

Morelli Family

My son could see that kids in a high school have their paintings hanging on the walls in a museum in Atlanta and it makes it all real and not out of their grasp... it becomes closer to his world. He likes to draw. He looks at art and says: Yes, I can do that. I don't want them to neglect that side of their development. Here is more emphasis on sports and hunting and fishing and they can have a run with that but I don't want that other side to be neglected.

– Vincent Morelli

The Morelli family made their first visit to the High Museum of Art in 2005. Several years before that, Vincent had started visiting art museums with his two teenage daughters from a previous marriage and knew that he wanted to continue that trend with his younger children. Today, Vincent visits the High Museum with his current wife, Stephanie, and their two sons, Tank (now 10 years old) and Ace (now 8 years old). In general, the family visits the museum around three times a year, making use of their membership and viewing the exhibitions.

Slightly different from the other case study families, the Morelli family only visited on weekends and never visited the Greene Family Learning Gallery, saying, "We like to go and look at stuff. In the

interactive room, the kids pushed some cushions around and then we left, so we did not get the full impact of that space, but we would like to spend more time in there during our next visits." Despite that comment, the Morellis never did visit the interactive family gallery.



Morelli Family (back row), Stephanie and Vincent, (front row), Ace and Tank.

The Morellis say they value their time spent together as a family and try to do many things together. Although he works a full-time job in insurance sales, Vincent tries to be home by 3 pm, when the children arrive home from school. Stephanie is a stay-at-home mother and spends much of her time creating home-cooked meals, gardening, and taking care of the home "culture." Stephanie and Vincent emphasize that while Stephanie could work and bring in another paycheck, it would not offset what they would lose in terms of family life and traditions. Together the Morellis enjoy visiting art museums (but not many other museums), attending the opera, watching movies, engaging in outdoor activities, rifle shooting, gardening, and visiting orchards. Both children are on a swim team and have won many awards and accolades in the sport. They also play flag football, take piano lessons, and read for at least an hour each day. The Morellis also emphasize that the children have a lot of time to "just be," with Vincent saying "I believe that they don't need to be kept busy all the time... it seems like they are always on some sort of schedule. It was different with my other daughters; they had much more of a schedule and I don't believe in that."

For this study, the Morelli family made three accompanied visits to the High Museum of Art, and three like-site visits to the Fernbank Science Center, the Zoo Atlanta, and the Atlanta Botanical Gardens. This was the first time the family had visited the Fernbank Science Center, and only the second time they had visited the zoo. While the family had visited the botanical gardens a long time ago, this was the first time they had been within the last seven years. Their

main motivation for visiting all of these sites was the importance of spending time together as a family.

Visits to the High Museum of Art Galleries

Overall, the Morelli family enjoyed spending time in the galleries looking at and discussing art. On each visit, the family made a point to visit a special exhibition—viewing the Chinese Terra-Cotta Warriors, the Monet Water Lilies, and the Leonardo da Vinci exhibitions. The boys particularly enjoyed using the audio guides. During the gallery visits, the family tended to stay together as a group; sometimes the boys ventured off on their own, but they always stayed within the same gallery and eventually rejoined their parents, pointing out objects of interest and sharing new information. Of all the exhibitions, the family seemed to particularly enjoy the Misrach photographs. During the visit in which they saw *Richard Misrach: On the Beach*, the Morellis spent a lot of time comparing different photographs, trying to predict which oceans were being photographed, and imagining and interpreting what was happening in the photographs. The Morellis also spent a lot of time in the gift shop on each visit, a ritual that seemed to be a highlight of the visits to the High Museum of Art. While in the gift shop, the family often discussed how much things cost and whether the materials were actually worth that cost. This “cost analysis” discussion appeared to be something that they family enjoyed doing together.

Visits to the Greene Family Learning Gallery

As mentioned previously, the family did not spend any time in the Greene Family Learning Gallery. Reasons the family gave for not visiting the space were that it is too crowded, that it had not changed since the first time they visited the space, and that they had already visited it in the past and did not see a reason for doing the same thing twice.

Visits to Like Sites

During each visit to a like-site venue, the family used a printed guide to help them orientate their way around the spaces. All three venues had spaces dedicated to reptiles: this seemed to be a key connection for the family. The family stayed together for most of their visits. Occasionally the boys ran out in front of their parents, but this was usually a response to their excitement of being in and discovering a new area. In general the family stayed together, their conversations were highly energetic, and everyone was fully engaged in the discussions.

Motivation & Values

In talking about their motivation for visiting the High Museum of Art, Vincent said that it is important for his children to be exposed to the arts and culture and to have a balance to sports and hunting and fishing. He also noticed that Ace has a drawing talent and he wants to support that creativity and artistic side. By visiting the art museum and seeing other artists' paintings on the walls, Vincent says the children can feel like art is within their reach and something that they can do on their own. He also alluded to the idea that visiting art museums is a better way to spend one's time than just sitting around watching television and that by visiting the art museum as children they might be more likely to continue to visit as adults.

When asked about what they enjoyed most about their visits to the High during the study, Vincent and Stephanie said the children enjoyed learning about how the Terra-Cotta Warriors

were made and the processes that were used to “dig them up.” Vincent and Stephanie were unsure about what their children enjoyed most on the other two visits, saying perhaps it was the gift shop on the second visit since they purchased a painting that is now hanging in the boys’ bedroom. On all three visits to the High, Stephanie and Vincent said they enjoyed looking at and learning more about the artwork. They particularly enjoyed the special exhibition artwork and artists, including the Terra-Cotta Warriors, Monet, and da Vinci.

In talking about the like-site visits, the family said they enjoyed their third visit to the Atlanta Botanical Gardens the most. Stephanie was not sure why, but the visit generated a lot of post-visit discussion. The family talked about their favorite flowers and identified plants that were similar to those at the zoo. Vincent indicated that he was not completely comfortable visiting the Fernbank Science Center, as he “does not believe in the big bang theory.” Overall, the family expressed feeling underwhelmed by their experience there.

Shared Characteristics—Art Museum & Like Sites

The Morellis had a difficult time articulating the similarities and differences between their visits to the High and the like-site venues. At a very concrete level, Stephanie referred to the services offered as similar, as were the look and feel of the spaces. On a more spiritual level, Stephanie outlined the balance she believed the High Museum of Art offered in contrast to that of the Botanical Garden, saying “nature has plants, which is beauty by God and art is beauty created by man... but, God created man.” In terms of differences, she explained that the science center could not compare to the Greene space at the High: “the Science Center was small scale and the High is a world-class museum.”

Connections & Effect of Participation in the Study

Following their first and second visits to the High, the family discussed the artwork they had seen in the galleries during their journey home. Following their first visit, one of the children discussed the burial of the Terra-Cotta Warriors underground, and following their second visit, the entire family talked about Monet and how having cataracts caused him to “see things” in a different way. Other ways the family made connections between their visits to the High and other learning experiences included sharing stories about what they did in the museum with other friends and family members and linking a book one son was reading about Monet with what they saw during the exhibition. Finally, while Vincent and Stephanie admit that the boys have always worked with clay as a hobby, they said that after seeing the Terra-Cotta Warriors exhibition and participating in the art-making activity, they “came up with more ideas to do at home.”

VISIT PATTERNS

	High Museum of Art	Like-Sites
Average time spent	90 minutes (Entire visit) The family did not visit the Greene Family Learning Center	115 minutes
Timing of visits	The Morellis always visit on the weekends, either a Saturday or a Sunday. The time of day varies from morning to afternoon.	The Morelli family's first visit was on a weekday and the second and third took place on weekends. All visits took place in the afternoon.
Order of	The family did not visit the Greene Family Learning	All of the family attended the three off-

<p>visits</p>	<p>Gallery. On each visit they attended a special exhibition first and then spent some time in the gift shop and/or the café.</p>	<p>site visits. In general they stayed together but there were some periods where the boys walked or ran out in front of their parents. The family always came back together before moving into another space.</p>
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Snapshot

THREE VISITS TO THE HIGH MUSEUM OF ART

Visit 1



March 2009
1 hour 30 min.
First Emperor

Visit 2



July 2009
2 hours 7 min.
Monet Water Lilies
Richard Miscrach: On the Beach

Visit 3



October 2009
1 hour 21 min.
Leonardo da Vinci Hand of the Genius

THREE VISITS TO LIKE SITES

Fernbank Science Center



September 2009

Zoo Atlanta



September 2009

Atlanta Botanical Garden



December 2009