

## **About Cross Currents**

Cross Currents started as a weekend tour for CIF guides. It was rebooted after the pandemic for our return to the galleries as Mia Guides. Through research, we found that visitors on weekends like the flexibility of visiting selected stops.

Currently, we alternate public tour formats. When a tour theme seems best to fit the Cross Currents model, we select that format for the month. The other format is the traditional one hour public tour, focused on Current Conversations (topical themes). The format for public tours is explained on the Mia website. Cross Currents tours run 2 hours, from 1 to 3 PM.

To streamline communication with Visitor Experience staff and volunteers, we are now picking four galleries for a Cross Currents tour, with guides often having agency to select an artwork or two to discuss in that gallery. Selecting galleries allows us to deliver a consistent message for the tour locations throughout the month.

If you are assigned a Cross Currents tour, please take an attendance clicker with you and record the number of interactions you have with visitors. These are in a basket on the table in the Guide Lounge. Following your tour assignment, record your attendance on the attendance sheet in the Tour Office.

If you are a lead guide, check in with other guides to see if any have questions regarding the assignment, and remind folks to track and record attendance.

## **Engagement strategies that worked well for guides, noted in our debrief session of 11.16.22**

- Guide badge and Ask Me button help visitors feel confident to approach guide for questions. (Note: Ask Me buttons are located in the baskets that hold the attendance clickers.)
- Give visitors a little “insider” info--like “you might not realize, but the back of this sculpture is beautifully carved” and show them a picture; hook them into the conversation.
- Intrigue the visitor with a story.
- Use props to bring in the visitor to explore more. (Note: Props help engage another sense and are especially good for family groups.)
- Ask, “Would you like to hear a story?” So many artworks have a story. More casual approach. Do not bombard people with information.
- Let visitors know why you are there, and that you are excited to be in the gallery, to share about the artwork. Invitation. “I’m here to talk about this if you’d like to do so.”
- Encourage visitors to ask their own questions for the artwork. “What are you curious about?”
- When you are in conversation with people, remain aware of other visitors entering the gallery. Ask those walking by, “would you like to join us?” or “Feel free to join us.”
- For the Gilliam draped painting, James used music to relate to it (jazz/Miles Davis). People were interested to know about the connection. James thinks the bigger the artwork, the better, to engage with people.
- Don’t think as a string of questions--focus on having a conversation, then let it go where it’s going to go.

- Be ready to give easy directions to get to the next artwork.
- Open yourself to conversation. The point is to engage people; let them talk and share their experiences.
- Invitations: “I have stuff here if you are interested.”
- Would you like to talk about this? Any questions about this? Other people gather when they hear people talking.
- If you run into the guards, let them know that you are in the gallery and there to talk with visitors.
- Direct visitors on to something you think they might like to see--if they are wondering, “what shouldn’t I miss?”
- Have some information or be ready to talk about other artworks in the room (like the sub-theme of “portraits”). Be responsive to visitors' interests.