

Granville Family

Our mindset is that every time you do something you learn something and you just have to keep your eyes open to what that thing it is. The minute you stop learning is the minute you might just curl up and die. The way we look at it is that every day you learn something new. – Peony Granville

Peony and Golden Puff Granville made their first visit to the High Museum in May 2008 following a recommendation from Peony's mother. At that time, the Granvilles were still living in Charleston, SC, but were in the process of moving permanently to Atlanta. Peony recalls returning to their apartment following their first visit to the High Museum of Art and calling Darby, her husband, and saying "this is what I want for Mother's Day—a membership to the High." The Granvilles have been frequent visitors to the High Museum and the Greene Family Learning Gallery ever since.



Granville Family (from left): Darby, Golden Puff, and Peony.

On most occasions, Peony and Golden Puff visit alone, since Peony is currently a stay-at-home mother and Darby is often at work as a federal fire marshal. Darby does visit when he is able, mostly on weekends. On some occasions, the family is joined by Peony's mother, who also has a membership to the High Museum of Art, and/or friends of Golden Puff's. Besides visiting the High Museum of Art other things the Granvilles enjoy doing as a family include visiting other museums and zoos, doing outdoor things, visiting the library, and attending local events.

For this study, the Granville family made three accompanied visits to the High Art Museum of Art, and three visits to like sites, including the Fernbank Museum of Natural History, the Center for Puppetry Arts, and the Chattahoochee Nature Center. During their three visits to the High, the Granville family followed a similar visit pattern: special exhibitions and the permanent collection first, lunch second and the Greene Family Learning Gallery last. Only on their last visit did the family slightly alter this pattern by not visiting the Greene Family Learning Gallery. When asked about why they visit the family gallery last, Peony explained, "[we] always go in the end because Golden Puff has been listening to 'don't run, don't run' and so we go there and she gets to play for a while and that is what she does, she sits and builds and climbs all over." On all of the visits, Peony and Golden Puff visited without Darby; on one of the visits, they were joined by a friend of Golden Puff's. One ritual that the Granvilles enjoy during their visits to the High is to visit the same exhibition multiple times and look for objects that are new or for artworks that might have changed or been moved. Peony feels that by viewing the same exhibition several times they will see something new and gain new perspectives about the artwork.

Unlike the visits to the High, for two of the like-site visits all of the family was present; for the other visit, Darby was not able to participate. While the family's motivation for visiting the Fernbank Museum of Natural History and the Center for Puppetry Arts was not clear, their final visit to the Chattahoochee Nature Center coincided with a singing event Golden Puff was participating in. Peony indicated that the family had wanted to visit the Chattahoochee Nature Center for a while, so Golden Puff's singing performance was a good opportunity for all the family to finally make it to the venue.

Visits to the High Museum of Art Galleries

Overall, Peony and Golden Puff tended to stay together during their visits to the galleries and collectively decided on what to do and see. Before visiting the High with her daughter, Peony always visits the museum first on her own or with other adults so that she can "preview" the exhibit and read the label texts. That way, she says, she "can read it beforehand and point out the interesting things and explain it to her... that is how I do it first to find things." That strategy appeared to work for the family because during their visits to the galleries, Peony and Golden Puff spent a lot of time discussing the artwork and expressing their opinions about what they liked and did not like and why. While Peony tended to do more of the explaining, there seemed to be a natural back and forth, with both asking questions about the art and imagining what it would have been like to be the artist or live during the past. The two often joked with each other and there was an overall warmth and lightheartedness throughout their visits.

Visits to the Greene Family Learning Gallery

While in the Greene Family Learning Gallery, Peony and Golden Puff vacillated between playing together and Golden Puff playing alone or with other children while Peony observed. During the first visit, Golden Puff and Peony played together with the foam building objects and during the second visit, Golden Puff played with her friend while Peony observed. During those times when Peony took on more of an "observer" role, she continued to engage Golden Puff by making suggestions and providing support when needed. During their second visit to the family gallery, Golden Puff and her friend had some difficulty compromising about how to build their structure and what it was going to be. Peony often stepped in to help resolve the issue and eventually helped the girls work together as a team.

