meaningful when you

put it in the context of how the music and writing style had changed at the time. I really liked that album art a lot.

Has there ever been a piece that you didn't understand like in a museum?

Yeah but I've often forgot about them. I don't recall the museums very well individually.

Do you often think that part of the reason why you didn't understand a piece was because it was presented in a bad way? Or could it have been presented in a different way for you to remember it better?

I think it's difficult - I don't quite recall. I think an artist I really like on Instagram is Electroillusion. I think they do a really great job at placing - recontextualizing things in terms of other things. It's hard for me to explain what I like about them but I think that a lot of people - they create art and it - sometimes it feels done for the sake of - it doesn't present the idea that I necessarily agree with or it seemed like it didn't put enough effort into its own idea or wasn't deliberate enough. If that makes sense. I don't quite recall those pieces very well though. But I end up feeling that way about a lot of music as a whole. So sometimes people want me to listen to music that they thought was really profound but it seems like it was determined to be profound because it was created ironically and I think sometimes when you create art ironically it doesn't - it's created in spite of the listener and not as something honest that the artist felt at the time.

Can you often tell when that happens in art?

It feels disingenuous at times.

Is there a specific genre where that makes you feel? Or do you see it in most art?

In specifically, I think the context of it was the bassist of a cover band that was in that I hated. He wanted us to learn a song called Rattlesnake by a band called King Gizard and the Lizard Wizard and I listened to the song and it was just 8 minutes of people saying the word rattlesnake. And they had another song called Flying Microtonal Banana and it wasn't even microtones, it was quartertones and it didn't even sound like - it attempted to appeal to people who felt more deeply about music but it didn't seem to - it seemed to do it in a really shallow way that I didn't necessarily appreciate. I felt like it just took advantage of things that people thought were more interesting and tried to make it seem exotic for no other reason or appreciation for the context.

Have you felt that way about an art piece in a museum before?

I definitely have but I don't recall.

Can you think of a time you didn't enjoy going to an art museum?

Not that i can recall

Would you possibly be available to meet again?

Yeah of course.

Vishaka Nirmal

Insights

1. One of the positive aspects of an experience at an art museum includes getting to understand the art, whether that is through a friend's explanations or from a museum employee's interpretation.
2. Older users tend to lose interest and spend less time in museums geared towards children or museums that they have gone through previously. In already seen exhibits, the artist statements can get boring and repetitive to users.
3. Having a personal connection to the artist enhances the experience and understanding of the piece of art.
4. Having similar art grouped together would increase understanding and experience for viewers.

Interview

Responses to Questions 1 and 2 have been omitted for privacy reasons.

What do you usually do for leisure?

I like movies... I like to go hiking outside, go exploring the city. Variety of things.

Can you walk me through a day in your life?

Oh gosh, yeah. So lately, I get up around 6 or 6:15 to get ready to go to my internship. And then I will have a small breakfast or coffee before I leave. And then I will travel down on the light rail to go downtown, go to my internship, travel back to campus afterward, go to class, and then usually go home after that. And eat and do homework. And then hang out with friends if I have time.

Do you usually make time for hanging out with friends, or the leisure activities you talked about?

Most days I try to, yeah.

Would you characterize yourself as a more fast-paced person or someone who likes to take things slowly?

Probably fast paced. I would say I lean more towards fast-paced, but definitely, there are people that are more fast-paced than I am.

Are you a visual or kinesthetic learner?

Visual, for sure.

Tell me about some of the museums you've visited in your lifetime?

I've been to a whole bunch. Well, I grew up in Cleveland, and so there's a bunch of museums in and around the Cleveland area. Cleveland art museum is world renowned, and I would go there quite often growing up. And I try to visit when I go back home, cause they're constantly updating. And then, they have the rock and roll hall of fame is in Cleveland too, the football hall of fame is near Cleveland. However, I've been to lots of science museums too, they have one in Cleveland, one in Columbus. And I think my favorite types of museums to go to are natural history museums. I've been to a couple of those. I've been to New York and been to a bunch of their museums. DC's museums. I don't know, I've been to a bunch.

You mentioned liking the natural history museums, why is that?

Well, I like science a lot. And that's basically what I studied in college.

Are there any ones that you particularly didn't like?

I think as I've gotten older, the specific science museums, I've lost interest in them, just cause they're catered towards middle school age kids. I still like going to them if I've never been to them, but I don't repeatedly go back to like... The one I'm specifically referencing is the COSI museum in Columbus.

Would you consider yourself to be interested in art?

Yes.

Do you like going to art museums?

I do like going to art museums, yes.

Is there anything that you particularly like about art museums?

I do like how much respect is being paid towards artists at the museums. That everyone there is interested in it as well, or at least seem to be.

Who do you go to museums with?

I've never gone to a museum by myself, so I guess that says something. I go with friends usually, or my brother and I will go to... When I'm home we'll go to the Cleveland art museum.

How long do you usually spend at a museum?

I spend a lot more time at a museum that I've never been to, versus subsequent visits. I say if I've been there before, I'll spend just over an hour, just depending on the size of the museum. But if I'm new to the museum, probably twice as long, like two hours or so.

Why do you spend more time at the newer museums than at the older museums that you've been to?

