

# FLING: OBSERVATIONAL EVALUATION USE AND INTERACTION REPORT

## High Museum of Art Greene Family Learning Gallery

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### BACKGROUND/PURPOSE

Present results of observing three interactive stations in the *Greene Family Learning Gallery* 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>

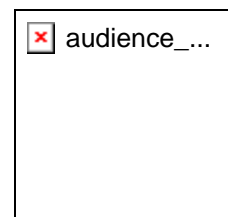
### GREENE FAMILY LEARNING GALLERY

Located on the High Museum of Art Robinson Atrium level of the Stent Family Wing, the *Greene Family Learning Gallery* [GFLG] is designed to serve children from pre-school through ten years of age, their families and caregivers.

Inspired by some of the most popular objects in the museum's collection the GFLG acts as a springboard for the rest of the art museum and is intended for use pre- or post-gallery visits. It is intended that families make connections with the wider art museum.

There are five (5) interactive stations:

- *Building Buildings*
- *Making a Mark*
- *Telling Stories*
- *Sculpting Spaces*
- *Transforming Treasure*



Three (3) of the interactive stations areas were included in the evaluation: *Making a Mark*, *Telling Stories*, and *Sculpting Spaces*.

This report will focus on the combined results of all three (3) interactive stations. Individual interactive station results can be found in **Appendix A-C**. Comparative data is available upon request. However, it was not the intention of this particular evaluation to gather information for comparative purposes.

## METHODS

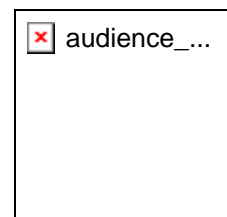
The method for this study included non-participation observations using an 'Observation Form.' Education staff conducted the observations at 30-minute intervals for a total period of 2.5 days. The sample included anyone who visited the interactive station during the 30-minute period of observation. Observations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

## DESCRIPTION OF SAMPLE

A total of 548 visitors were observed engaging with one of three interactive stations (*Sculpting Spaces*, *Making a Mark*, or *Telling Stories*) over a 2.5 day period in December 2010. Of those 548 visitors, 33 (6%) observed the interactive quickly and then left without directly engaging, while another 69 visitors (13%) 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: 446 visitors.

Of the 446 visitors, a total of 241 (54%) were observed engaging with *Sculpting Spaces*, 133 people (30%) were observed engaging with *Making a Mark*, and 72 people (16%) were observed engaging with *Telling Stories*. Overall, children made up 61% of the sample (n=270), while adults made up the remaining 39% (n=176). The majority of children (51%, n=138) were ages 5 to 12, another 34% (n=91) were under the age of 5, and the remaining 15% (n=41) were age 13 or older. Fifty-five percent of visitors (n=244) were females, and the remaining 45% percent (n=202) were males.

## FINDINGS



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

## Use

### CAPACITY

During the days observations were conducted, crowd levels inside the *Greene Family Learning Gallery* were low to moderate. Sixty-four percent of the time, the gallery was mostly empty (or 0-30% full), while the remaining 36% of the time, it was moderately visited (or 31-50% full).

### COMBINING ART FROM OTHER STATIONS

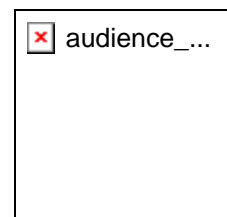
Staff were curious to know whether visitors were making connections between the various interactive stations within the interactive gallery, or whether they tended to work at each station in isolation of the wider environment. To answer this question, observers noted whether visitors used art from other interactive stations located throughout the gallery when engaging with the interactive that was the target for this study. Only 10% (n=45) visitors were observed demonstrating that behavior.

### READING INSTRUCTIONS

Not applicable to the *Greene Family Learning Gallery*.

### MAKING CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE INTERACTIVE AND ART IN OTHER GALLERIES

One of the key goals for staff when creating the *Greene Family Learning Gallery* was to encourage adults and children to make connections between the art on view in the museum and the activities with which they engage in the interactive space. 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 only observed a total of 12 times. In most instances (58%, 7 times), an adult was observed making these connections, either for another child (3 times), for another adult (2 times), or on their own (2 times). Children were observed making connections between the interactives and art from the permanent collection 5 times (42%).



DIRECTED VERSUS SELF-DIRECTED EXPERIENCES

Many of the activity stations located in the *Greene Family Learning Gallery* were designed to allow for multiple points of entry and engagement for the visitors. While the interactives encourage self-directed 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 museum educators, 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 the *Greene Family Learning Gallery*, and to what degree, observers recorded the number of directed (as defined as *visitors directing others in using the interactive*) versus self-directed instances (as defined as *visitors who engage with the interactive without any direction from someone else, and/or the written instructions*).

