

Enhanced Engagement for Museum Visitors on Tours

Effective for engaging visitors on tours:

- Inquiry based tours, open-ended questions for visitors
- Infotainment; make it nonthreatening, enjoyable, and fun
- Use of accessible terminology, avoid “art-speak”
- Enthusiastic tour guide (energetic tone and pace of speech)
- Storytelling (i.e. Jack and Jackie Kennedy & Picasso’s *Angry Owl*, Louise Bourgeois’ *Spider II*, etc.)

Encourage visitors to:

- Participate in tour, but not too far beyond their comfort zone
- Share opinions, feelings, and information known about artworks
- Ask questions

Effective Techniques of engagement:

- Propose key open-ended questions
- Start a conversation
- VTS where applicable
- Directed looking
- Active listening
- Paraphrase what the visitor is saying
- Why? “What do you see that makes you say that?”
- Balance breadth & depth of tour (# of artworks & amount of detail on each)
- Tasks & Games for smaller groups
- Dress the part (Denise-Pat Lasch, Vinny-Killer Heels/WAE, Bob M-Warhol)
- Use an iPad to elaborate on discussions (show Youtube videos of large Jim Campbell art installations as a SF MOMA or San Diego Airport, etc.)
- Include the use of smart phones on tour (Barbara Shirley does this with Timothy Tompkins’ *After Caravaggio*)
- READ YOUR AUDIENCE and adjust accordingly

Goal is to blend art, enthusiasm, and fun with educational value.

Things to avoid that have been shown to disengage visitors - use of highly academic terms, lecturing to your audience, and covering too many or too few artworks.

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Possible Prompting Questions for Visitors:

1. **How do you think this artwork was made?** (i.e. Faig Ahmed's *Osho*, Helen Frankenthaler's *April Screen*, Mark Bradford's *Rat Catcher of Hamelin IV*, Deborah Butterfield's *Ryunanji*, Gerald Clarke's *Continuum Basket Privat*, etc.)
2. **Think like a curator - How might the artworks in this gallery be linked?** (i.e. Chase Gallery South with *Garbage Bags*, Celeya's *Bird*, Lambie's *After the Future* → environmental theme; etc.)
3. **Can you theorize about the possible personality +/- or characteristics of an artist by looking at their artwork? WHY?** (i.e. Helen Frankenthaler's *April Screen*, Hung Liu's *And the Last Fight Let Us Face*, Mark Bradford's *Rat Catcher*, etc.)
4. **Without looking at the label, what would you name this artwork? WHY?**
5. **What artwork have you seen today that you would like to take home? WHY?**
6. **What story might this artwork be telling? WHY?** (This will work best with Western Art as opposed to Abstract Art.)
7. **What is your reaction to this artwork? WHY?** (Max Neumann's 'monster under the bed' in Chase south, 'garbage bags' in Chase south, Gisela Colon's *Glo-pod*, Duane Hansen's *Old Couple*, etc.)
8. **What is the emotional tone of this artwork?** (Gisela Colon's *Glo-pod*, Helen Frankenthaler's *April Screen*, etc.)
9. **For Abstract & Contemporary Art - What idea might this artist be projecting with this artwork?** What emotion might this artist be projecting with their artwork? (Ideas: Chul-Hyun Ahn's *Tunnel* → infinity, Jim Campbell's *Exploded View* → lowest resolution at which brain can identify image, Anselm Kiefer's *Nossis* → competing systems of acquiring knowledge, fact vs thought; Emotions: Mark Bradford's *Rat Catcher* → anger, Hung Liu - pain & pleasure, etc.) No incorrect answers here.

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Examples of Possible Games & Tasks for Adults (works best with smaller tour groups):

Pick three artworks in this gallery, one that you **love**, one that you **hate**, and one that you are **indifferent** about. Then each member of group shares and explains WHY? x 3.

Similar to above - **Buy, Steal, Burn** (a la Marry, Kill, F**k.) Pick 3 artworks in this gallery, one that you would buy, one that you would steal, and one that you would burn. Share responses with the group and explain WHY? x 3.

Pick any artwork in this gallery and **describe it to me as if you were talking to me on the phone and I cannot see the artwork.**

Smartphone Photo Challenges in a gallery:

- EDIT - Photograph an artwork in the Chase Gallery and edit it more to your liking, then share and explain why it is more pleasing.
- CROP - Photograph close-up detail of an artwork in the Chase Gallery and have the rest of the group guess which artwork it came from. Why did you focus on this area of the artwork?
- BEFORE & AFTER - Photograph 2 artworks in a Western Art gallery and tell a story that connects the two sequentially.
- THE SUBJECT IS THE ART - Photograph yourself or someone in your party in front of an abstract art piece to create a narrative of your own. Share the narrative with the group.
- LOVE IT OR LEAVE IT - Using your smart phone, photograph works you love through hands shaped like a heart, or through crossed forearms. Tell the group why you made your decisions.

Sales Pitch to a Billionaire - *“Let’s assume the artworks in this gallery are all for sale and I am a billionaire planning on buying only one of these artworks. Each of you pick an artwork and take 3 minutes to develop your best sales pitch to convince me to buy the one you have chosen. Use any criteria you feel is important to convince me - investment value, quality, uniqueness, conversation starter, artist, etc.”* Visitors take turns answering.

Scavenger Hunt for adults - find all the artworks in the Chase gallery that are made of more than one material (i.e. Anselm Kiefer x 2, Jim Campbell’s ‘birds’, Chul-Hyun Ahn’s *Tunnel*, Antony Gormley’s *Mother’s Pride*, Gisela Colon’s *Glo-pod*, Duane Hansen’s *Old Couple*, etc.) What are the materials? Or find all the artworks with a peaceful feeling, or all the artworks that disturb you, WHY?

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Guess the Security Guard's Name - This is a playful way to engage with others in the group as well as acknowledging the Museum staff. It can be a good exercise to introduce the concept of creating our own narrative or examining our emotional response to an artwork.

Name That Tune! - Ask, "What song would go best with this artwork?" Another way to explore our emotional responses to different artworks.

Riddle Me This! - Develop a riddle based on artworks in a gallery. Once assembled, read the riddle and give the guests 10 minutes to decipher which artworks or artists are being referenced. Encourage visitors to examine the art as well as read the associated labels.

Examples:

1. In the Cargill MacMillan/Gorelik Gallery:

I fly ¹beyond sight, fly ²in and out of the light, and ³hover in white.

2. In the Stone Singer Gallery (Lines In The Sand exhibit)

I am ⁴engineering a ⁵glittering ⁶future of ⁷lyrical ⁸enchantment.

1 Chul-Hyun Ahn's *Tunnel* - The reflection bends out of sight.

2 Jim Campbell's *Exploded View* - Objects seem to fly in the LED lights.

3 Peter Shelton's *Littlesister*; or Enrique Martinez Celaya's *Bird* - The white dress floats on its own. The Bird has no background.

4 Fred Eversley's *Untitled, 1978* - The plaque describes using his engineering background to create works of art using new materials.

5 Mary Corse's *Untitled, 2001* - She used glass beads in her paint to create a glittering finish.

6 Agnes Pelton's *Future* - The title of the work.

7 Edward Biberman's *Palm Canyon (Lyric Landscape)* - The title of the work.

8 John Hilton's *Enchantment of Sunrise* - The title of the work.