Visits to Like Sites

During all of the like-site visits, Peony took the lead in guiding her daughter through the spaces. The mother and daughter engaged in constant conversation about what they were observing. Darby, on the other hand, moved more freely between observing Peony and Golden Puff interacting and actually joining in the discussions. This all appeared natural and free flowing. The family always appeared to be having fun, often engaging in jokes and lighthearted humor. For example, during their visit to Fernbank, the family joked about how dinosaurs are really just "big lizards." Peony and Darby often made connections with what they were seeing by linking objects on view with Golden Puff's life experiences. This seemed to be done with the intention of encouraging understanding and meaning-making. As an example, during a visit to Fernbank, Peony pointed to a dinosaur shinbone and said to Golden Puff, "Do you see this? That is where the muscle is attached. Remember in runners club class and your shins hurt and we said you had a shin splint?"

Motivation & Values

As a former student of architecture and daughter of two interior designers, Peony grew up with art and often visited art museums with her parents as a child. She explains that art is not intimidating to her and hopes that it will not be intimidating to Golden Puff either. In talking about their motivation for visiting the High Museum of Art, Peony says that it is important for them to be able to discuss art and for Golden Puff to become familiar with it. She also says that spending time with family and learning something new or thinking about something differently are also valuable aspects of a visit to the High Museum and that she and Darby “work very hard and very consciously” to expose Golden Puff to “as many educational opportunities as possible.” While Peony says that the Greene Family Learning Gallery is a “good place to introduce people to art in a very friendly way,” it is not the reason they come to the museum and the activities in there “do not hold their interest every month.” Overall the family uses the space as a place to unwind after a long visit, a place where Peony says: “I can sit down for minute and [Golden Puff] can explore and get her wiggles out.”

The Granvilles’ motivations for visiting the like sites shared similar characteristics in that they hoped that by visiting places like Fernbank, the Center for Puppetry Arts and the Chattahoochee Nature Center, there would be opportunities for Golden Puff to view life from differing perspectives. Additionally, Peony selected sites that offered tactile environments and stressed the importance of “visiting places where there is always something new” and where the family can have “fun while learning.” It was also important to Peony that her daughter be exposed to as much culture as possible instead of having a focus on materialistic things.

When asked what they enjoyed most about their visits to the High, Peony perceived that Golden Puff mostly enjoyed specific pieces of art, especially the large-scale Monet pieces, building with the foam blocks in the Greene Family Learning Gallery, and spending time with the research assistant and socializing with other adults and children in general. Peony explained that her daughter “loves people and just loves talking to them” and how Golden Puff told Darby following one visit how she got to “sit down and have lunch with Miss Sofia [the research assistant] and it was really neat.” One aspect that Golden Puff enjoys about the Greene Family Learning Gallery is that when she is in that space she feels like she can be in charge and more independent. Overall, the family enjoys visiting when the museum is slightly less crowded, as they feel like they do not have to be as quiet and they have more freedom to “bounce around.” As a parent, Peony says she enjoys watching her child learn and listening to her daughter explain new things and knowing that her daughter understands new concepts. Because of her background in architecture, Peony also said that she enjoyed viewing the architecture exhibit and looking at the models and renderings. Viewing that exhibition, she said, made her recall childhood memories with her father when they visited one of the buildings that was on display in the exhibit.

When asked what they enjoyed most about their visits to the like sites, Peony perceived that Golden Puff mostly enjoyed the dinosaurs, which were present at both Fernbank and the Center for Puppetry Arts, while at Chattahoochee Peony felt that Golden Puff enjoyed seeing something new, playing in the water, and locating different animals. As a parent, Peony says she enjoyed learning about how the dinosaurs’ muscles and skins are layered (Fernbank), seeing The Muppets puppets up close (Puppetry Arts), and talking with a docent who told her about a planetarium located in Cartersville (Chattahoochee). Across all the visits, Peony said

that just getting out of the house and spending time with the family is perhaps the most enjoyable aspect.

