

FLING: OBSERVATIONAL EVALUATION USE AND INTERACTION REPORT

Frist Center for the Visual Arts Martin ArtQuest Gallery

BACKGROUND/PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to present results of observing three interactive stations in *Martin ArtQuest Gallery* at the Frist Center for the Visual Arts [FCVA] in order to assess original intention of interactives set by educators against actual use by visitors. The evaluation grew from the Family Learning in Interactive Art Galleries [FLING] research program; a three-year study examining the motivation, value and use families place on interactive spaces. For more information go to <http://www.familiesinartmuseums.org/index.html>

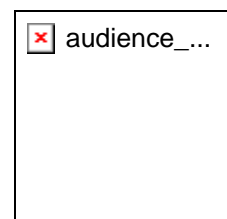
MARTIN ARTQUEST GALLERY

The *Martin ArtQuest Gallery* is an interactive, hands-on space with approximately 30 activities, many of which change with each new exhibition. Visitors of all ages are invited and encouraged to create prints and collages, sketch and paint, or explore the essentials of art, including color, pattern, texture, and perspective.

Martin ArtQuest Gallery was designed to support the Frist Center's vision to change the way people look at the world through art by offering educational and outreach experiences that provide visitors with new ways to access art—through making, talking about, and looking at art. The interactive gallery is located next to the exhibition galleries on the upper level and on average hosts 200-250 visitors each day. *Martin ArtQuest Gallery* is staffed by trained art educators and knowledgeable volunteers who help visitors create and learn about art.

Three of the interactive stations were included in this study:

- *Images in Reverse*
- *Print Making*
- *Art in the Round*



METHODS

The method for this study included non-participation observations using an Observational Form. Education staff conducted the observations at 30-minute intervals for a total period of 2.5 days. The sample included anyone who visited the interactive station during the 30-minute period of observation; Observations were conducted October-December 2010 and data was compiled onto a basic Excel data sheet.

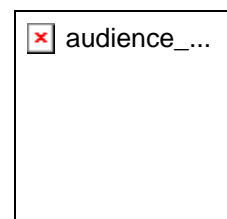
DESCRIPTION OF SAMPLE

Researchers observed a total of 198 visitors engaging with one of three interactive stations (*Images in Reverse*, *Print Making*, or *Art in the Round*) between October and December 2010. Of those 198 visitors, 34 (16%) observed the interactive quickly and then left without directly engaging, while another 11 visitors (6%) were repeat visitors, meaning they were observed engaging with the interactive multiple times during the time period the observations were taking place. For the purposes of this study, visitors who only observed the interactive but did not stop to engage, as well as repeat visitors, were not included as part of the final sample. A final total of 153 visitors were included in the findings presented below.

Of the 153 visitors, 55 people (36%) were observed engaging with *Images in Reverse*, 53 (35%) were observed engaging with *Print Making*, and the remaining 45 (29%) were observed engaging with *Art in the Round*. Overall, children made up 59% of the sample (90 people), while adults made up the remaining 41% (63 people). The majority of children (59%, n=53) were ages 5 to 12, another 33% (n=30) were under the age of 5, and the remaining 8% (n=7) were age 13 or older. Fifty-one percent of visitors (n=78) were females, and the remaining forty-nine percent (n=75) were males.

FINDINGS

This report presents the combined results of all 3 interactive stations. Individual interactive station results can be found in **Appendix A-C**.



USE

CROWD LEVELS

During the days observations were conducted, crowd levels inside *Martin ArtQuest Gallery* ranged from being nearly empty (or 0-30% full), to moderately visited (or 31-50% full), to extremely crowded (or 51-100% full). Most of the time, the interactive gallery was either mostly empty (55% of the time) or moderately visited (40% of the time). Only on a few occasions was the gallery extremely crowded (5% of the time).

