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A Museum Hack for Museum Education

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A Museum Hack for Museum Education

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Dedication

For Arwyn

You are my motivation and inspiration everyday.

I am lucky to have you, my baby girl. Je t'aime.

For Jim

Your unwavering love, support, and commitment has been my strength.

I am lucky to have you by my side, always and forever.

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Abstract

A Museum Hack for Museum Education

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The purpose of this study was to investigate the alternative approach to museum education utilized by the Corning Museum of Glass and influenced by the museum tour company, Museum Hack. Through the process of identifying methods and techniques employed by Museum Hack, the goal of this research was to recognize which of those approaches could be applied to other educators and institutions in their efforts to establish and encourage a positive learning environment for visitors. Applying a multiple site case study methodology, this study used a firsthand account of a Museum Hack tour operated at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, New York to establish a sampling of techniques typically used by the company's tour guides. This study provides a detailed account of the Museum Hack tour, paying attention to the variety of methods employed. The second site of research visited in the study was the Corning Museum of Glass in Corning, New York, to ascertain the influences affected by Museum Hack and their use of alternate methods of tour procedures. Through extensive interviews with members of the Corning Museum of Glass's education department, the elements of the Museum

Hack's gallery teaching techniques were compared and connected, pertaining to the museum's programming, while questioning their derivative nature. Four main themes emerged that represented significant features applicable to alternative museum education. These were the importance of the narrative, the focus of the visitor museum experience, the use of interpretation, and the need to establish relationships. Based on the findings of the study, museum educators, teachers, and institutions may gain a new perspective on the possibilities of the museum environment as a place of learning for all visitors.

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Chapter One: Introduction to the Study

This study was focused on the Corning Museum of Glass in Corning, New York. This research site was selected because the Corning Museum of Glass recently exchanged their conventional educational foundations for a structure of narrative storytelling, discovery, and interpretation that mimics some of the characteristics of Museum Hack. Consequently, I have identified those activity and conversation based tour techniques that are employed by Museum Hack at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, New York to ascertain their influence on museum educators and their approach to change the classic museum tour and, if so, how are they accomplishing this task? Through exploratory interviews, firsthand experiences, and in-depth analysis, this study presents a look into the metamorphosis of today's museum education, as well as provides a thoughtful and reasonable approach for art museum educators to apply to their own practices and to the field of art education.

The Corning Museum of Glass and Museum Hack are working to makeover the museum experience. Their practices are part of a trend that is altering the public's view of museums through initiating various approaches that focus on visitor participation and perception. As an example, by shifting their approach to teaching and touring in the museum, Museum Hack has successfully attracted a wider audience, many of whom have never set foot in a museum (Simon, 2014). With this change, the public's perception of the museum as an elitist institution for historians and art connoisseurs is now becoming a part of the past ("Museum Hack," 2016). As museums face a more diverse audience, encountering people from all walks of life, these

institutions have increased their focus on the needs and wants of their patrons. This change has led to a shift in museum programming, education, marketing, and more. Art educators are now faced with the task of creating new approaches to museum education (Filippoupoliti & Sylaiou, 2015).

Central Research Question

The following question provided focus and direction for this investigation: Employing techniques influenced by Museum Hack, how is the Corning Museum of Glass developing an alternative approach to museum education, and what may institutions and educators learn from Museum Hack to help them create a more positive and enjoyable learning environment for visitors?

Problem Statement

In the twenty-first century, the museum has come under re-examination. Once considered to be a symbol of an elitist society where objects were held in highest regard as sacred, the museum is now receiving increased scrutiny from the society that surrounds it. This inquisition into the purposes of the museum comes at a time of need for socially responsive institutions. Clamoring for inclusivity, and with a paradigm shift for the benefit of the public and our communities, institutions are now asking what contributions they can make for the good of the people (Anderson, 2004). The focuses that have been at the forefront of museum consideration and activities for years have been sustainability and funding for operations, as well as establishing and maintaining relevant and alluring programs. As the world changes and shifts its

direction and emphasis, the museum and the art educators who work there must reconsider and alter their direction as well.

Based solely on survival, museum leadership have formerly asked what will matter the most to their audience, and be of greatest use to society. The problems that educators are now concentrating on center around experience, interpretation, sharing of knowledge in all forms and contexts, as well as accessibility (Skramstad, 2004). Thinking deeper into the issue, another problem for scrutiny is the importance of the museum for the betterment of the individual community where it rests. In the end, the question that is asked by many is what is the meaning of the art museum (Simon, 2011)? If the main goals of the museum are not understood, then it becomes the responsibility of museum educators to try to express the importance of the museum to its visitors.

Education and learning are no longer synonymous within the context of the museum. Each have taken on new meaning, and with that shift comes the struggle of art educators to navigate well the line that separates the two ideas. Learning in an university or school has a very different connotation than what takes place in the museum. Educational pedagogy has form and structure, based upon academic qualities, and can denote a higher level of mental capacity. However, the characteristics of learning within the museum are often based on inspiration, entertainment, and experience (Genoways, 2006). It is the undertaking of art museum educators to find the difference between these two experiences, and teach accordingly.

Motivations for Research

My overall interest in museums fuels the general motivations for my research. I love everything about museums, from the art in the galleries to the architecture, and even the gift shop and cafe. The museum environment is a personal haven of inspiration, solitude, and reflection. In my studies, I encountered the term Museum Hack in a discussion about the perceptions people have of museums. Upon visiting the Museum Hack web page, I was intrigued by not only their focus of giving tours in museums, but how they approached these visitor experiences. Never before had I encountered a company whose enthusiasm for museums was on the same level as my own. During a trip to New York City, I registered for one of their tours at The Metropolitan Museum of Art. For more than two hours I followed my guide to various corners of the museum, exploring and experiencing the galleries in ways I never imagined. Even though I had visited the museum countless times before, Museum Hack gave it a new perspective that displayed the possibilities of bringing excitement, entertainment, and an appreciation of art to those who may not expect it.

Soon after, I attended the National Art Education Association Annual Convention in New York City. It was at this time that I attended an informative session conducted by representatives of the Corning Museum of Glass titled, “Narrative in Gallery Teaching, Interpretive Writing, and Persuasive Communication” (Wetterlund, Smythe, & Kay, 2017). During the presentation, I learned that this museum was taking the components of the Museum Hack tour and education structure, and applying them to their own museum education programming. In addition, the

museum was experiencing success in utilizing this new framework for conducting tours. Their presentation included an identification of elements, including “Ingredients for a Great Story” and “‘Story Embryo’ Technique,” which outlines a step-by-step structured process of storytelling. By using these tools, alongside guidance and teachings from Museum Hack, the Corning Museum of Glass was entering into a new phase of museum education, one that focused intently on visitor experience.

As art educators, we are faced with the task of determining how to best relay knowledge about art to our students and construct understanding. Moreover, our purpose is to learn how to demonstrate interpretative responses to works of art in rich and beneficial ways that hold interest and wonder for the visitor. Museum pedagogy of the past has often centered on fact-filled structured tours. However, many visitors desire a different museum experience. By examining the Corning Museum of Glass, and the features of Museum Hack they now employ, I set out to provide a new perspective regarding what is possible for museum educators today. Based on Museum Hack’s signature components for a museum tour, I here apply their methods into a compilation of techniques and tools that can assist museum educators in their endeavors to teach, inspire, and share innovative content with visitors, thus giving museum educators ideas and capabilities to better help their institutions succeed in achieving greater community involvement.

Research Method

The Corning Museum of Glass and Museum Hack focus on visitor experience. But what experience rests at the heart of their activity? Although there are multiple interpretations of the

word “experience,” a basic analysis would define it as, “the only source for humans’ encounters with their environment” (Hein, 2012, p. 29). However, delving further into the perception of the word leads to the work of John Dewey and his book *Art as Experience* (1934). To summarize his ideas in an updated vernacular, Leddy (2006) explains, “‘An experience’ is one in which the material of experience is fulfilled or consummated, as for example when a problem is solved, or a game is played to its conclusion.” This is one of many similar definitions, and leads one to ask, what does experience mean when applied to museums? What attracts people to the museum, and how can we as museum educators encourage them to do so? “The first step in understanding the museum visitor’s experience is to ask why, of all the possible ways an individual or family could spend their leisure time, millions of people freely choose to visit museums” (Falk & Dirking, 1992, p. xv). The questions that pertain to this study are based on what is the Corning Museum of Glass doing to attract visitors to enter the museum, and what are the differences in their approach? How has their programming been influenced by Museum Hack? In terms of research, the only way to gain a full and rich understanding of Museum Hack’s affect on the Corning Museum of Glass would be to gather data on both subjects, exploring each experience directly.

I used a case study methodology for my research into these questions and others. In order to discover the answers, I needed to be part of the Museum Hack experience and also examine the effects Museum Hack has had on other institutions such as the Corning Museum of Glass. The first step in conceptualizing case study research, as detailed by Lapan, Quartaroli, and Riemer (2012) is “clarifying the purpose, defining and limiting the case, identifying the

questions, and considering potential audiences for the report” (p. 248). Following this pattern, my research was an intrinsic, multiple site case study, which helped me to better understand alternative museum education and how it could be used to construct positive and successful learning environments for museum visitors. The extent of my case was to document my experiences and data gathered from a Museum Hack tour and examine educational programs at the Corning Museum of Glass. My questions pertained to the methods and techniques used by Museum Hack to influence their audience, and to learn how their methods were used by the Corning Museum of Glass in their application to museum education. The outcomes and analysis of this case study has potential benefit for museum educators, teachers, docents, and the like. A more thorough discussion of the methodology utilized in this study is presented in Chapter Three.

Definition of Terms

- Accession number: This is an assigned number, or group of numbers, which is used by museums, galleries, and archives as a way to catalog and identify works in the collection at the time of their acquisition.
- Blog: Abbreviated from *weblog*, this is an online social platform, usually a website, where individuals or groups can write informal entries on various subjects. The diary-like articles can be accessed by the public as long as the site is active. There is also the possibility for others to comment and share on each post.
- Buzzword: A popular phrase or word that is used commonly, usually in a social context.

- Go-Fund-Me: A website used for crowd sourcing monetary funds.
- Hack: A quick, efficient method for managing a certain task. Also seen as a shortcut or a tip. In the museum context, it can refer to those who work together to tell stories and share information to help others.
- Hot Shop: A glass-worker's studio, usually containing a large furnace for heating glass to a molten state in order to be manipulated.
- Meme: A copied image or video with an element of a culture in a humorous fashion, often spread rapidly on the internet.
- Mic-drop: Used to emphasize an impressive point of completion in story, performance or speech. In the museum context, it can signify the end of the tour.
- Mind = blown: Something that is amazing, shocking or mind-boggling; often used in a social context. In the museum context, it can refer to inspiration or revelation.
- Museum Hack: A company founded by Nick Gray in New York City in 2013 as a way to engage audiences in museums through the use of narrative, interpretation, engagement, games, and trivia.
- Post: A web form, usually supported by HTTP protocol, used to submit data to a web server. Most often used in regards to blogs, social networks, and commentary.
- QR code: A matrix barcode that is used by a scanning device, usually a smart phone, that connects the user with a piece of information or access.

Limitations of the Study

The parameters of my study were based on two separate cases. However, my analysis of their cases was focused on the relationship recognized between them. The boundaries were contained to each site, where I gathered data and conducted interviews with key leaders within the organization. For the Museum Hack site case study, I participated in one of their tours, gathering data from the experience. The Corning Museum of Glass was the location of my second site case study. The limitations of this study include participation in one of their educational public tours, and gathering data from the experience. In addition, I interviewed members of the Educational and Interpretation Department, at the Corning Museum of Glass, gathering data on their programs and how Museum Hack has influenced their work within the museum.

The data collected for this study was primarily qualitative in nature. I observed participants of these tours, activities conducted in or around them, conversations pertaining to the experience, and interactions between participants. Through the use of interviews, I gathered knowledge based on the perspective of a museum, to include the creation of programming, the forming of relationships, and the objectives guiding the institution. Other forms of data collected dealt with my individual thoughts and feelings while participating in the tour experience. Information contained on the websites of each organization was also assembled for the use of verification. My strategy for gathering data focused on a process of triangulation, defined as the examination and interpretation of the same subject through various sources. By this method, a

deeper understanding of the study is achievable through the comparison of the commonalities and distinction within the different types of data. (Schensul, 2012).

The parameters for time spent on site for the study fell into the space of four days. Each tour was no more than two hours in length. In addition, I am the sole researcher for these case studies. Other details that were added to the study apply to creating interview protocol, a plan of observation, and field tests of data collection equipment such as a digital voice recorder.

Benefits to the Field of Art Education

It was John Dewey who helped give form to the grandest example of “an experience”: it is our experiences gained through art. His theory lies at the core of what museum educators wish to accomplish for their visitors. Part of the experience includes elements of understanding obtained through the instruction and direction given by the educator. This is not so easily accomplished (Burnham & Kai-Kee, 2011, p. 9). Dewey states in his book *Art as Experience* (1934):

In order to *understand* the esthetic in its ultimate and approved forms, one must begin with it in the raw; in the events and scenes that hold the attentive eye and ear of man, arousing his interest and affording him enjoyment as he looks and listens. (p. 4)

As museum educators, we continue to search for and find new and effective methods of teaching in order to facilitate learning in our museums. As the world changes and new generations look to the art museum for purpose, we must change the way we approach what we do and how we interact with our audiences. The aim of this study is to aid in this endeavor. The Corning Museum of Glass, alongside Museum Hack, has found a form of experience that has achieved a

positive reaction from many people. The techniques and tactics they use may be applied to other areas in the field of art education, including, but not limited to, museum education. Such an approach provides educators with the tools and components needed to generate a new found interest in art with their learners. In addition, a further benefit would be the application of elements of art to other avenues of society, thus creating an appreciation and supportive outlook toward the arts and the field of art education.

Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the two main components of the study, Museum Hack and the Corning Museum of Glass, as the focus of research and investigation. Identifying the theme of the study, I have presented in Chapter One the research question, problem statement, motivations for research, research method, definition of terms, limitations of the study and the benefits to the field of art education. In the chapters to follow, I delve deeper into the techniques, methods, and processes obtained and operated by museum educators. In Chapter Two: Literature Review, I outline pertinent literature relating to the topic of alternative museum education, museum history, storytelling, and the museum experience. This gives a general background to the ideals expressed throughout the field, from the past and the present. In Chapter Three: Methodology, I present a detailed and expressive account of my research of a Museum Hack tour, with the purpose of giving the reader an imagined experience of being present for the tour. Chapter Four: Data Analysis highlights the techniques used on the Museum Hack tour and compares them to the programs, events, and methods employed by the Corning Museum of Glass

as part of their museum programming. Here the central research question is answered through multiple forms and variations, all giving evidence to the effects the innovative programming of Museum Hack has on museum education. In Chapter Five: Conclusions, I provide my summary thoughts on the question, the research, and the further applications of the techniques used by both Museum Hack and the Corning Museum of Glass.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This review of literature is divided into four main categories that have an essential role in helping me to conduct this study. These categories act as a base from which connections emerge and a narrative for the study is formed. These subjects are, (a) a historical discussion focused on the museum, (b) alternative forms of museum education, (c) storytelling or narrative, and (d) the visitors' museum experience. Within these foci underlies a common theme of change, which becomes an undeniable connection linked throughout the literature, as present in historical records, societal opinion, and general consensus of those who visit and write about museums. Yet, throughout each focus is a thread of continuity that is unwavering and indestructible, despite efforts by the museum to modernize or change direction. What remains constant are basic experiences that correspond with our human condition. The mysteries of life have been pondered by artists, scientists, and philosophers since the beginning. Many of their works and subsequent products of inspiration are held within the museum, making the institution a veritable wealth of curiosity and knowledge. However, the museum often holds a stigma of being an elitist institution, carried on throughout the ages, making it difficult in this current time to be accepted by those who reside outside its experience.

One aspect of this study examines the elements of this hierarchical museum-directed reasoning, in order to try and combat it; however, in order to facilitate change, more must be accomplished than merely identifying the problem. The groupings of applicable literature that follow give voice to the issues, theories, and problem solving techniques that have been

published in attempt to present a perspective of the museum that could change the view of society now and in the future. In the paragraphs that follow, I present an organized interpretation of how each piece of literature pertains to the topic of study, with particular focus given to the ideas relating to change and progressive thought as directed towards the museum visitor. It is my goal to present the reader with information to assist them in seeing and approaching the museum in a new light.

History of the Museum

In order to comprehend the present, we must endeavor to understand the past. There can be no assumption about what the future holds if we do not first look to where we have been. The history and the evolution of the museum is a long and involved story that has its roots in ancient times. In the current age, the museum, and its status as an institution, is a far cry from its simple and inspirational beginnings. In order to convey a proper understanding of these humble origins, as well as a concise and detailed account concerning the events and circumstances that played a part in the creation of the museum, focused study of the museum in the present and past is required. Thus, for this study I offer a sufficient amount of framework material needed to build a historical knowledge base for the reader, which will help in comprehending recent significant changes occurring in museums, and why such change is creating waves within the community of museums and educational programs housed within them.

Simply enough, the main focus of historical literature surrounds the reasons for and purposes of a museum. With this in mind, I am able to set a foundation regarding the relationship

found between the public and the institution, including aspects that are associated with their creation, function, and importance. One of the sources that helped me achieve this was *The Curator's Egg: The Evolution of the Museum Concept from the French Revolution to the Present Day* (2009) by Karsten Schubert, who gives explanation for the changes surrounding the museum in the past and how these have led us to understand museums today. She offers examples and descriptions of some of the earliest forms of the museum, even though they would be unrecognizable to most of us in our contemporary world. She provides evidence of the political and social changes that have molded the museum throughout the centuries. In reference to the current day call for museum reformation, she states,

Each generation has had its 'own' particular museum crisis, resulting, as political, social and economic circumstances involved, from frequently contradictory demands and expectations The museum has always been on the edge of its own ever-changing and ever-expanding definition, the object of savage critique and unending reform, yet in the end each crisis has miraculously reaffirmed its status and normative power in all matters cultural. (p. 16)

The museum is reflective of our own social and political status. It adapts to the changing climate of society, while its favor and popularity ebb and flow, the institution remains a part of our cultures and our lives. The reason is based upon many possibilities, but the fact that museums are still here is proof enough that they do matter.

When discussing these origins, a topic commonly analyzed concerns the very definition of the museum. The question, "What is a museum?" has held the attention and studies of scholars, educators, and society for years, while their attempts to answer it have shifted throughout time. The concerns, questions, thoughts and theories that constantly surround the

topic change only slightly. Even with some pieces of literature pertaining to issues with museums, a reader would be surprised to learn that the article is over forty years old, for it speaks with a furor and depth of knowledge precisely relating to museum controversies occurring in the present day. This is seen in Duncan F. Cameron's article, "The Museum, a Temple or the Forum" (1971). The subjects discussed here are as relevant now as they were when Cameron raised them. Similarly, *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge* (1992) by Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, also shares her perspective on the relationships surrounding museums, staff, visitors, and society. In addition, the book follows the extensive history of the museum from its beginnings to what we know today.

Another perspective that details the first days of the museum, which offers insight to the path of its creation, is explained by Harold Skramstad in his article, "An Agenda for American Museums in the Twenty-first Century" (2010). He states, "From its beginnings, the great value of American museums has come from their diversity. It has always been a mix of collecting, inquiry and scholarship, entertainment, and education" (p. 1). The museum has many purposes, and yet those at the forefront transform with the social and political status of the world. Our society differs from that of thirty years ago, hence we cannot set the same standards today as we could then. The museum is in a constant state of renewal, and museum educators must be prepared to be flexible with the variety of focus given to one subject or another.

Alternative Museum Education

The Corning Museum of Glass (CMoG) has begun to build innovative educational programming on many recognized supportive blocks of traditional gallery teaching. The foundational sources utilized for this area of research are segmented into different categories. The following are based on the five Museum Hack story components: “engagement”; “what’s the story?”; “mind = blown”; “connection”; “drop the mic” (Wetterlund, Smythe, & Fay, 2017). Another extension of the Museum Hack philosophy is detailed in their e-book, *Museum Tested Audience Approved: How To Attract More Visitors And Engage Millennials* (n.d.). This online publication focuses on gaining the attention of visitors and how museums can use their techniques to engage audiences. Another publication, popular within the museum field as well as online, is *The Participatory Museum* (2010) by Nina Simon. As a working museum professional, Simon also maintains a blog, titled “Museum 2.0,” gaining popularity since its beginning in 2006 and attracting other museum professionals to read, share, and learn from the experiences of others. Information gathered from the book, as well as the updated blog, supplies a treasure trove of up-to-date information and consensus regarding the current state of the museum field. As a museum practitioner today, Simon has an ear to the real issues affecting museums, and transmitting these concerns on her blog. By using this information, I was able to obtain an understanding of the present day museum educator and issues that are effecting them, their institution, and visitors to their museum. This essentially gives an insider’s perspective, which is a useful tool when researching museums and other like institutions.

Other significant sources that detail the alternative museum education come from established museums, like the Getty Museum in Los Angeles. The book, *Teaching in the Art Museum: Interpretation as Experience* (2011) written by seasoned and experienced museum educators, Rika Burnham and Elliott Kai-Kee, identify main components that contribute to an understanding of how to teach well in the art museum. In the chapter, “The Art of Teaching in the Art Museum,” the authors give examples of sample tour experiences an educator might encounter, showing how different and similar the tours are when compared to each other—depending on the type of visitor—and how it becomes more than just an event in the museum. The authors express that a well conducted tour creates an experience that continues after the tour is completed. This is the goal of the museum educator. Straightforward as it may appear, the profession contains aspects that are seemingly problematic, and even at times, impossible. From an outside perspective, it is difficult to imagine the trials that museum educators encounter, yet Danielle Rice (1988) describes it in a manner that affirms the complex and challenging nature of the occupation:

We have to make every experience significant and meaningful without placing the emphasis on factual information, such as dates and period names. We must give viewers a hint of how informed vision works, but we must do so without, on the one hand, making them feel ignorant or inadequate or, on the other hand, giving them a false sense that they have understood all there is to knowing one short experience. (p. 16)

Other important topics covered in the books mentioned contain information on alternate methods of gallery teaching, such as interpretive play, intense looking, and the role of the teacher as a guide of interpretation. These provide insights into the changing and innovative nature of art

museums tours, and helps give support for my investigation into changing museum education practices, and Museum Hack, in particular.

In addition, the writings of John Dewey comprise an essential collection of literature that outlines, discusses, and analyzes the experience. Although his book *Art as Experience* was written in 1934, much of what he discusses is as prevalent today as it was then. His theories and observations continue to guide and inspire educators to create worthwhile and meaningful experiences available to museum visitors. Such is an example of his teachings:

EXPERIENCE occurs continuously, because the interaction of live creature and environing conditions is involved in the very process of living....In contrast with such an experience, we have *an* experience when the material experienced runs its course to fulfillment....In such experiences, every successive part flows freely, without seam and without unfilled blanks, into what ensues. At the same time there is not sacrifice to the self-identity of the parts. A river, as distinct from a pond, flows....In an experience, flow is from something to something. As one part leads into another and as one part carries on what went before, each gains distinctness in itself. The enduring whole is diversified by successive phases that are emphases of its varied colors. (pp. 36-38)

Storytelling

From the earliest cave drawings to blockbuster movies, it is in our nature to tell stories. There is a reasoning behind the evidence, and it has much to do with how our brains perceive the story, ultimately letting it shape our lives. In this area, I used sources based on the nature of storytelling, such as *The Storytelling Animal: How Stories Make Us Human* (2013) by Jonathan Grottschall and *Wired for Story: The Writer's Guide to Using Brain Science to Hook Readers from the Very First Sentence* (2012) by Lisa Cron. These publications give an in-depth look into reasons why we are quite often drawn to the narrative. They describe a scientific approach, as

well as the rubric that defines what makes it a “good story.” This structure of storytelling is a necessity for gaining the attention of the reader, or in this case, the museum visitor. As humans, we are hard-wired to know a good story when we hear one, and the opposite is true as well. Our brains perceive a story just as we would life. There is no illusion, as the same regions in the brain that are responsible for processing the things we see, hear, and taste, are also activated when we listen to a narrative. This is what accounts for the visual images we see, and why it is difficult to separate ourselves from the experience (Cron, 2012). These sources that outline instructions for composing a story are very useful for the writer, yet they can also be beneficial to museum and education professionals in their efforts to engage and educate the public and other audience members.

These books present me with an understanding about why the use of narrative is essential for conducting successful tours in the museum. Furthermore, beyond the action of storytelling is the process of creation. What kind of inspiration and key ingredients are necessary in order to create a product that captivates the audience? There are certain components that help to establish a narrative, and in order to do this, certain elements must be considered and utilized. Besides writers of novels, screenwriters use these guidelines to construct their stories. One such example of a useful rubric is Dan Harmon’s “Story Circle,” loosely based on Joseph Campbell’s “The Monomyth Structure: The Hero’s Journey,” which uses a model of events that creates a cycle of growth and change that can be applied to a character in a story (Angela, 2013). This structure is a dominant characteristic among many stories and can be seen in ancient tales like *The Iliad*, and

even more recent ones, such as the *Star Wars* films. By using this story design, the chance that museum educators can capture and hold the attention of their audience is far more likely, and will encourage them to return to the museum for more engaging stories and visits in the future.

The Experience

Another aspect of my study focuses on visitor engagement and interpretation as experience being key components of education in museums. Finding meaning through learning and discovery brings about quality experiences that educators hope will stay with the viewer even after leaving the museum. Previously, museum education was built around a framework based upon the transfer of knowledge from those who are experts to those who are not. This method of information transfer does not fit a large number of museum visitors in the twenty-first century, those who are in need of a new experiences that better mesh with the changing social, economic, and technological fabric of society (Henry, 2010). Two sources that also provided me a great deal of pertinent information related to art museum visitor engagement are *From Knowledge to Narrative: Educators and the Changing Museum* (1997) by Lisa C. Roberts, and Falk & Dierking's *The Museum Experience* (1992). Both of these works outlined aspects of the museum experience, offering a full and specific perspective to all matter of issues and systems within the topic, including the element of entertainment.

Identifying various components of experience can aid the museum educator in understanding and facilitating learning for the benefit of visitors. When exploring such an overarching idea as the museum experience, it is necessary to divide this notion into smaller,

more manageable pieces, so that a higher chance of successful understanding is achieved. Falk and Dierking (1992) organize the experience into sections based on the stages of the visit. What happens before, during and after a museum visit and what is remembered from it are all covered in this thoroughly stimulating and useful book. Beside the areas previously mentioned, there are sub-categories that cover smaller, less noticeable components of the museum that might go overlooked by visitors, and even by those professionals working in the field. Details such as exhibit labels, pathways, and the identification of the workings of the group tour are all touched upon in the confines of this literary piece. Noted as being a staple in the museum studies field for many years, this volume presents a wealth of knowledge and insight into the world inside and outside the museum.

When describing an experience, the term “experience” can be analyzed in many fashions. In order to address this ambiguity, I suggest a metaphorical explanation for relating the term experience to the museum context. The experience is an over reaching cloud that signifies the visit. Any part of the museum has the possibility of an experience. The interpretation of the cloud comes from how we, individually, identify and demystify its purpose: is it a rain cloud, a thundercloud, or a white, puffy cloud? The engagement comes in the form of how we approach it. If we perceive it as a rain cloud, do we run under it to be a part of the rain, or do we stay sheltered, unwilling to immerse ourselves and get wet? The discovery or inspiration occurs when we take a step towards it only to learn that it was not what we had speculated; it has become a storm cloud with lightening when we thought it was only a rain cloud. The meaning appears

when we relate the cloud to a part of ourselves or our lives. For a person who loves the rain, it has become a symbol of comfort. When it becomes more than just a cloud, and now carries an emotion or insight, both of which are elements of what is referred to as an aesthetic experience. Or, in other terms as expressed as the existence of insight and emotion that is felt by the viewer, conveyed in Carol Henry's book *The Museum Experience: The Discovery of Meaning* (2010). There is the added element of aesthetics and what is expected from the visitor, which can contribute to the complexity of the idea. The concept may be complicated at first glance, but further reading and inspection of my study will clarify each of the components told here.

Within these sources also rests the foundations for the analysis of what is gained through the research. Through careful observations, and detailed inquiry, my analysis of data produces methods that can be applied to the field of arts education. In order to apply them as teaching methods, it is necessary to compare and contrast them to previous museum educational research and writings.

Conclusion

In order to understand the changing tide of museums and why there is upheaval in the traditional view, historical understanding is required. By looking at the past, we have reaffirmed our present and gives us a place from which to explore our future. In this case, I have offered the reader a selection of literary works that aid well in obtaining prior knowledge of the institution where this study takes place: the museum. Becoming more than what was expected, the museum has evolved, and continues to do so, meeting the needs, wants, and desires of the world that

surrounds it. From here, the reader can assess the other factors that help move the museum in the desired direction. No longer only a storehouse of knowledge, the museum has added an entertainment component, and thus enters the element of the experience. Formerly, visiting a museum was the equivalent of looking up a piece of information in a book, a source of reference and research. However, more recently it has become an entity different from only being a repository of things. The time spent within its walls is now labeled as visitor experience and its halls are now a learning environment. Contained within this category are methods and practices that help facilitate these ideas. Alternative forms of museum education, with an element of storytelling, have become normal happenings and areas of study within the museum. All of this breeds a completely new perspective for society as it looks to this ancient institution and brings it along into the twenty-first century. In the next chapter I offer the reader an experience through my recollection and telling of a Museum Hack tour.

Chapter Three: Methodology

“The key philosophical assumption,...upon which all types of qualitative research are based is the view that reality is constructed by individuals interacting with their social worlds” (Merriam, 2001, p. 6).

To better understand our world and our place within it, we rely on several sources of knowledge to help us navigate and negotiate the happenings that occur around us. These can come in the form of personal experiences, traditions, reasoning, and authority (Lapan, Quartaroli, & Riemer, 2012), and the museum is a very accessible place in which to find these features. The museum has the possibility of being a location where everyone is invited to process the world in which they live. Museum Hack is a facilitator of this idea, bringing forward the notion that museums have the ability to teach, inspire, connect, engage, and share with others around them. When I discovered Museum Hack was also helping other museums adopt these innovative ideas, I wanted to know more. I devoted my study to investigating these influences and their consequences.

Research provides a beneficial addition to our ever changing base of understanding. It offers for our scrutiny a breadth of information previously gathered, assessed, and analyzed. As a researcher, we become part of the development of our consciousness as we try to identify the meanings we bring to life experiences (Lapan, Quartaroli, & Riemer, 2012). Qualitative research is an integral part of this process, a perception that contains various frameworks of inquiry to aid in the understanding of social phenomena without disturbing the natural setting (Merriam, 2001).

Not easily defined, qualitative research prefers no set methodology over another, and is essentially interpretative (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Because of this, qualitative research became the ideal form of research to utilize in this study.

Case Study Methodology

When conducting qualitative research, the researcher is, more or less, part of the investigative process. This recognition is what Adler and Adler (1998) refer to as the *observer-as-participant role*, “depicting those who enter settings for the purpose of data gathering, yet who interact only casually and nondirectively with subjects while engaged in their observational pursuits” (p. 84). For purposes of this research, I recognized it was imperative I be an active participant in it, and therefore required me to travel to multiple sites. Frequently used with site-specific research, I adopted a case study methodology, but not solely for that reason. Stake (2003) defines case study as “not a methodological choice but a choice of what is to be studied” (p. 134). Due to the case inhabiting more than one location, having multiple sources, and a variety of data, I established a multiple site case study methodology. This approach permitted me to use multiple data gathering procedures tailored to each site. My areas of study were the The Metropolitan Museum of Art (The MET) to experience and document a Museum Hack tour, and the Corning Museum of Glass (CMoG), where I participated in a public tour and interviewed members of the CMoG’s Education Department.

The question that guides this study is easily laid out within the definition of case study, expressed by Merriam (2001):

A case study design is employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved. The interest is in process rather than outcomes, in context rather than a specific variable, in discovery rather than confirmation. Insights gleaned from case studies can directly influence policy, practice, and future research. (p. 19)

Because the CMOG had been influenced by Museum Hack, and was actively in the process of change within their institution, I wanted to know how they were using the information given to them by Museum Hack. What techniques had been adopted to use as part of their programming at the CMOG, and could these methods be applicable to other museums and, furthermore, with their educators? When asking who might benefit from my work, I came to identify the audience or stakeholders who may be interested in the information uncovered. For other institutions looking to improve visitor engagement, increase ticket sales, or simply further the betterment of the educational field, I believe my research could assist them in program development. In the process of conceptualizing my research, it is important to identify that this inquiry falls into a classification within case study methodology. Defined as *intrinsic case study*, its undertaking is based on an outcome of understanding for the participant. This is contrary to an *instrumental case study* where an understanding is facilitated or insight is gained (Stake, 2003). This clarification helped confirm the purpose of my research.

Site Selections

The next step was formulating a base structure in which to build my research, also known as bounding the case. To create an in-depth, rich, and detailed report, parameters are necessary in order for the researcher to utilize their time efficiently, considering limiting factors such as

availability of dates and resources (Moore, Lapan, & Quartaroli, 2012). I encompassed my study within borders that enabled me to answer my central research questions without getting lost in other related topics. Instead of focusing on several museums and the impact Museum Hack had on them, I chose one, the CMOG to be in the spotlight. I participated in a general public tour given at the museum, and conducted formal interviews with two members of the education department. In order to gain an idea of the techniques used by Museum Hack, I could have participated in one of several tours they offer throughout the United States. However, I chose to focus on the tour they offer with the most frequency, the “Un-Highlights Tour,” given at the location in which they started their company, The MET. As both of these locations are within the State of New York, I felt the course of action for my research was highly achievable. With these selections and boundaries put in place, I was able to conduct my research effectively and efficiently.

By participating in museum tours I was able to gain a deeper understanding of the educational process involved in these tours. This is an essential aspect of my research and can only be accomplished through the action of participation in a tour at the museum. I chose to participate in basic and general tours that were not based on one specific subject. In this way, I was able to gain a general understanding of the museums’ collections, along with discovering what pieces were chosen by tour guides as part of the tour. With such an expansive collection owned by each museum, the process of planning and selecting artwork for each tour must have

been a daunting ordeal for the guides. By speaking with these tour guides in a casual environment, I was able to ask questions directed to them without the need of a formal interview.

At the CMoG, the general tour held every day at 11:00 am for walk-ins and people of all ages was titled, “Glass Through the Ages.” It consists of a one-hour tour, led by a docent, through the various areas of the museum, covering time periods focused on the history and relationships of glass and people. The descriptions listed in the museum literature gave no other information on the focus or subjects discussed during the tour. There was no additional cost for the museum tour, although there is a general admission price of \$19.50 for nonmembers. The directions on how and where to meet your tour guide were clear and easy, meeting in the admissions lobby besides the entrance to the galleries.

Comparatively, the tour conducted by Museum Hack at The MET was more detailed in its description, informing the visitor about what they should expect on the tour. This general tour is titled “Un-Highlights,” and is held every day at The MET at 11:00 am, with an additional time slot of 2:30 pm on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays. Pre-registration is required with payment, to be made online before the day of the tour. This tour’s price is \$59.00 for adult admission, which is significantly more expensive than The MET’s suggested general admission price of \$25.00. However, it is important to note that the Museum Hack ticket also includes admission to the museum. The Museum Hack website describes the tour as, “See The Metropolitan Museum of Art in a whole new light with our highly interactive, subversive, fun, non-traditional museum tour!,” which encourages visitors to forego the institution’s tours and join theirs instead. Each

tour is led by a member of the trained Museum Hack staff, lasting two hours in length, and has the possibility of covering many curatorial departments throughout the museum.

The notable difference seen between the tours held at these two museums is the organizer. At the CMoG, the museum's education department is in charge of the docent staff, adjusting tours as the institution requires. For The MET and Museum Hack, this tour is conducted by a separate company who has capitalized on The MET's unique situation¹. This difference in tours is explained more extensively later in the thesis. A comparison made between these two institutions' tours demonstrates varied results. The MET has a general tour that accepts walk-ins, and is included with the cost of admission. These hour-long guided tours start every fifteen minutes throughout the day beginning at 10:30 am and ending at 4:15 pm. The type of tour visitors receive is based on the selection of what the museum offers that day, such as the Museum Highlights tour, or Masterpieces of the Middle Ages tour. Each type of tour is offered for a one-hour block of time during the day, with some tours being repeated twice a day. Another option for visitors is audio guides, which are available for all visitors in ten languages and at a rental cost of \$5.00 a piece, with discounts given for certain groups. Although their audio/video collection contains over three thousand files concerning an array of subjects, this technology is not a substitute for a museum educator. For docent-led group tours, a visitor would need to have a group of ten people or more, and book at least three weeks in advance. Prices of docent led

¹ The MET was established within the borders of Central Park in 1870. Classified as public land belonging to the city of New York, the museum is essentially renting the property. In 1893, a state law declared that the public should be admitted for free for a set amount of days per week. This explains the museum's "suggested" admission prices. However, it should be noted that as of March 2018, this mandate has been altered and now applies only to New York State residents.

tours vary depending on the tour that is chosen, but prices range into the thousands of dollars. My reason for not focusing on The MET's institutional tours was not due to their lack of availability. To the contrary, as the museum has a number of options available to all areas of the public, but due to the current onslaught of attention and popularity being given to Museum Hack for its "renegade" tours, there exists a movement of change that is affecting how we define a museum tour, and this is what I wanted to study.

When registering for these tours, the process was quite simple. The CMOG required no sign up, but only a suggestion that I check to make sure there is a tour scheduled for the day of my arrival. This was similar to Museum Hack, as I checked their schedule regarding what tours were offered and at what time of day. Once I chose the tour that best fit my purposes and schedule, I confirmed my spot on the tour with a payment of \$49.00, which is the discounted student rate. Museum Hack quickly sent me an email with information about what to do on my arrival, as well as what the billing will look like on my credit card statement. There was also a QR code that would enable me to download my ticket to an app on my phone. The whole process was thorough, easy, and exciting as I anticipated my upcoming tour.

Data Collection

Originally from upstate New York, and spending many years in and around New York City, I felt at ease returning to the areas where I used to frequent in my youth. As it was nearing the Thanksgiving holidays around the time I conducted this research, my immediate family and I traveled to New York to see our extended family. During our stay there, I took my leave for a few

days to travel to New York City to conduct this investigation. A few days later, I then made a similar trip to Corning, New York to conduct the other portion of this research. The trips were familiar, but with a new purpose, as I researched the institutions I enjoyed so much. Besides the cold November weather, the trips were enjoyable, enlightening, and busy. Although each adventure possessed its own defining characteristics, both experiences were a pleasure as they gave me the opportunity to do what I love to do—visit the museum!

New York City

The whole process of getting to New York City is set up like a knight's quest, with a number of tasks to complete, to prove your worthiness in order to gain the coveted prize. The giant metroplex of New York City starts miles outside the city limits and simply driving there would be a rookie mistake. With my husband playing the role of my supportive traveling companion, we started our journey at 7:00 am. Kissing our daughter goodbye, and leaving my parents' house with coffee in hand, we set out to find the entrance to the New York State Thruway. Driving through rolling hills, showcasing the remnants of autumn foliage, we traveled for more than two hours to the Poughkeepsie train station, only to find that we missed our train. An hour and a slice of pizza later, we finally boarded the Metro North train.

Settling into our blue and red naugahyde upholstered seats, we were granted stunning views of the Hudson River as we traveled south. Approaching the city, the atmosphere felt thicker and heavier, but neither smog or fog would damper my excitement to be back in the city that never sleeps. Almost two hours later, we stepped off the train into Grand Central Station.

The cacophony of commuters and workers is almost deafening compared to the white noise made by the clicks and clanks from the train. We jumped right in, as a New Yorker would, joining the streams of people focused on arriving at their next destination. We navigated the crowd, making our way to the exit. As soon as I opened that door, I was immediately hit with cold icy wind, a result of the buildings creating wind tunnels on all New York streets. It was about a four to five block walk to the hotel, dodging the throngs of people jostling one another on the streets.

An Ironic Twist

The morning started like any normal day, but the added excitement of my upcoming Museum Hack tour had been at the forefront of my thoughts. Stepping outside the hotel to face the cold was less shocking than it was the day before, for I was prepared and had worn my winter clothes and an extra pair of socks. Feeling confident, I stepped onto 5th Avenue and assimilated with the flow of New York sidewalk traffic. Keeping my gaze straight and focused, and ignoring all those around me, I wove my way past the delivery carts, the tourists, and crossed the side streets with a fleeting caution to cars whizzing past. There is a trick to walking on New York City streets, and recollection of this skill was returning, falling more into place with each stride. As I considered how the city can make you feel alone, while simultaneously being a part of a community, I wondered who I was going to meet that day. With the prospect of anyone being on my Museum Hack tour, the possibilities were endless. This idea made me anxious and thrilled because the experience is unknown to some extent, but also assuring as we were all going to be

there for one purpose—to visit and explore The MET through the eyes and theatrics of Museum Hack.

Looking at my watch, I decided it was better to take an UBER to the The MET and not risk being late, than taking the subway and fighting the morning traffic. During that twenty minute ride, I checked emails on my phone, and was pleasantly surprised to see one from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) office at The University of Texas at Austin (UT). My proposal for conducting this research was, at the time, still under review and I had been awaiting a reply for over a month. The email contained a waiver of IRB approval, thus meaning my research could officially begin. Overjoyed by this ironic twist of luck, I felt positive that not only was this going to be a good day for research, but that it was going to be a tour I would never forget.

Introduction to Museum Hack

Earlier that week, Museum Hack had sent me a reminder email with pertinent information on the logistics of my tour, and a downloadable ticket I could place on my smart phone. With this high-tech admission ticket in hand I climbed the numerous stairs of The MET and joined the shuffling line of people being inspected by security officers. Entering the Great Hall, I made my way to the long line at the coat check counter. Looking around, the entrance was filled with people making their way to the many areas of the museum. It was not unlike Grand Central terminal however, minus the luggage. The foyer's ceiling was expansive and echoed the dissonance that occurred within. With these hundreds of people entering the building, bundled with thick coats and jackets, there is no doubt why the The MET has two large and busy coat

checks. The room was manned by three personnel, all operating with the authority of a Transportation Security Administration agent but, arguably, with a softer disposition. Once my items had been given their tags and the corresponding identifier to me, I took a few steps to the large and imposing statue of Amenemhat II, who was seemingly positioned in front of the entrance to the Egyptian wing, appearing to be the guardian of antiquities.

I received a text message on my phone from an unknown number. The message revealed a photo of a man holding up a paper sign with the words, Museum Hack, and in the background was the statue of Amenemhat II. It read, “Hey, this is you[r] Museum Hack tour guide. When you get upstairs and through security look to the right” (personal communication, November 22, 2017). I realized that my tour guide was only a few steps away, but due to the large number of people in the Grand Hall, it was hard to distinguish one tour group from another. Now, with the photo as my lead, it was easy to find my group. Gathered in the exact spot where the photo was taken were five people and my tour guide. I introduced myself to the tour guide, Kevin, and was greeted with an enthusiastic welcome. He was apologetic for not having the Museum Hack name tags to aid us, and made introductions all around, allowing us to become acquainted with our fellow tour participants: John, Laura, Dorothy, Lisa, and lastly Monisha, who was introduced as a Museum Hack trainee from the Getty Museum in Los Angeles.

The Tour Experience

As we began the tour we were informed there would be two more participants joining us in a few minutes. Kevin asked the group if anyone had previously been to the The MET, and

most everyone raised their hand. Yet, when asked who had been on a Museum Hack tour, besides Monisha, I was the alone in this regard. Kevin went on to talk about the greatness that is The MET, and the type of tour on which we were about to embark. Introducing the values of the company he represented, Kevin proudly stated the slogan of Museum Hack, “Museums Are Fucking Awesome.”² Giving evidence to this claim, he expressed the large amount of time he had devoted to researching the objects in the museum. His findings revealed the discovery of countless stories and truths, and stated they were typically ones the museum did not want the public to know. Describing the information contained in his arsenal he explained, “The stories I know are really funny, they’re really weird, they’re super awkward,” followed by a declaration that we were going to go fast, play games, win prizes, and have a good time. Adding an opt out for anyone who would like to decline the invitation, with a promise of a full refund.

With no one taking his offer, he described the next course of action that has become a keystone of the Museum Hack experience. Asking for everyone to put their hands in the middle, a similar formation to the team hand-stack often seen as a symbol of camaraderie or solidarity, he gave specific instructions concerning the level of fervor in which to express our cheer. “On the count of three, we’re going to go down on U, up on Z, volume level three out of ten because I don’t want to scare the guards. We’re going to do energy level like, six out of ten, alright? ’Cause Lisa’s, at like, at a two. I want to bring it up to a six, and then we’ll be at a ten by the end of it. Sound good?” At this point, before we were to begin the cheer, Kevin gave a very important

² Being a direct quote, the curse word was used as written. However, in Museum Hack publications and other printed material, the following format is used: Museums Are F***king Awesome

piece of information to the group. Unapologetically, he stated that he walked like a New Yorker and following the direction of his pointed hand, he gave the route of his intended travel. Describing what this meant in the crowded museum, he flatly explained he was going to go fast and he was going to bump into people, but neither circumstance would slow his pace. We were expected to keep up, as he jokingly hinted he didn't care if we were lost from the group. This happened to not be the case, as he made sure every tour member was present and accounted for at each stop during the tour. At his command, Kevin initiated the cheer, reiterating the instructions so quickly they were almost unintelligible, and with everyone in unison, we quickly asserted the cry, "Muuuuu-Zeeeeee-UM," and Kevin said, "Let's go!" to which we all formed a line, and with focused tenacity we followed our leader.

A Little History of The MET



Figure 1. *Saint James the Greater*, circa 1450-1475

Leading us into the hall of medieval art, Kevin paused in front of a stone statue of *Saint James the Greater*. The statue was significantly worn and damaged in most areas, however the image of a seashell on his hat was plainly recognizable. Drawing attention to the space we occupied, fewer people were present than in The Great Hall, making the room significantly quieter and thus easier for Kevin to welcome us again to The MET. It was here, he gave a better detailed introduction of the history of the museum, including some lesser known facts that one would not find on the museum's website or in a history book. Adding his own opinion and light-hearted humor to the lecture, he portrayed a sense of being sincere and honest with the group.

This initiated bouts of laughter, exclamations of wonder, and murmurs of intrigue that continued on for the entirety of the tour.

He painted a picture of The MET in a favorable light, describing their humble beginnings and the difficulties they endured. However, instead of listing facts, Kevin joked and posed questions, all the while filling us in with stories of the founding members, the collections, the building, the typical museum visitor, and more. For example, he drew our attention to the very plain and unadorned ceiling above, and asked the question, “If this were your house, what would you notice?” The immediate reply from the group was, “all the cracks.” Satisfied with the correct answer and laughing, Kevin highlighted the multiple cracks and evidence of water damage that covered the ceiling and explained their presence. The museum’s first building was considered universally unappealing, constructed quickly and poorly resulting in a leaking roof. Comically, there are accounts told from the original directors that when it rained they had to run around the museum and cover the artwork with tarps. Instead of fixing their mistakes, they erected another building in front of it, which is the one we all know today.

In a candid-style confession, Kevin disclosed a vital piece of information that exists at the core of Museum Hack tours. He illustrated the three possible situations for a visitor at The MET, which were, (a) they become intimidated by the sheer size of the place and they limit themselves to one section of the museum; (b) they try to see everything in the museum, which leads to an overload of visual stimulation and a veritable information dump, which can be the equivalent of seeing nothing; or (c) they consider everything a masterpiece and ignore the reality of the object.

Elaborating on this last point, Kevin donned a snobbish tone and pointed to the seashell adorned statue of Saint James next to us, mockingly interpreting its beauty as a piece derived from *The Pirates of the Caribbean* movie. Laughter emitted from the crowd, and he explained there are pieces in the museum that are masterpieces, and others which some people would consider garbage, such as the three thousand year old raisins in the Egyptian wing. But what is most fascinating are the artworks they lie in between the two ends of the spectrum. Affirming his opinion, the best pieces in the museum are the ones that give no clues to their purpose, except when explained, and thereupon the object becomes more than what it appears. Kevin concluded that it was these types of work that he was going to show us.

A German Drinking Game



Figure 2. *Diana and the Stag* by Joachim Friess, circa 1620

Standing next to an incredible ornate and gilded object, Kevin asked if any of us knew what this object was or what it was used for. With only guesses to contribute, no one could provide the correct answer. Rather than reveal the answer outright, he took another approach. Kevin started to tell a story and singled out John, the most senior man on the tour, to play the part of a 1600s German baron. In the story John is hosting a lavish party at his home, when the festivities soon take a downward turn and everyone starts to leave. John is reluctant to let the party end, and calls everyone back while he unveils the piece we see here. Kevin interjects to inform the group of the mythological story of Diana and Actaeon, which had we been present in

1600s Germany would be a well known and illustrated tale. He asked John a hypothetical question that places him stumbling upon a golden, naked goddess bathing in a pond, and asks what is his reaction, implying the use of careful consideration regarding the present company of five women. John replies that he would ask the beauty to grant him immortality. This response issues Kevin supplying the correct answer, and better choice, of diverting your gaze and leaving the area as quickly as possible. Just like the ill-fated Actaeon, the alternative would result in the goddess turning John into a stag and forcing him to run the grounds for multiple days until he is at the point of exhaustion, at which time his own hunting dogs would devour him.

Bringing us back to the party, Kevin proceeds to inform us of John the Baron's next course of action. Removing the head of the stag, John would find a hollow cavity in which to pour in his favorite alcoholic drink, followed by the reveal of a key in which to wind the instrument, and upon doing so, the object would spring to life. At this point, Kevin displayed a YouTube video on his phone of the automaton in action. Continuing, he explains the piece would follow a five pointed star pattern, stopping at each guest at the table, whereupon they would be required to drink the entirety of its contents, replenish, wind the machine, and begin the process again. This story of a 1600s German drinking game impressed the group, producing exclamations of amazement and wonder. With the group still in awe, Kevin solidified his earlier statement that these are the kinds of stories he was going to present on the tour and sometimes the most fascinating thing about a work can be how old it is, what it is worth, or even who used to own it. In the case of *Diana and the Stag*, its previous owner was J.P. Morgan, who was well

known for his utilization of drunken coercion, and Kevin posed the question, “Wouldn’t it be amazing to think that this automaton had something to do with the building of the American railroad system?” With this statement still being pondered, Kevin led us to our next piece on the tour.

The Golden Shower

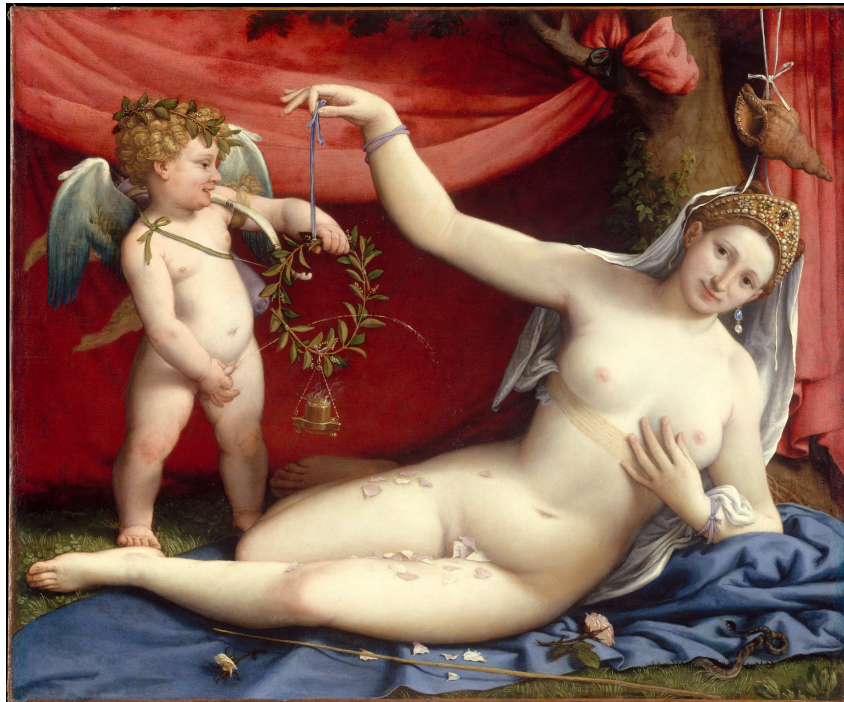


Figure 3. *Venus and Cupid* by Lorenzo Lotto, circa 1520

Climbing the steps to the European Paintings Wing of the museum, Kevin informed us there are seventeen curatorial departments within The MET, essentially meaning there are seventeen different museums within this one building. He described this as being the stuffiest, but not in reference to the art. He blames this feeling on the cantankerous guards, and warns that they might “yell” if you get too close to any of the paintings, but he assures us it is alright,

because it happens to him all the time. Basically telling the group to not touch anything, Kevin relays the number one rule of the art museum while at the same time, being satirical. As we walk through the galleries, he adds a small theater element to our journey. He asks the group to give over-embellished “oohs” and “ahhh” at each artwork he points out. It may seem like a silly task, but the small game produces a playful energy within the group as each person takes a conscious look at their surroundings.

We reach our next piece when our missing tour participants, Frank and Peggy, join the group. Now, with our group consisting of eight participants, we gaze upon the work before us, as stifled giggles are emitted from the small crowd. The painting is of a nude woman lounging on a blue cloth, while holding up a wreath in her right hand. There stands a naked, winged boy next to her, with a quiver of arrows and bow upon his shoulder. He is Cupid, and the woman is Venus. The reason why the group is producing a humorous reaction is due to the portrayal of Cupid urinating through the dangling wreath, and onto Venus’ abdomen. Jokingly, Kevin offers a fictitious title of the artwork, Golden Shower, to a hearty response of laughter. Becoming more austere, he illustrates a perspective the common Renaissance person might have when they observed this painting. If they were unable to read a book, they would most likely be able to read a painting due to the repeated use of symbolism contained within the art.

Rather than list the symbolic items in the piece, Kevin suggests a game. He challenges us to call out items we see, and he would explain their symbolic significance. Ignoring the wreath and urination for the time being, the game began. As each participant named items such as the

conch shell, the earring, and the snake, Kevin has an answer for each one, and slowly the puzzle of this painting's purpose is revealed. First, the young boy with white wings, a bow, and arrows are the hallmark traits of the god of desire, Cupid. The conch shell tells us this is Venus, the goddess of love and beauty, well-known for being birthed from the sea in ancient mythology. In addition, the rose petals that adorn the ground also represent love. The singular bejeweled earring hints at an erotic nature, allowing the viewer to understand that she is without its match, inferring a state of undress possible before or after the deed. Educating us more on this subject, Kevin adds a useful piece of information which can be implied at a later date. When looking at other Renaissance work, if a woman is portrayed wearing one item that usually comes in a pair, such as an earring, a glove, or a shoe, the artist is insinuating the act of sex. Other objects with significant symbolic meanings are her crown, the wrinkled blue cloth, and the knotted ribbons around her wrists, all indicating her role as the bride. The small snake in the grass is placed in conjunction with a stick, indicating her ability to beat off the temptation that occurs during the length of marriage.

Even though the given symbols may allude to a union in marriage, this is not the focus of the artwork. Kevin explains the main purpose of this painting centers upon the small wreath and the successfully aimed urination. The liquid passing through the circle is denoting fertility and, hence, the reason for its creation. Although fertility objects, rituals, and art have a place in our history for thousands of years, Kevin brings this art piece into perspective by placing the viewer in the shoes of the typical Renaissance newlywed. He adds a personal connection to the story by

divulging his own upcoming nuptials next year. With exclamations of congratulations issued, he asked Peggy to imagine herself as a bride-to-be, and him as an invited guest to her wedding. In his acting role, he explains to the group he must find a suitable gift to present to the bride on her wedding day. He finds the artist, Lorenzo Lotto, and commissions this fertility painting. Such a work could take months to complete, but Lotto has prepared several identical paintings, all complete, apart from the missing face of the woman. Kevin would describe Peggy's likeness to Lotto, who subsequently would paint her face onto the body of Venus. Resuming the role of his character, Kevin presents this painting to Peggy, the newlywed bride, and asks her if she likes it. She is unaware of the correct answer and with hesitation, gives a response of affirmation. Kevin gives her assurance of her correct answer, and continues questioning the chosen placement of the piece within her dwelling. Peggy guesses, suggesting she put it in her bedroom, at which Kevin applauds her correct answer again. With emanating laughter from the group, Kevin offers a new piece of information he calls Renaissance Science, and encourages us to research the fact. On the night of the couple's union, the beauty of the painting was believed to enter the man's eyes, travel through his body and be released into the woman. This painting was the Renaissance equivalent of in vitro fertilization for beautiful children, and the ultimate good luck charm.

Changing directions, Kevin turns towards me and remarks that there are those of us who know art and have been taught how to look for symbolism within a painting. I had previously mentioned that I was a studying art education at UT, and he took this opportunity to point out that I might be one of these "art people." Although I may know more about art than the average

person, he was going to share something that I may not know, and not taught in school. He asked me to imagine that I was offended by this painting, and questioned what would my reaction be at this exact moment. I said that I would simply walk away from the piece. He affirmed my level headed action and suggested it was not the case for some people in the past, and they sometimes felt the need to censor the artwork. He invited the group to take a few steps closer to the piece, and instructed us to look at the area surrounding Cupid's abdomen, pointing out the discoloration. Kevin disclosed that when The MET acquired the painting, Cupid was holding a large bouquet of flowers. When the painting was x-rayed, a procedure done for many of the works in the museum, the truth was certainly surprising. This led to the introduction of Kevin's theory, "people have been people for as long as there have been people," meaning no matter the time or the person, human reasoning and action have been at times ill-based and misplaced. Thereupon he put forward the question to consider, "Are we more sophisticated now?"

Forty-five Million Dollars



Figure 4. *Madonna and Child* by Duccio di Buoninsegna, circa 1290-1300

Only three galleries away, we take the short walk to the next stop along the tour. We are standing in the center of a room with medieval paintings, but Kevin has not drawn our attention to any particular piece. He begins the conversation speaking to Frank, and asks if he saw a beautiful painting in the museum, what is the first thing that comes to his mind. Frank ponders the question and answers he would be curious to know how much it costs. Kevin is pleasantly surprised by the answer and high-fives Frank for giving a response that fits perfectly with the topic of his intended discussion. “I wonder how expensive that is,” is a common question for many visitors to the museum. However, Kevin takes the query a bit further and asks instead, “What causes something to have value?” His interpretation is based on what a person is willing

to pay, and time, material, or skill do not have the same effect on the work's monetary value. Sharing his thought process with the group, he has broached this topic in relation to the painting housed within the gallery where we stand. To date, The MET has paid the most money to acquire this artwork, and happens to be more than double the cost of any other of the two million pieces in the museum. Kevin starts a new game, and gives thirty seconds for each of us to go stand next to the artwork we think is the aforementioned piece. At the end of the allotted time, Kevin tells us to stand next to our choice and briefly share with the group the reasoning for our choice. Four participants chose pieces based on aesthetics, placement within the room, application of gold leaf, and other like qualities. However, none of these selections were correct. I was last to share my choice, for I was already aware of the painting and its outrageous price tag, hence giving away the answer.

As we all gathered around "The Duccio" as it was informally called, Kevin asked us all to "appreciate it," playfully suggesting a conscious effort to try and understand its significance. Furthermore, in order to fully comprehend the action of the museum, it should be known that The MET is an encyclopedic museum, meaning their goal is not to acquire "the best art from the best artists," but all the artworks from all the time frames. Until they had obtained this piece, they were missing a specific bridge from the Middle Ages to the early Renaissance, and this painting helped secure that transition. Taking a break from the story of the acquisition of the piece, Kevin shared his personal thoughts, proclaiming himself, "not the biggest fan of art

history,” yet stressing the importance of learning a little about these two areas of art history in order to better understand the magnitude of “The Duccio.”

As seen throughout art history, though especially prevalent in the Middle Ages, are the figures of the Madonna and child. Kevin elaborated on these two influential subjects, and indicated three major characteristics in their depiction during medieval times. First, Madonna was always judging you for your sins, and is often seen with a stern expression on her face. Second was the appearance of the baby, shown with similar features as a grown man and often sitting upright. This was credited to the teaching that Jesus was all-knowing and in perfect form, thus was painted as a grown and complete man rather than a simple infant. The third and most important characteristic was the situating of the figures is ambiguous. Backgrounds and surroundings were usually solid blocks of gold, heavens, or other ethereal settings, and with no concrete evidence to tie them to a place known to the viewer. These general guidelines of religious art appear to be falling out a favor in the early Renaissance, as demonstrated in Duccio’s painting.

In an effort to identify the differences in “The Duccio,” compared to the typical medieval religious art, Kevin asks the group what we notice about this piece that interferes with the guidelines he just described. The relationship between the Madonna and the baby Jesus is at the forefront, with her looking down at him with a seemingly loving gaze. The other strong variation in the painting is the child, with his arm up-stretched at his mother’s face, doing an act very typical of a baby or an infant. The body of the child is elongated based on the intended placement

of the painting on the wall, being above eye level of the average person. Duccio had the foresight to adjust the painting based on his understanding of perception. With consideration to those in the group with poor knees, Kevin invites us to kneel in front of the painting to gain a better view from its intended angle. With everyone in position, he introduces the most important aspect of the artwork, and draws our attention to the red and white structure directly above the frame, posing the question, “What is it?” Answers of railing, banister, and balcony are called out, and Kevin confirms the guesses are correct. What is surprising about this detail, other than its play of perspective, is scholars can deduce its location by its architecture and place it in the town of Siena, Italy. This aspect of reality combined with religious figures was amazing to people of the time.

Kevin continues with his story, progressing to the series of events that ended with the painting in The MET’s possession. The rumors and speculation of its discovery combined with known facts about the work, made for an intriguing narrative. The story starts with two women in Switzerland who were cleaning out a closet and came across the painting. Thinking that the frame might be valuable, they brought it to an auction house to be appraised. Kevin adds some theatrics as he tries to impersonate the reaction made by the appraisers when they saw the piece. Claiming the following is a quote, he exclaims, “Gaaaahhhhaaaaaamm!” Laughter erupts, and he continues his charade by trying to convince us it is an actual quote, in addition to asking to spell it out. Returning to his story, Kevin reveals the auction house brought the painting to the director of European paintings at the museum, whom then brought it to the attention of The MET’s

director in 2003, Philippe de Montebello. Expressively affirming that he did not make this up, Kevin quoted de Montebello as saying, “Well, we simply must have it.” Subsequently asserting it was a terrible negotiating technique by basically pronouncing that they will do anything to acquire it. Kevin builds up to the final purchase price of forty-five million dollars, and presents it as The MET’s version of their *Mona Lisa*. Compared to the throngs of people who gather elbow to elbow to see “da Vinci’s lady” every day at The Louvre in Paris, the noticeable lack of people in the gallery where we stood was certainly not the intended outcome.

Kevin goes on paraphrasing this elaborate story with simple, to-the-point laymen terminology. For example, in 2004 *The New Yorker* magazine inspected *Madonna and Child*, and were unimpressed with the painting, publishing their findings. Yet he sums up this occurrence by saying, “They looked at it, and were like, ‘eh,’ and left. The headline in *The New Yorker* the next day was something like, ