

Participatory Activities on Tours

Nina Simon, *The Participatory Museum*

<http://www.participatorymuseum.org/read/>

Museum 2.0 blog

<http://museumtwo.blogspot.com/>

The participatory museum is a place where visitors can create, share, and connect with each other around content.

Why would you want to do this? Participation does five things best:

- Delivers personal relevance
- Celebrates and networks diverse voices
- Delivers dynamic content
- Encourages interpersonal dialogue
- Supports collaborative + creative practice

Consider the following questions:

How is a museum visit enriched by participatory activities?

How do visitors interacting with one another contribute to making a better museum experience?

How can we create spaces and activities in the museum that will lead to interaction among visitors?

How do “visitors” become “users”? (take ownership)

Let’s look at a few examples; things to do and not do . . .

Lessons learned and best practices to follow:

- Work from a selection of suggested galleries or objects
- Start by brainstorming ideas in groups: think about new ways of looking at art and encouraging multiple voices
- Don’t try to replicate the experiences of other cultures; broaden an activity to include what the experiences have in common
- Keep the pressure off (an activity does not need to be perfect); allow for experimentation and give yourself permission to fail
- Tell your tour audience that you want to try out an experiment and see if they are willing
- Ask for feedback about the activity from your audience

Assignment

Sign up in groups of 2 or 3 people and select an object from the list of suggestions. More than one group can do the same object. If you see something else you'd like to use, check with one of us first. You will design a participatory experience that can be used on a permanent collection tour. This means you must keep it simple—you will bring any materials needed with you to distribute at the appropriate time during the tour.

Participatory activities can include, but are not limited to:

Storytelling

Symbolism

Dance, movement, gesture

Fashion/bling

Puzzle-solving/scavenger hunt

Visual elements: color, line, shape

Written observations

Games (including teams)

Plan on about 20 minutes with your group to complete the activity. Be sure the activity relates to the object and theme of your tour; however, this presentation is based **less on content and more on visitor experience.**

You will have class time to prepare on January 11 and 18. The presentations will be given on February 8, 15, and 22.