COMBINING ART FROM OTHER STATIONS

Observers noted whether visitors used art from other interactive stations located throughout the gallery when engaging with the interactive that was the target for this study. Only three visitors (2%) were observed demonstrating that behavior.

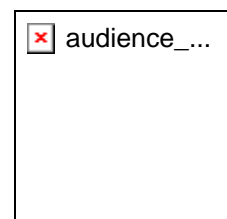
READING INSTRUCTIONS

For each interactive, instructional panels were written to explain what to do and support visitors' use of the activity. For this study, observers noted whether visitors utilized the instructional panels during their engagement with the interactives. Only 10 instances of this behavior were recorded. Not surprisingly, in all but one case, an adult read the instructions; in 5 instances, an adult read the instructions on his/her own, and in 4 cases, an adult staff member read the instructions to a child. Only one child was observed reading instructions.

MAKING CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE INTERACTIVE AND ART IN OTHER GALLERIES

One of the key goals for staff when creating *Martin ArtQuest Gallery* was to encourage adults and children to make connections between the art on view in the museum and the activities in *Martin ArtQuest Gallery*. As a way to find out whether that was happening, observers listened in on visitors' conversations and noted when they heard evidence of families making connections between the art on view and the interactive activity. This behavior was observed a total of 23 times. In most instances (70%, 16 times), museum staff initiated these conversations with both adults (7 times) and children (9 times). Visitors were also observed making these connections on their own (30%, 7 times). Children were just as likely to make these connections as were adults.

DIRECTED VERSES SELF-INITIATED EXPERIENCES



Many of the activity stations located in *Martin ArtQuest Gallery* were designed to allow for multiple points of entry and engagement for the visitors. While the interactives encourage self-initiated discovery, support for directed experiences is also available for those who want it. These visitors can access information through the use of the instructional panels, by talking with on-site museum educators and volunteers, or by discussing the activity with a member of their own group. In an effort to know more about which types of experiences were occurring in *Martin ArtQuest Gallery*, and to what degree, observers recorded the number of directed (or an activity that was directed by someone else to the person creating the artwork) versus self-initiated instances (or an activity where an individual used his/her own initiative to create an art work).

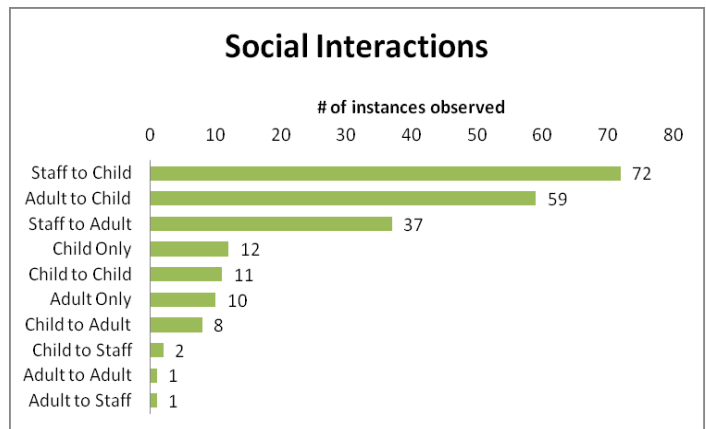
Directed experiences were by far the most frequent type of interactions observed. Observers noted 135 instances of directed experiences, versus only 12 instances of self-initiated experiences. In a majority of the directed experiences, either an adult visitor (41%, 56 instances) or museum staff member (50%, 68 instances) was identified as the person directing, or guiding, the experience. In the remaining 11 instances (9%), a child directed the experience; usually this involved directing the experience for another child, but in some cases the child directed the experience for an adult in his/her group or for a museum educator/volunteer. In the 12 instances of self-initiated experiences, 8 instances involved a child directing his/her own experience, and the remaining 4 instances involved an adult initiating his/her own experience.

Finally, the museum staff was also interested in finding out the degree to which visitors observed other visitors prior to engaging in the activity themselves; this behavior was observed 33 times. All three audiences, adults (12%), children (28%), and museum educators (60%) engaged in this behavior.

