

Engaging with your visitors «Participation»

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**A building where objects are
stored . . .**

Museum?

**. . . for inspiration, learning and
enjoyment.**

Museums as shrines



Objects as witnesses



Product-led?

... or market-led?





Santiago Museum of Memory, Chile



Palace Museum, Udaipur, India

Labelling

'In Advance of the Broken Arm'

Marcel Duchamp, 1915



Labelling

'Portrait of Sultan Mehmet'

Giovanni Bellini, 1480


**'Sultan Mehmet: clever or
lonely or thoughtful?'**

Giovanni Bellini, 1480



Write your own label

Write your own label

This is a bridge for ants. It is blue so it camouflages against the sky. The ants believe the smell of feet helps defend them against predators like echidnas. They are actually very common and you will see them every  where if you really look.

Name: Alison

Age: 43



Shops and cafes



Mitsitam Café, Museum of the American Indian

Engaging with 'the historic reality'





Replica Viking saw,
Ancient Technology
Centre, UK

Living Museum – Beypazarı/Ankara



Participation and Collaboration

- What do we mean by participation and collaboration?
- Why is it important? What are the benefits?
- How do we make our work participatory and collaborative?

What is participation?

- Participation is a process through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives and the decisions and resources that affect them. (World Bank Participatory Learning Group)

Participation is a collaborative process and commitment to the deliberate and appropriate sharing of power: power in defining how decisions will be made, setting priorities and establishing whose interests will be served.

Levels of Participation

- Information sharing: project managers share information with beneficiaries
- Consultation: create opportunities for feedback from beneficiaries to project managers, allowing people to contribute to the design of a project
- Decision-making: beneficiaries make decisions together with project managers
- Initiating actions: beneficiaries not only make decisions and take action but they initiate them themselves
- Samuel Paul. "Community Participation in Development Projects"

Kinds of participation in museums

- Consultation
- Advisory groups
- Visitors (passive or active)
- Co-curation and co-development
- Community outreach
- Community members creating their own museum and representing their own cultural heritage based on their values, worldviews, needs



Vietnam Museum of Ethnology
Exhibition on Toi Bao Cap:
Subsidized Times. Everyday life
And post war rationing. 1975-1986



Hilltribe Museum

Hmong Community Museum

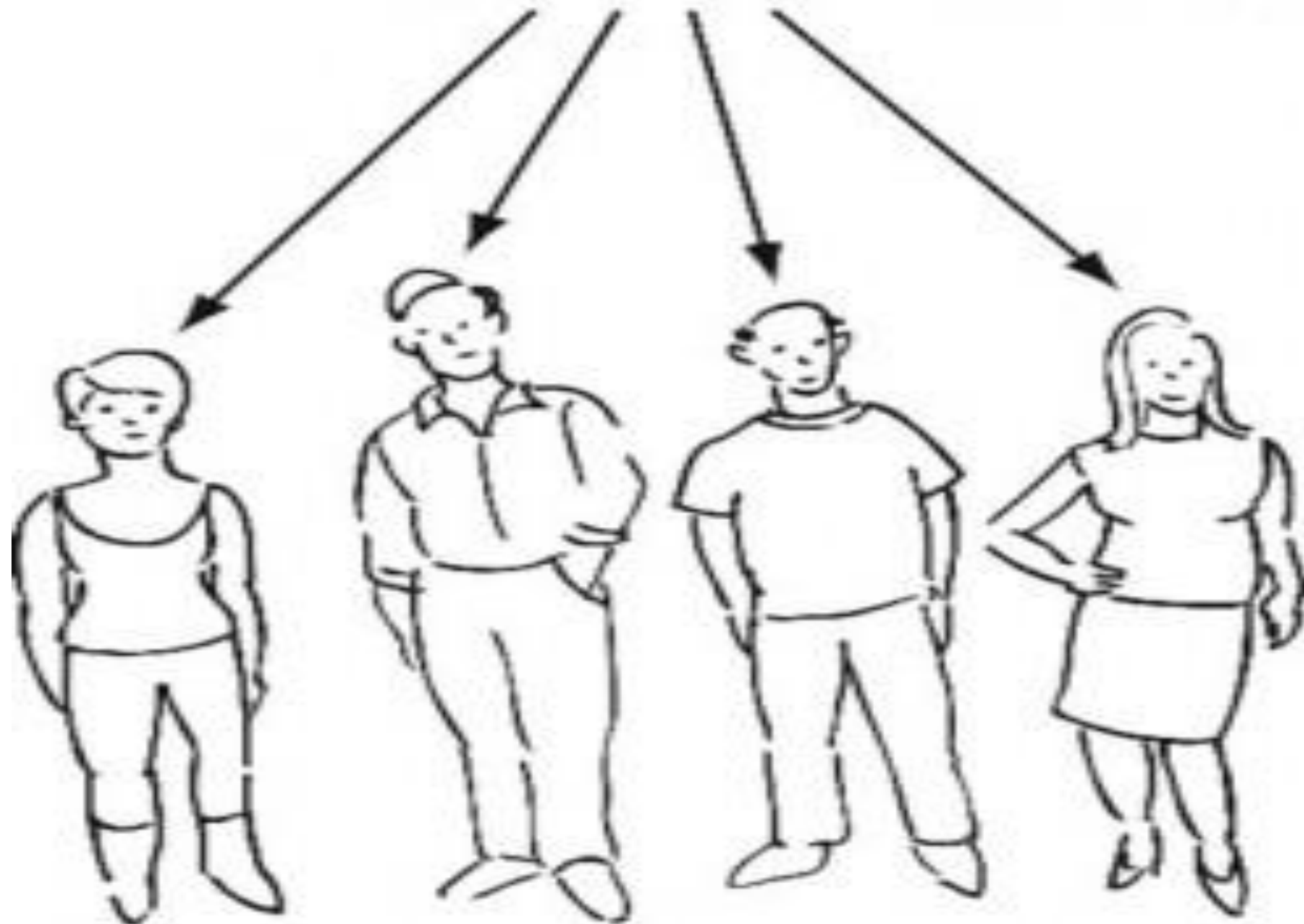
Museums must be useful to communities and meet their needs and interests for them to be sustainable without outside support. Community members can participate in museum activities and operations but museums must also be active participants in community life.