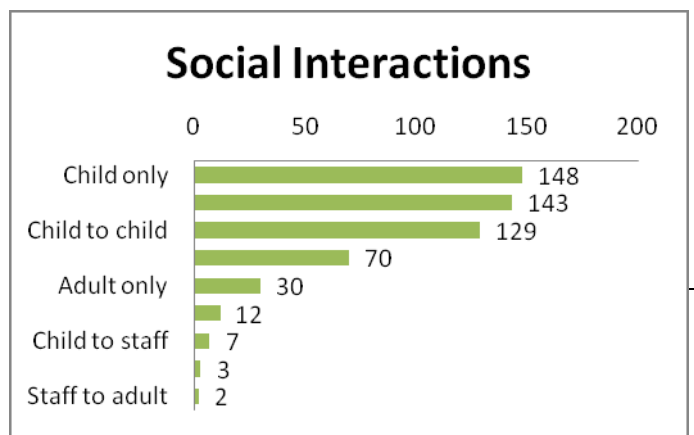
Of the 416 instances where this behavior was observed, directed experiences were observed more frequently than self-directed experiences. Observers noted 267 instances of directed experiences (59%), versus 189 instances of self-directed experiences (41%). Adults and children were equally likely to direct an experience for another visitor. Adult visitors were observed directing an experience (usually for a child) 128 times, while children were observed directing the experience (for an adult or another child) 135 times. Museum staff members directed an experience for visitors 3 times. In the 189 instances of self-directed experiences, 129 instances (68%) involved a child self-directing his/her own experience; while, only 24 instances (13%) involved an adult guiding his/her own experience.

Finally, museum staff were also interested in finding out the degree to which visitors observed other visitors prior to engaging in the activity themselves, as evidence of this behavior was documented in the FLING case studies and they wanted to find out whether the behavior was consistent. Overall, this behavior was observed most frequently among children. Of the total 67 times this behavior was observed, 43 instances (64%) involved one child observing another.

**Social Interactions**

As a way to find out more about the types of social interactions that happen in the *Greene Family Learning 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

Figure 1: Instances of Social Interactions



interaction and who, if anyone, was the target of that interaction. 34% of interactions were initiated by adult visitors, 64% were initiated by children, and the remaining 2% were initiated by museum staff. (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 *Greene Family Learning Gallery*. The evaluation was designed to assess the original intention of interactives set by educators against actual use by visitors.

### *The primary function to serve children is being met.*

The majority of children who participated in this study were from the key target audience (pre-school through ten (10) years). *Child only* interactions were the most frequently observed with *child to child* interactions the third most frequently observed type of interaction.

### *Families engage with each other through the interactive stations.*

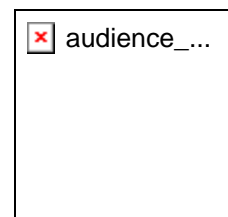
Families were observed interacting with each other at the interactive stations. The types of interactions observed among families ranged from directed experiences to self-initiated experiences, which supports the FLING study which demonstrates that parents/caregivers/guardians encourage and develop their 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 12 instances observed**). There is an opportunity to continue observations, focusing 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 one-on-one interviews with visitors.

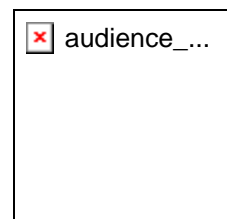
### *Minimal use made of instructional information.*

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.



*Interactive stations were, generally, quarter or half full.*

In this study, the interactives were, generally, quarter or half full. Future studies that involve observations over a longer period of time [could use time lapse video camera] could shed additional light on whether this is a consistent feature of the interactive stations.



## APPENDIX A

### ***MAKING A MARK***

*Plexi-glass easels ask visitors to leave their mark by drawing self-portraits, still life, or scenes from their imaginations.*

#### **DESCRIPTION OF SAMPLE**

- A total of **133** visitors engaged with *Making a Mark* over a 6-hour period
- 59%** were female and **41%** were male
- 41%** were adults and **59%** children
- Of the children, **38%** were under the age of five (5), **27%** were between the ages of five (5) – twelve (12) and, **16%** were over the age of twelve (12).



#### **FINDINGS**

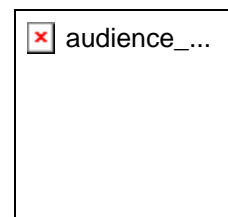
##### **USE**

##### **CAPACITY**

- 75%** of the time the interactive stations were a quarter full.
- 25%** of the time they were half full.

##### **READING INSTRUCTIONS**

- None of the observed visitors read any informational instructions.



### COMBINING ART FROM OTHER STATIONS

- Only **5%** of visitors used objects from other interactive stations while interacting with the target interactive.

### MAKING CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE INTERACTIVE AND ART IN OTHER GALLERIES

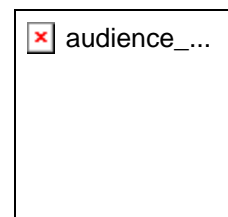
- Only **7 instances** of visitors making connections between the interactive and art located in other galleries were observed. Most of these visitors (**57%** of total) were children.