I just like to spend time reading the... Not so much the artist statements in art museums because those get kind of boring ... to me at least. But like in other museums, I like to read the history behind things and how they were created and why they were created. Or like the life cycle of certain species or how they went extinct in the natural history museums for example. And if there's a new installation in an old museum that I go to then I like to spend more time in that part of the museum versus seeing things I've already seen. I like to see new material.

Can you think of a specific time you particularly enjoyed going to an art museum?

I can, there's a bunch. Well, the last time I went to a museum was really enjoyable. I went to the Seattle art museum to see the new Indian artists exhibition.

Why did you go to the museum in the first place?

So my friend Rahul mentioned that there would be an Indian artist exhibition there so... And he's also Indian so I was like wow what a great opportunity for me to learn a lot about this. And it was nice that he was there because a lot of the stuff would have just gone right over my head or was not written on the wall so I wouldn't have known the history behind a lot of things or why Indian culture was this way. And they did have a video playing but I didn't want to stand and watch their video for like 45 minutes, so he could like explain a lot of the culture stuff while we were looking at the art, so it was nice to have him there. And it made it a lot more memorable too that I didn't just like walk through, I could stand there and ask him questions about it and we could walk through together.

Did your visit include any special exhibit(s)?

Yes.

Did you go through the other parts of the museum or was it just the special exhibit?

We went through the other parts of the museum. It was a pretty quick walkthrough, we spent most of our time at the new part of the museum.

Did you enjoy your overall experience?

Yeah. It was great. It's always a great time going to the museum.

Have you gone back since?

That was my most recent one, but I'll mention that the first Thursday of every month is free and I like to go on those days cause you can just go in and walk around

Was there anything you didn't like about the experience?

So in some of the other museums I've been to that I really enjoyed, they'll have stationed interpreters there that you can ask questions to, or they're just standing there talking to a group of people and you can kinda just walk by, listen for a while, and move on when you want to. And it's nice to have that perspective of a trained person whos doing these talks on the artists or the artwork and why it was created. So I like that about other museums, and that didn't happen at the Seattle art museum. And I wish they would do more stuff like that. But other than that it was

a pretty enjoyable experience. We were like kinda there late at night too and we were up in the museum until right when they were about to close, so I could feel pressure to move more quickly through the museum. And I wish they wouldn't do that, they kind of I think took away from the experience a little bit.

Can you think of a time you didn't enjoy going to an art museum?

I can't think of any right now. I have only gone to really... This makes me sound spoiled but really really great museums. And if I haven't heard good things about it I probably won't go. Like I think I'd rather spend money on a sub-par zoo than a sub-par art museum, just because that is more of my interest.. or a natural history museum .. I'd rather see sub-par of that versus okayish art. And I've also been really lucky the places I've lived have all had super super super great art museums, and so I guess I've been spoiled in the places that I've lived. They've had great art funding in the areas that I've been at.

Have you ever seen a piece of art that particularly spoke to you? Why?

I think... So, when I went to Ohio State, Ohio State had their own art museum for student installations downtown. And like twice a year they would hold these big exhibitions that were open to the public. And by my senior year a bunch of my friends had made it into the show and were showing their own artwork. And I really liked all of their pieces because I knew from like start to finish how it has transformed. And so all of theirs I spent a lot of time with them while they were creating it and seeing it up. And so I'd say if any pieces had spoken to me, those were the most, just because I know the story behind them.

Do you think you fully understood the artist's intentions for the piece?

Yeah, think for those ones specifically I have. And I also think, going back to the last question a little bit, some of those exhibitions had very provocative live performance art at the exhibition and those ones always gather large crowds, and so I think that's the point of them, is to be provocative like that. But I remember this one artist she was at a table, and she had a whole sheet cake, like from Costco, and she ate the entire cake during the length of the exhibition. And like very slowly eating it throughout the whole night, but when you got there, she started it as soon as everyone got there, and right around when everyone was starting to leave, she finished, and I just kinda stood there after she finished and was like oh my god, she just ate an entire cake. And I don't really remember the point of why she was doing it, I think it might have been some mental health or eating disorder type awareness. But like stuff like that really sticks with me. Yeah.

Has there ever been a piece that you didn't understand?

Yeah. I can tell you right now because I was.. Where was it? What museum was it in? Was it in Seattle art museum? Or no no no, it was in one of the New York museums, maybe it was the Guggenheim. We were in there and this one piece of art is a painting and it was a modern made painting and it was these little gremlin type monsters were in this disco club and they were up on the rafters, and they were pooping down on the people below dancing. And I just ... I read the artist statement and I did not, I didn't get it. I did not get it at all. And if there is no way to convey

meaning through the artist statement in any way, then I just like I'm like what was the point of this. And obviously, it was really great because it made it to the Guggenheim and the collectors saw value in it. But for that one, it lost me.

Do you think this piece should have been presented in a different way? Or with different explanations? How so?

I think so. I think if they had more pieces of art that were more whimsical like that in the area. Because it went from like very regal and traditional way in that you think of art, and like renaissance paintings and it went straight into this like this like two paintings on the wall that were just like really wacky and out there. I think if they had a whole room dedicated to this type of art then it would have made more sense, it was just very jarring to see that right next to something that was made in the like the 1800s that is a portrait versus that like weird whimsical type painting.

Would you possibly be available to meet again?

Yes, that would be great!