museum

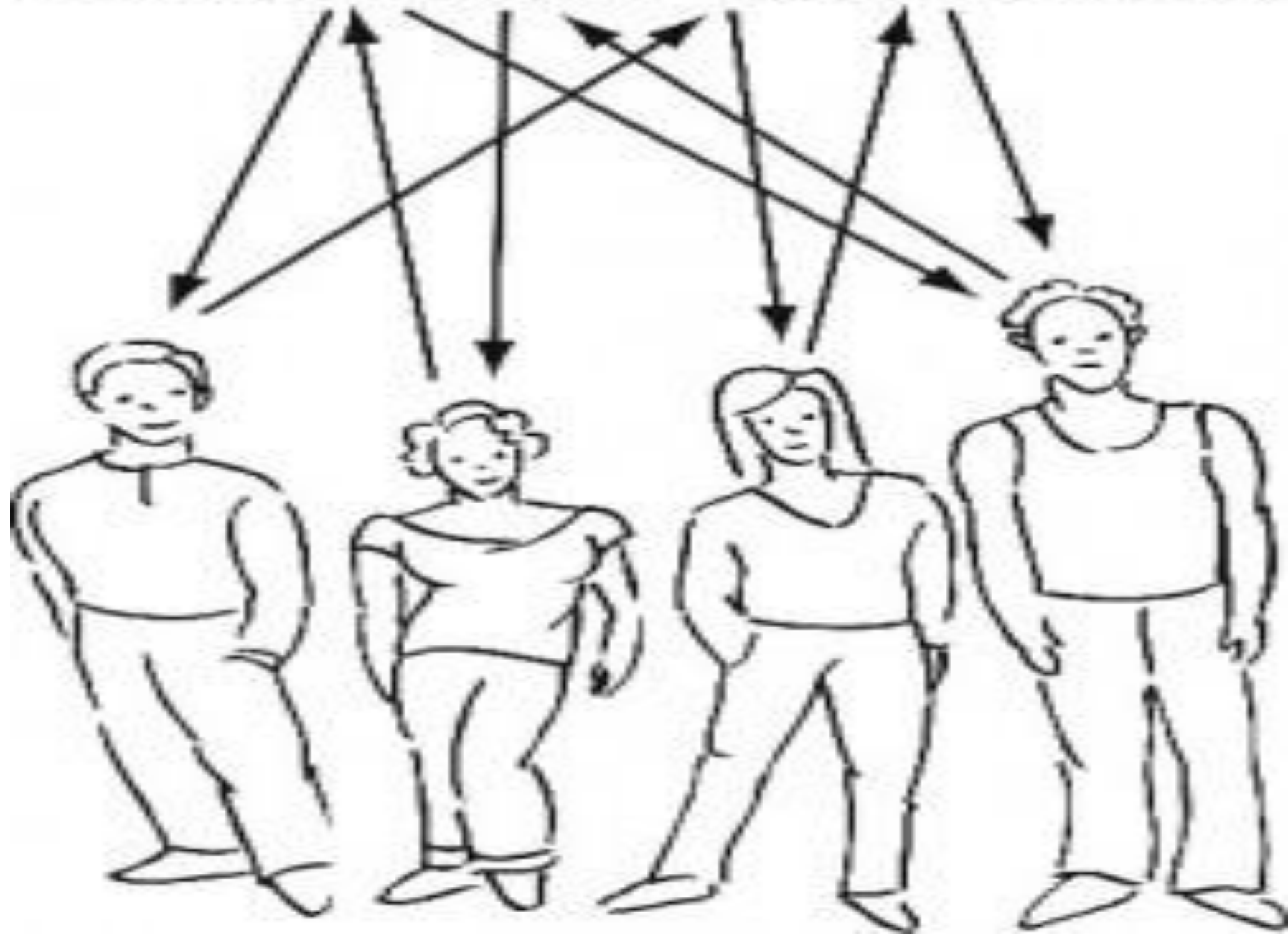


community

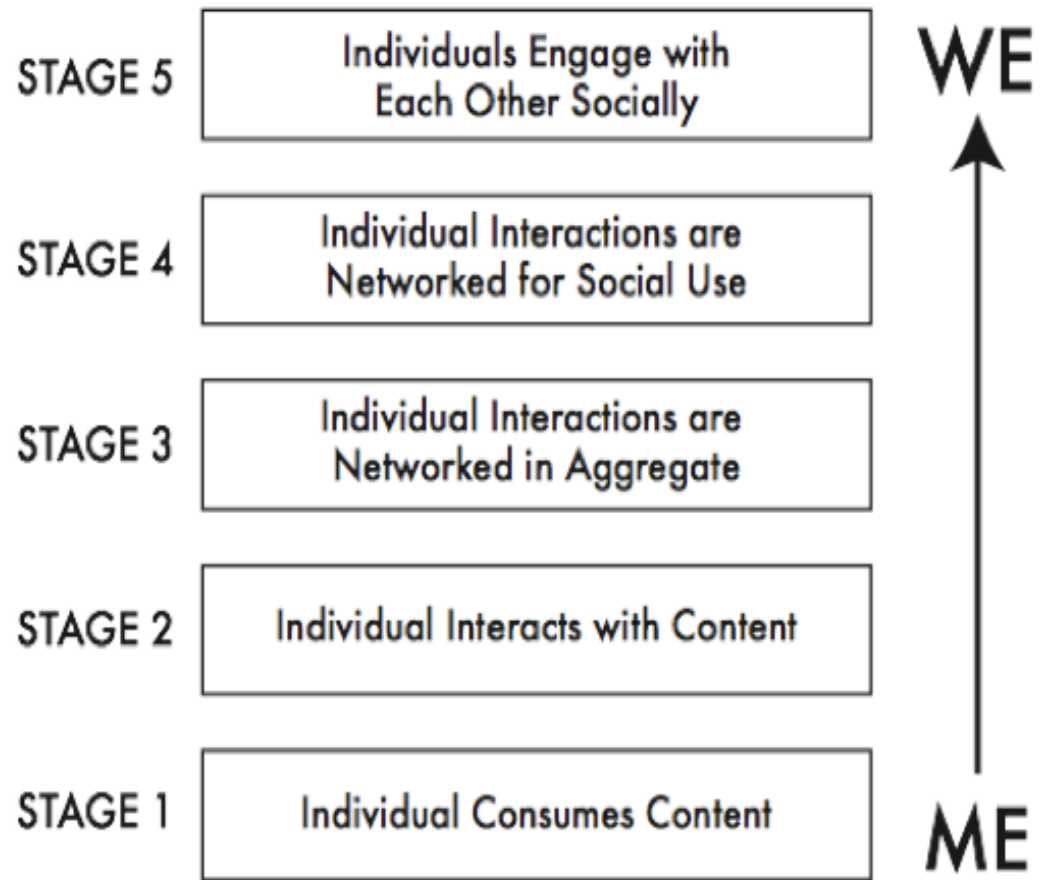
TRADITIONAL INSTITUTION



PARTICIPATORY INSTITUTION

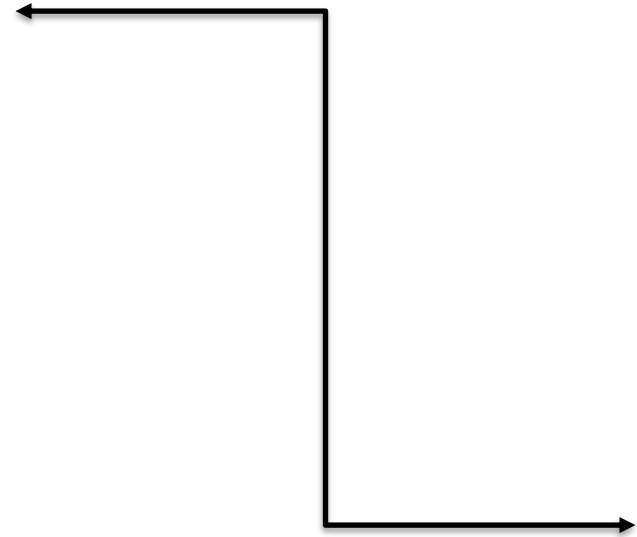


Whatever role they play in your institution, participatory elements must be well designed to be useful. Poorly designed participatory experiences such as the video comment station mentioned at the beginning of this chapter do little to enhance anyone's experience.



Audience First approach...

The first step to personalizing cultural institutions is to take an audience-centered approach to the experiences offered. This doesn't mean throwing out the things the staff thinks are important, but it means framing them in the context of what visitors want or need.