SOCIAL INTERACTIONS

As a way to find out more about the types of social interactions that happen in *Martin ArtQuest Gallery*, observers recorded verbal and non-verbal interactions between adults, children, and museum educators, noting the directionality of those interactions, e.g. who initiated the interaction and who, if anyone, was the target of that interaction. A little over half of the interactions (51%) were initiated by museum staff, while another 34% of interactions were initiated by adult visitors.

• **Figure 1: Instances of Social Interactions**



❌ audience_...



Children initiated 15% of the total observed interactions. (See Figure 1 for details.)

CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of the observational evaluation was to observe the *'Use and Interaction'* of three interactive stations in the *Martin ArtQuest Gallery*. The evaluation was designed to assess the original intention of interactives set by educators against actual use by visitors.

Visitors are NOT combining art from other stations.

Findings from this report confirm FCVA's hypothesis that not many people combine art from other stations when engaging with the activities. This offers a great opportunity for educators to consider if where making these connections is important or not when developing new and/or revisiting existing interactive stations.

Visitors do not follow prescribed visit patterns.

Findings from this report showed a disconnect from FCVA's original intentions and what visitors actually do. Originally, FCVA educators created the interactive stations with the intent that visitors would follow a clear pattern of behavior before interacting (i.e. start with reading the instructional panels or, take direction from staff). However, observations revealed that visitors do not follow such patterns, preferring a more fluid approach to engaging with each station. This finding reinforces the importance of having multiple interpretation opportunities within the station, i.e. instructional panels, staff, artworks and examples on display, so that visitors have choice and control over their learning experiences.

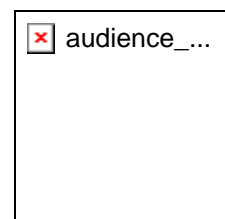
Museum educators and volunteers play a significant role.

FCVA educators and volunteers were observed interacting with children and adults. Overall, staff played a key role in helping visitors make meaning in the galleries by helping to direct their experiences and draw connections between the activities and the art located in the galleries. This finding supports the FCVA's intention that *Martin ArtQuest Gallery* be staffed at all times and that those staff support families in their endeavors to learn more about and have fun with art.

Families engage with each other through the interactive stations.

Families were observed interacting with each other at the interactive stations. The types of interactions observed among families ranged from directed experiences to self-initiated experiences, which supports the FLING study which demonstrates that parents/caregivers/guardians encourage and develop their child's learning using a variety of direct and independent learning styles.

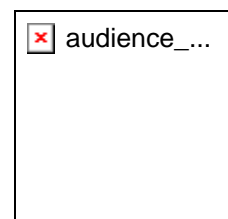
Minimal connections were made at interactive stations with the wider art museum.



Although some visitors made connections at the interactives, the number was very low (**only 23 instances observed**). There is an opportunity to continue observations, focusing in on this topic. One way to discover more about what connections, if any, visitors are making with the wider art museum, would be to include interviews with visitors.

Minimal use made of instructional information.

Visitors were only observed reading instructional information a few times. There are opportunities to develop observations to include informal interviews with visitors about their use or nonuse of the instructional material.



APPENDIX A

IMAGES IN REVERSE

Visitors create a preliminary drawing and then use this drawing to inform their work on a printing plate.

DESCRIPTION OF SAMPLE

- A total of **55** visitors engaged with *Images in Reverse* over a 3.5 hour period
- 55%** were female and **45%** were male
- 42%** were adults and **58%** children
- Of the children, **31%** were under the age of five, **63%** were between the ages of five and twelve, and **6%** were over the age of twelve



FINDINGS

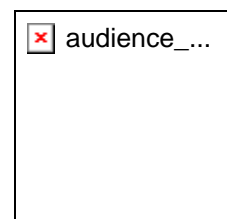
CAPACITY

- 57%** of the time the interactive stations were a quarter full.
- 43%** of the time they were half full.

READING INSTRUCTIONS

- Visitors were observed using the informational instructions 7 times.
 - In **57%** of instances, museum educators read instructions to children
 - In **29%** of instances, adults read on their own
 - In **14%** of instances, children read on their own

COMBINING ART FROM OTHER STATIONS



- None of the visitors used objects from other interactive stations while interacting with the target interactive.

MAKING CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE INTERACTIVE AND ART IN OTHER GALLERIES

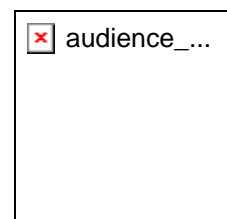
- 15 instances** of visitors making connections between the interactive and art located in other galleries were observed. Most of these interactions (**53%** of total) were initiated by museum staff; **27%** were initiated by children, and **20%** were initiated by adults.

DIRECTED VERSES SELF-DIRECTED EXPERIENCES

- Instances of directed activity were observed **49** times.
 - **41%** of directed activity involved an *adult directing a child*
 - **24%** of directed activity involved a *museum educator directing a child*
 - **18%** of directed activity involved a *museum educator directing an adult*
 - **12%** of directed activity involved a *child directing another child*
- Instances of self-initiated activity were observed **7** times.
 - **57%** of self-initiated activity was observed among *children*
 - **29%** of self-initiated activity was observed among *adults*
- Instances where an activity was initiated by watching others first were observed **11** times.
 - **27%** of these cases involved a *child observing another child*

SOCIAL INTERACTIONS

In total **26%** of activity was *adult to child* interaction, **22%** of activity was *museum educator to child* interaction, **20%** of activity was *museum educator to adult* interaction, and **10%** of activity was *child to child* interaction.



APPENDIX B

PRINTMAKING

Visitors learn the process of printing on a press. Staff or volunteers support the printmaking process by answering questions about the printmaking process and the use of the press.

DESCRIPTION OF SAMPLE

- A total of **53** visitors engaged with *Printmaking* over a 2 hour and 50 minute period.
- 38%** were adults and **62%** were children.
- Of the children, **30%** were under the age of five, **64%** were between the ages of five and twelve and, **6%** were over the age of twelve.
- 43%** were females and **57%** were male.



FINDINGS

CAPACITY

- 43%** of the time the interactive stations were a quarter full and **57%** of the time half full.

COMBINING ART FROM OTHER STATIONS

- 4%** of visitors used objects from other interactive stations.

READING INSTRUCTIONS

- Visitors did not read any informational instructions.

MAKING CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE INTERACTIVE AND ART IN OTHER GALLERIES

audience_...



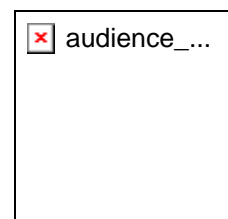
- **7 instances** of visitors making connections between the activity and the art in the museum were observed; in all 7 instances, museum staff initiated the conversation.

DIRECTED VERSES SELF-DIRECTED EXPERIENCES

- Instances of directed activity were observed **42** times.
 - **81%** of directed activity involved a *museum educator directing a child*
 - **17%** of directed activity involved a *museum educator directing an adult*
 - **2%** of directed activity involved a *child directing a museum educator*
- No instances of self-initiated activity were observed.
- Only **1** instance was observed where an activity was initiated by watching others first.

SOCIAL INTERACTIONS

Overall, the majority of activity was initiated by a *museum educator* – with *children (76%)* and with *adults (20%)*. Interactions were initiated by *children* with *museum educators (5%)*, and by *adults (2%)*.



APPENDIX C

ART IN THE ROUND

Visitors construct a unified sculpture. Using the turntables at the station, they are able to view their work from all sides in order to examine it from various viewpoints.

DESCRIPTION OF SAMPLE

- A total of **45** visitors engaged with *Art in the Round* over a 3.5 hour period
- 55%** were female and **45%** were male
- 44%** were adults and **56%** children
- Of the children, **40%** were under the age of five, **48%** were between the ages of five and twelve, and **12%** were over the age of twelve



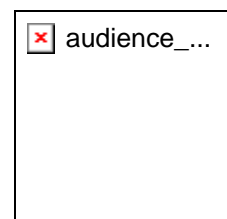
FINDINGS

CAPACITY

- 67%** of the time the interactive stations were a quarter full.
- 17%** of the time they were half full.
- 17%** of the time they were more than half full.

READING INSTRUCTIONS

- Visitors were observed using the informational instructions **3 times**.
 - In **100%** of these instances, and adult read on his/her own



COMBINING ART FROM OTHER STATIONS

- Only one visitor used objects from other interactive stations while interacting with the target interactive.

MAKING CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE INTERACTIVE AND ART IN OTHER GALLERIES

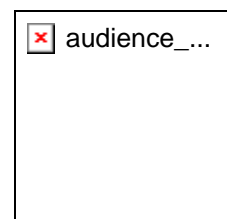
- Only **1 instance** of visitors making connections between the interactive and art located in other galleries were observed. This interaction was initiated by museum staff when speaking with a child.

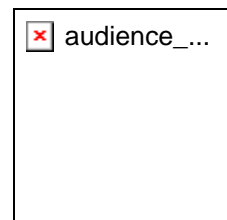
DIRECTED VERSES SELF-DIRECTED EXPERIENCES

- Instances of directed activity were observed **52** times.
 - **65%** of directed activity involved an *adult directing a child*
 - **15%** involved a *museum educator directing a child*
 - **12%** involved a *museum educator directing an adult*
 - **6%** involved a *child directing an adult*
 - **2%** involved an *adult directing another adult*
- Instances of self-initiated activity were observed **5** times.
 - **80%** of self-initiated activity was observed among *children*
 - **20%** of self-initiated activity was observed among *adults*
- Instances where an activity was initiated by watching others first were observed **13** times.
 - **62%** of these cases involved a *museum educator observing a child*
 - **15%** involved a *child observing another child*
 - **15%** involved an *adult observing a child*
 - **8%** involved a *child observing an adult*

SOCIAL INTERACTIONS

In total **49%** of activity was *adult to child* interaction, **23%** of activity was *museum educator to child* interaction, **8%** of activity was *museum educator to adult* interaction.





APPENDIX D

OBSERVATION CODE DOCUMENT

Station: _____
Date: _____
Time: _____
Observer: _____

VISITORS AT STATION										
ADULTS		CHILDREN				Repeat Visits				
Total Males	Total Females	Total Boys	Total Girls	Total under age 5	Total aged 5-12	No. who visit, look and leave <i>[do not participate]</i>		No. of repeat visits		
SPACE										
ATTENDANCE LEVEL INTERACTIVE SPACE								SCHOOL GROUP		
Quarter Full [0-30% capacity]			Moderate [30 – 50%]			Extremely Crowded [60 – 100%]		Present Yes = 1 / No = 0		
SOCIAL INTERACTIONS										
Interaction Codes [I.C.]:										
1. Connection to art museum; 2. Activity initiated by observing others;										
3. Read instructional text panel/s; 4. Directed activity 5. Self initiated activity										
IC	WITH OTHER VISITORS				INDIVIDUAL		WITH STAFF			
	A → C	C → A	C → C	A → A	A	C	A → S	S → A	C → S	S → C
1.										
2.										
3.										
4.										
5.										
BEHAVIORS										
USING STATIONS AS INTENDED		USING OBJECTS FROM OTHER STATIONS			TECHNOLOGIES					
YES	NO	YES	NO	NO	Uncomfortable	Comfortable	Very			

audience_...



						<i>Comfortable</i>

x audience_...

