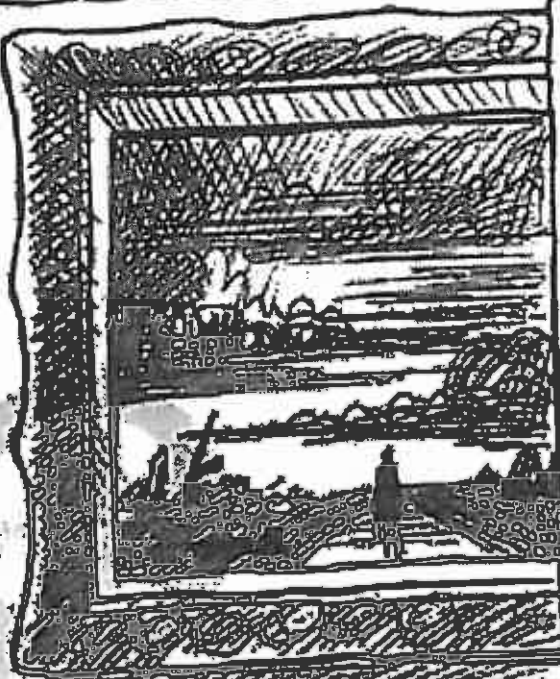


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DESIGN



TO BE TOLD BY AN
EXPERT HOW THIS
PRINTING SHOULD MAKE
YOU FEEL,
PRESS BUTTON



"Education is Not the Filling of a Pail, but the Lighting of a Fire"

William Butler Yeats (1865-1939)

Our job as educators and docents is to:

- Engage natural curiosity
- Promote self-discovery
- Encourage examination
- Foster motivation

Inquiry-based Tour Techniques

Relating information, facts, and stories about artwork

vs.

Asking questions that prompt the visitor to actively participate
in the learning process

Less is more...

We must learn to be masters of exclusion.

Why is this approach necessary?

According to research, visitors expect the following from a quality museum experience:

- Social interaction
- A worthwhile experience (i.e. worth the time and money to do it)
- Feeling comfortable and at ease in one's surrounding
- Being challenged
- Having the opportunity to learn
- Active participation

If a museum experience fulfills all of these expectations, then visitor satisfaction and motivation is increased. Even if one or two of these expectations is overlooked, the visitor may leave feeling unfulfilled.

**Falk, J. (2009). *Identity and the museum visitor experience*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

Methods to encourage inquiry:

- Relate a limited amount of information followed by a question. Think 60/40—you talk only 60% of the time, while the visitor fills-in the remaining 40%. (Keep them wanting more.)
- Ask open-ended questions. Use yes/no questions sparingly.
- Follow up visitor comments or assertions with questions such as:
 - “Why do you think this?”*
 - “How can you tell?”*
 - “Why would the artist do that?”*
- Avoid relating your own personal opinions or feelings (unless asked).
- Connect an object to a visitor’s life or memories.
- Compare and contrast objects, styles, or techniques.
- Use controversy to engage a visitor.

Methods to encourage inquiry:

- Build off of pre-existing knowledge (effectiveness is somewhat dependent on age and education level).
- Acknowledge different visitor OPINIONS. Follow these types of comments by repeating what the visitor has stated (i.e. acknowledge their opinion) and ask them to explain their reasoning.
- Provide accurate FACTS (be sure the information is based on research). If a visitor makes a comment that is inaccurate, it is your job to correct them by stating, “I understand how you can think this BUT...”
- Identify core ideas (themes) and build off of them.
- Use backwards design. Determine what you want the visitor to learn (the objective) before the tour and develop questions that will lead them to it. This requires pre-planning.



James Hamilton Shegogue
(1806–1872)
*Portrait of African-American
Woman*
Between 1825 and 1833



John Baeder (b. 1938)
Col. Poole's Pig Hill of Fame
1995