### DIRECTED VERSES SELF-DIRECTED EXPERIENCES

- Instances of directed activity were observed **108** times
  - **56%** of directed activity involved an *adult directing a child*
  - **22%** of directed activity involved a *child directing an adult*
- Instances of self-initiated activity were observed **76** times
  - **71%** of self-initiated activity was observed among *children*
  - **14%** of self-initiated activity was observed among *adults*
- Instances where an activity was initiated by watching others first were observed **12** times
  - **58%** of these cases involved a *child observing another child*

### SOCIAL INTERACTIONS

In total **33%** of activity was initiated by *adult to child* interaction followed by children working on their own (**31%**), **13%** *child to adult* interaction, and **13%** *child to child* interaction.





## APPENDIX B

### *SCULPTING SPACES*

*Using large architectural foam pieces, children can turn fabrics and foam into imaginative spaces of their own.*

#### DESCRIPTION OF SAMPLE

- A total of **241** visitors engaged with *Sculpting Spaces* over an 8.5 hour period
- 41%** were adults and **59%** were children
- Of the children, **25%** were under the age of five (5), **38%** were between the ages of five (5) and twelve (12) and, **15%** were over the age of twelve (12)
- 51%** were females and **49%** were male



#### FINDINGS

##### USE

##### CAPACITY

- 65%** of the time the interactive stations were a quarter full and **35%** of the time half full.

##### COMBINING ART FROM OTHER STATIONS

- 8%** of visitors used objects from other interactive stations.

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### READING INSTRUCTIONS

- Not applicable to the activity.

### MAKING CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE INTERACTIVE AND ART IN OTHER GALLERIES

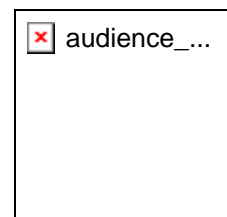
- Only **2 instances** of visitors making connections between the activity and the art in the museum were observed; adults and children were equally unlikely to make these connections.

### DIRECTED VERSUS SELF-DIRECTED EXPERIENCES

- Instances of directed activity were observed **125** times
  - **38%** of directed activity involved an *adult directing a child*
  - **38%** of directed activity involved a *child directing another child*
  - **20%** of directed activity involved a *child directing an adult*
- Instances of self-initiated activity were observed **77** times
  - **60%** of self-initiated activity was observed among *children*
  - **12%** of self-initiated activity was observed among *adults*
- Instances where an activity was initiated by watching others first were observed **45** times
  - **67%** of these cases involved a *child observing another child*

### SOCIAL INTERACTIONS

In total, **37%** of activity was initiated by one *child to another child*; **23%** of activity was initiated from an *adult to a child*, and **22%** consisted of a child working on his/her own and. **12%** of the activity involved *adults* working on their own.



## APPENDIX C

### *TELLING STORIES*

*Custom-made puppets inspired by some of the museum's best-loved paintings, sculpture and decorative arts come alive in the hands of children who invent their own stories or illustrate children's books on display.*

#### DESCRIPTION OF SAMPLE

- A total of **72** visitors engaged with *Telling Stories* over a 3.5 hour period
- 43%** were adults and **57%** were children
- Of the children, **60%** were under the age of five (5), **15%** were between the ages of five (5) – twelve (12), and **15%** were over the age of twelve (12)
- 65%** were females and **35%** were males



#### FINDINGS

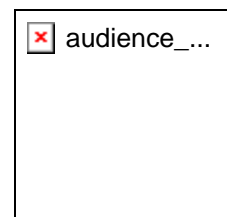
##### USE

##### CAPACITY

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

##### COMBINING ART FROM OTHER STATIONS

- 26%** of visitors used objects from other interactive stations.



### READING INSTRUCTIONS

- 9 instances** of visitors reading instructional information.

### MAKING CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE INTERACTIVE AND ART IN OTHER GALLERIES

- Only **3 instances** of visitors making a connection between the activity and the art in the museum were observed; all three of these connections were made by adults.

### DIRECTED VERSES SELF-DIRECTED EXPERIENCES

- Instances of directed activity were observed **34** times
  - 47%** of directed activity involved an *adult directing a child*
  - 32%** of directed activity involved a *child directing an adult*
- Instances of self-initiated activity were observed **36** times
  - 81%** of self-initiated activity was observed among children
  - 11%** of self-initiated activity was observed among adult
- Instances where an activity was initiated by watching others first were observed **10** times
  - 60%** of these cases involved a *child observing another child*

### SOCIAL INTERACTIONS

In total **35%** of children initiated their own activity followed by *adult to child (22%)* interaction, *child to adult* interaction (**14%**) and **11%** *child to child*.