Traditional points of entry—the admissions desk, the map, the docent tour—are not typically designed to be audience-centric.



Information Desk

Great Court

- ↖ Core Education Centre
- ↗ Café West
- Souvenirs & Guides
- Bookshop

West

- ↗ Egypt
- Ancient Near East
- Greece & Rome

North

- ↗ Africa
- Americas
- Asia
- Prints & Drawings
- Way out to Montague Place



9

in the countdown
of favourite pictures

Gillian Ayres

Sitar II, 1993

Print

Gift of the Contemporary Art Society



1. What individual actions will be available to visitors?
2. What will staff do with the individual actions, i.e. how will the institution respond to them, incorporate them, and use them?
3. How will the institution display the collective outcome of the individual actions?

The individual action:

Comment boards offer visitors specific materials to use to share their thoughts. Different comment board designs bias people toward different results. Sticky notes and pencils signal an easy, quick activity that anyone can do. A typewriter, or fancy markers and drawing paper, signal a more involved activity.



The Metropolitan Museum used visitor-generated photos from Flickr in the popular “It’s Time We Met” advertising campaign, following user-specific licensing requirements to credit visitors properly.



IT'S TIME WE MET

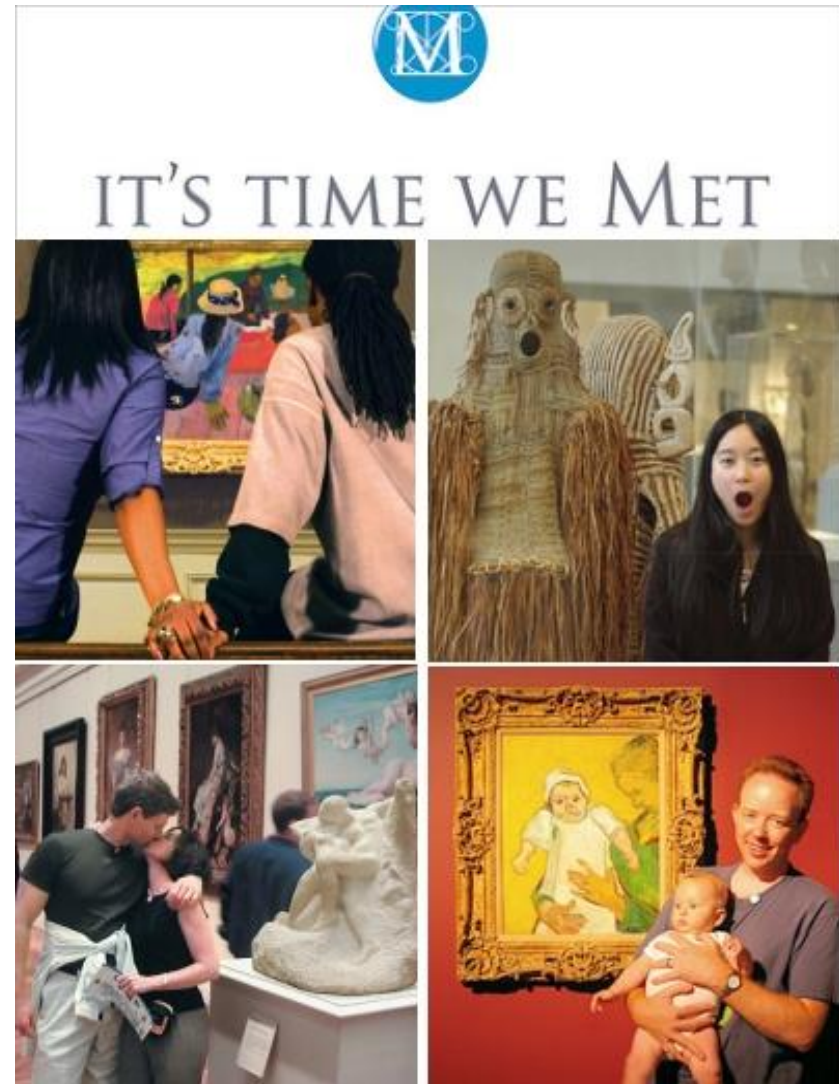
12:25 p.m. 19th-Century Galleries. Photo by Christine Acebo via Flickr.