Shared Characteristics—Art Museum & Like Sites

Peony identified education as a key link between all the like-site visits and the High Museum of Art. Drawing a comparison between Fernbank and the High, Peony perceived the former as more scientific in terms of its learning and the latter as more “intellectual” and “an opportunity to use perception.” The hands-on nature of specific areas within the Center for Puppetry Arts was perceived as being similar to the High Museum of Art’s Greene Family Learning Gallery. The Chattahoochee Nature Center was seen as a place to contextualize art and the environment. Another common denominator between visits to the High Museum and the like sites was that they are places where the family goes to “have fun while learning,” although Peony noted that the High is more focused on the learning than, for example, the Center for Puppetry Arts which, according to Peony, was more “just to have fun.” When discussing the difference, she explained: “At the High we are always learning something. At the Puppetry museum, they could have done something really spectacular on why people use puppets, but they didn’t.” Another difference she noted between the High and the Center for Puppetry Arts is that at the latter there was a lack of information and activities designed especially for children and/or intergenerational groups. One intrinsic quality that differed between the High Museum and the Chattahoochee Nature Center was that “Chattahoochee deals with nature and the living, breathing component that changes constantly,” whereas “the High Museum does not change much... it is static and presents something that has already happened.”

When thinking specifically about the similarities and differences between the like-site visits and the Greene Family Learning Gallery, Peony says that both Fernbank and Center for Puppetry Arts offered hands-on, interactive experiences. However, she made a point to say that the activities that make up the Greene Family Learning Gallery are “better” in that she can “remember exactly what is in the family gallery,” whereas all she can remember about the interactive spaces at Fernbank is that they are dark and about those at the Center for Puppetry Arts is that they are crowded and do not “present enough information about the puppets, about how they were used and what they were made out of.” In thinking about the similarities and differences between the Chattahoochee Nature Center and the Greene Family Learning Gallery, Peony noted that they were similar in that Chattahoochee has a discovery center where visitors learn about the animals and how the water affects the fish and trees and frogs, which gives it an “educational” feel similar to that of the High.

Connections & Effect of Participation in the Study

Visits to the High Museum are not isolated experiences for the Granvilles. The family described how they often discuss what they are going to see and/or recount previous visits on their way to and from the museum. For example, Peony said that prior to one visit she and Golden Puff “talked about having lunch with the research assistant” and on another Golden Puff asked questions like “How did Monet get this paintings inside?” and “Why would anyone want to paint a picture like the one we saw of the people in hell?” Following visits to the High, Peony and Golden Puff enjoy discussing the visits with Darby and other family members and friends, especially recounting the things they saw and did, such as playing with the in-gallery touch screens, building in the family gallery, and viewing exhibitions.

In addition to having discussions and recounting memories, the Granvilles sometimes incorporate and/or extend their experiences at the High Museum in other ways. For example, Peony noted how Golden Puff also builds with cushions at their home in a way that is similar to her building style with the foam pieces in the Greene Family Learning Gallery. Peony also explained how since they visited the architecture exhibition they have been talking more about buildings and have even tried to build models on their own.

In thinking about how participating in the study influenced them as a family, Peony explained that the study “has made them conscious of what they talk about as a family.”

VISIT PATTERNS

	High Museum of Art	Like Sites
Average time spent	163 minutes (Entire visit) 30 minutes (Greene Family Learning Gallery)	200 minutes
Timing of visits	During the summer months, Peony and Golden Puff visited during the day on a weekday (Tuesday/Wednesday). For their November trip, they visited in the late afternoon on a Thursday.	All family members attended the first and third offsite visits which took place on weekends. For the second visit, Peony and Golden Puff visited during the day. The first visit took place in the morning and visits two and three took place in the afternoon.
Order of visits	During the first two visits, the family viewed the special exhibition first, followed by some of the permanent collection and then a long lunch on the piazza, finishing in the Greene Family Learning Gallery. On the final visit, the family visited later in the evening and so did not have a long lunch, but they did visit the café at the end of their visit. Like usual, they visited the special exhibition first, followed by some of the permanent collection. Perhaps because they ran out of time, the family did not visit the family gallery during this visit.	Peony led the discussions and Golden Puff actively participated. Darby moved freely between observing to interacting.

Snapshot

THREE VISITS TO THE HIGH MUSEUM OF ART

Visit 1



June 2009
3 hours 19 min.

Monet Water Lilies
Richard Misrach: On the Beach
The Louvre and the Masterpiece

Visit 2



July 2009
2 hours 40 min.

Monet Water Lilies
Richard Misrach: On the Beach
The Louvre and the Masterpiece

Visit 3



November 2009
2 hours 10 min.

John Portman: Art & Architecture

THREE VISITS TO LIKE SITES

Fernbank Museum of Natural History



February 2009
4 hours 30 min.

Center for Puppetry Arts

No photograph available

October 2009
2 hours 30 min.

Chatahoochee Nature Center



November 2009
3 hour