THE
METROPOLITAN
MUSEUM OF ART

metmuseum.org

IT IS TIME WE MET!





In a typical photography exhibition, visitors can look and learn, but they can't leave comments or share the images with others as they browse. Social use of the photos is visitor-directed and may or may not be institutionally supported.

WHAT IF Objects?

Imagine looking at an object not for its artistic or historical significance but for its ability to spark conversation. Every museum has artifacts that lend themselves naturally to social experiences.

Five design techniques

Five design techniques that can activate artifacts as social objects in physical design:

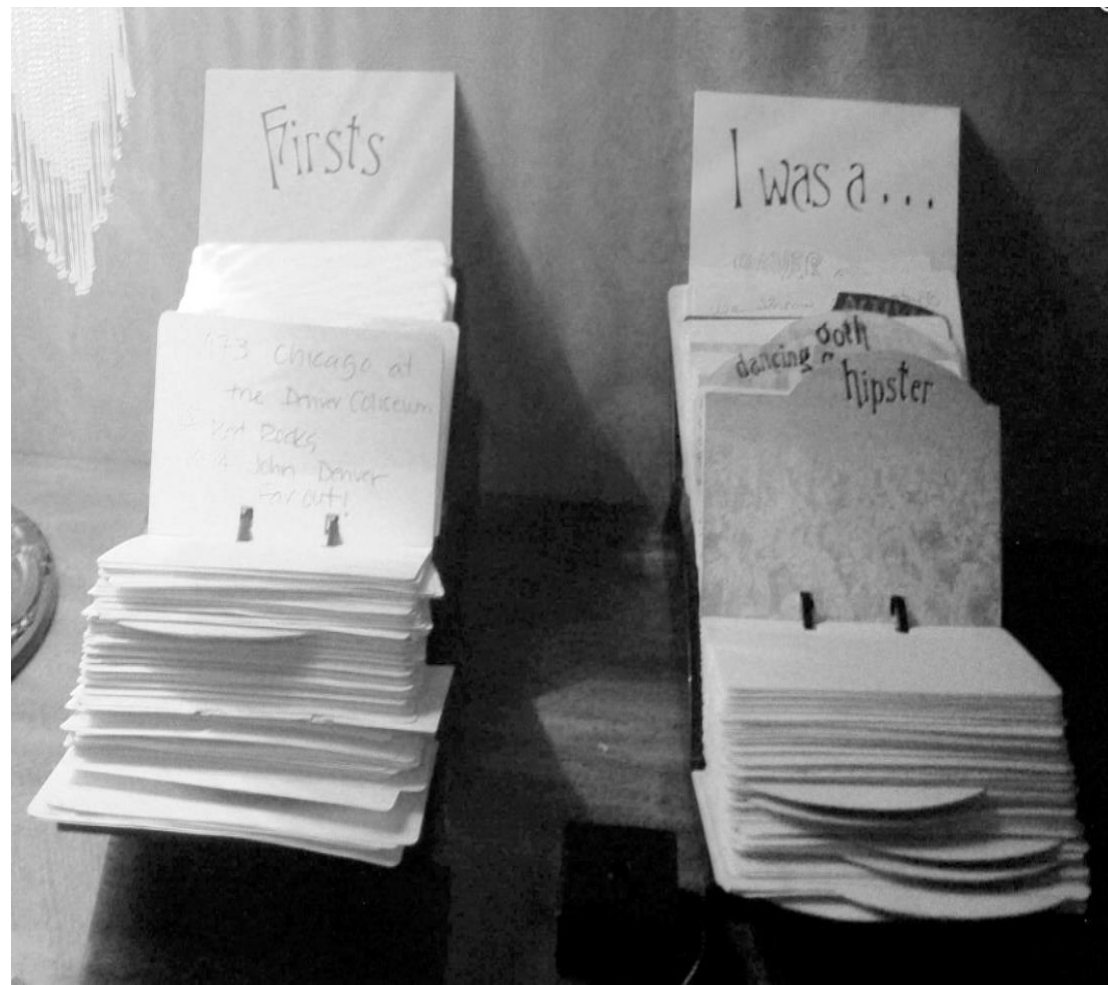
1. Asking visitors *questions* and prompting them to share their reactions to the objects on display
2. Providing *live interpretation* or performance to help visitors make a personal connection to artifacts
3. Designing exhibitions with *provocative presentation* techniques that display objects in juxtaposition, conflict, or conversation with each other
4. Giving visitors clear *instructions* on how to engage with each other around the object, whether in a game or a guided experience
5. Offering visitors ways to *share* objects either physically or virtually by sending them to friends and family

1.To encourage visitors to engage deeply and personally with a specific object

2.To motivate interpersonal dialogue among visitors around a particular object or idea

3.To provide feedback or useful information to staff about the object or exhibition

Simple rolodexes allowed Side Trip visitors to share personal stories across a variety of themes. Photo courtesy Denver Art Museum.



Recall the three basic goals for questions in exhibitions:

1. To encourage visitors to engage deeply and personally with a specific object
2. To motivate interpersonal dialogue among visitors around a particular object or idea
3. To provide feedback or useful information to staff about the object or exhibition

The Fill the Gap activity station clearly communicated a simple, meaningful question.



Possible Objects Fill the Gap! Great Suggestions



Fill the Gap!
 Name: Paula Borjesson
 Address: 1000 5th St
 Why should this piece fill the gap in our room?
 Because it looks like a
 piece of art that you
 would want to have in
 the rest of the piece. And
 it has a nice price.

Fill the Gap!
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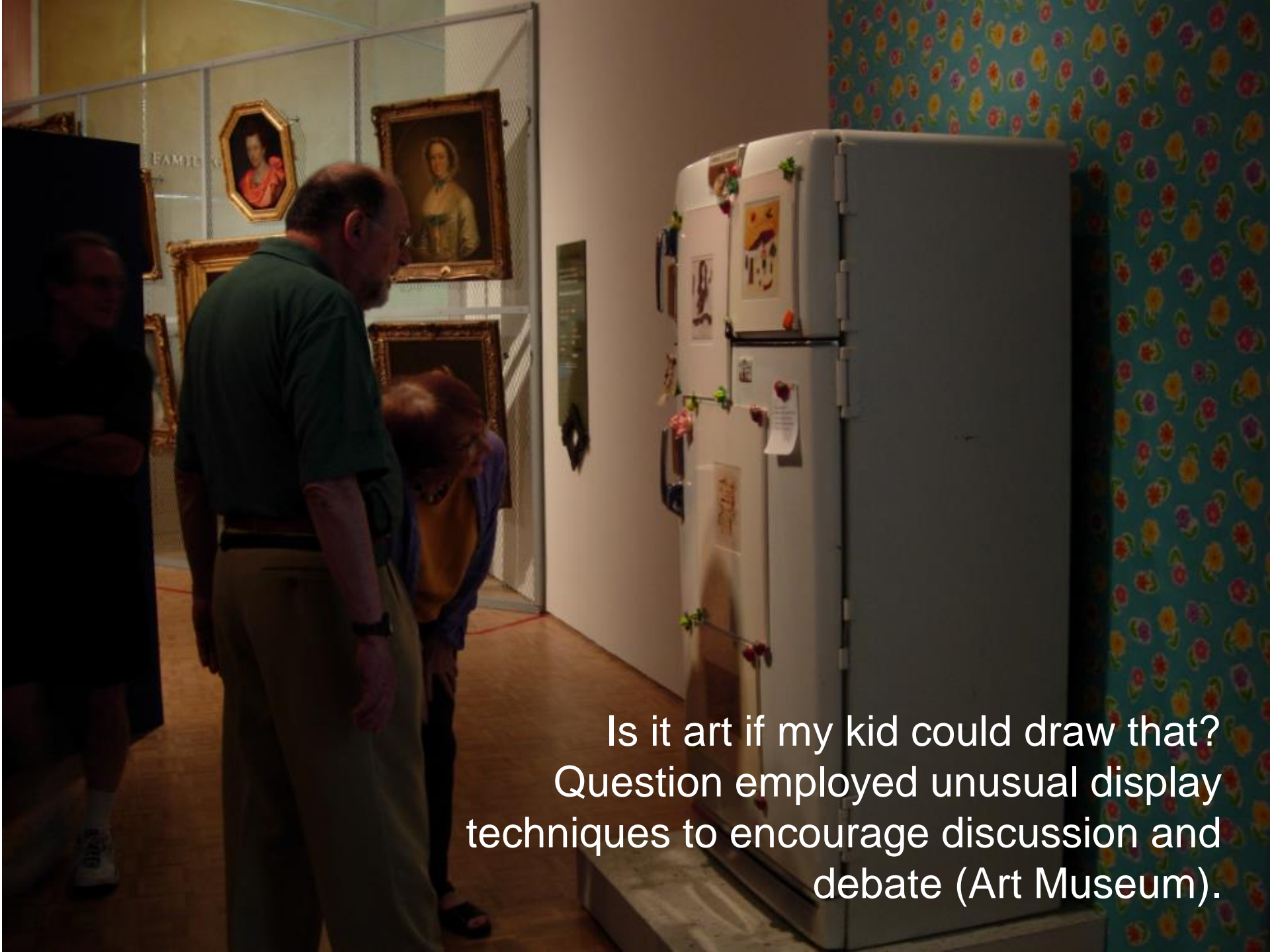
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The actor portraying the US marshal delivered his show inside this classroom. The print on the desk and photos in the background are both historic props used to connect visitors to the real story of Ruby Bridges.




Museum theatre experience



Is it art if my kid could draw that?
Question employed unusual display
techniques to encourage discussion and
debate (Art Museum).

Write your own label



This is a bridge for ants. It is blue so it camouflages against the sky. The ants believe the smell of feet helps defend them against predators like echidnas. They are actually very common and you will see them every  where if you really look.

Name: Alison

Age: 43

Follow the artist's instructions. Take a picture of your One Minute Sculpture and post it to the SFMOMA blog (www.blog.sfmoma.org) Use the tag "SFMOMAParticipation" to help others find it.

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art



Participation with cultural institutions

The most common way visitors participate with cultural institutions is through contribution. Visitors contribute to institutions by helping the staff test ideas or develop new projects. They contribute to each other by sharing their thoughts and creative work in public forums. Visitors contribute:

- Feedback in the form of verbal and written comments during visits and in focus groups
- Personal objects and creative works for crowd-sourced exhibits and collection projects
- Opinions and stories on comment boards, during tours, and in educational programs
- Memories and photographs in reflective spaces on the Web

London Science Museum
staff member Frankie Roberto
contributed his own toy and
story to Playing with
Science's participatory
element.



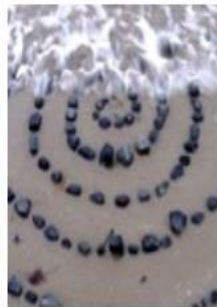
My dad bought this back from a
car boot sale. Despite the fact that
it can only go around in circles,
it fascinated me. A monorail!
Lent by: Frankie Roberto

CASE STUDY: How the Victoria & Albert Museum Asks for Contributions

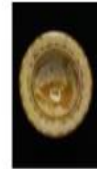
**The Victoria & Albert
Museum's *World Beach*
Project** has a particularly clear
“ask” for visitors’ contributions.
The website gives visitors a brief
overview of the process:

The project happens in two stages, in two locations:

- first, at a beach where you choose the stones and make your pattern, recording the work-in-progress with some photographs along the way.
- - Then later, at a computer, you can upload the photographs to this website to complete the project.

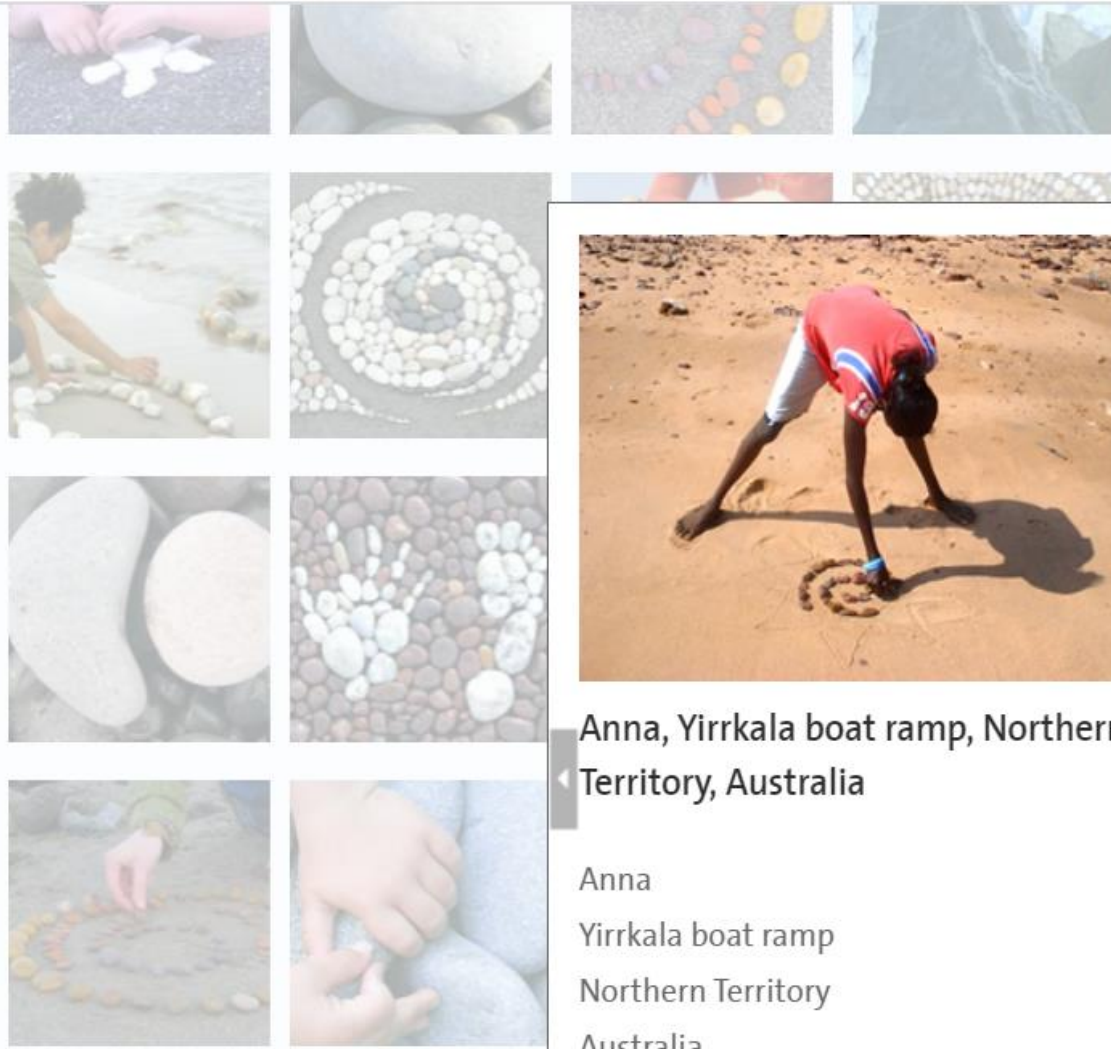


Related objects



[Search the Collections home](#)


By the close of the project in July 2012, over 1,400 entries had been added to the World Beach Project with entries from all age groups and from every continent – including one project from Antarctica.



Although we are no longer accepting entries, the map is still live and all past entries are visible.

[Launch the World Beach Project map](#)

[Close](#)



Anna, Yirrkala boat ramp, Northern Territory, Australia

Anna
Yirrkala boat ramp
Northern Territory
Australia
2009

We used the stones on the beach to make our sculpture.

V&A

For Victoria and Albert Museum Online Visit:

1 hour 20 mins

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kzvjVleLTzU>

The visitor comment station for On the Road allowed visitors to stay in the emotional space of the exhibition while sharing their thoughts. Photo courtesy Lowell National Historical Park.

Never say a commonplace thing.





Visitors make their handwritten pledges facing a projection screen which magically “rewrites” their promises digitally when they drop them in the slots. Photo by U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum/Max Reid.

Institutions may choose to pursue hosting models for participation

There are four broad reasons that institutions may choose to pursue hosting models for participation:

- 1.To encourage the public to be comfortable using the institution for a wide range of reasons
- 2.To encourage visitors to creatively adapt and use the institution and its content
- 3.To provide a space for diverse perspectives, exhibits, and performances that staff members are unable or unwilling to present
- 4.To attract new audiences who may not see the institution as a place for their own interests



**ADMISSION
PARKING
WI-FI
EXPRESSION**

All free.



**INDIANAPOLIS
MUSEUM
OF ART
IMA**

It is your turn...

1. Find an online exhibition.
2. Visit and evaluate it.
3. Answer the questions below.



1. How did you hear of the exhibit?
2. What was your overall impression?
3. How did the exhibit add to or alter your previous knowledge of the subject?
4. What part of the exhibition was particularly noteworthy?

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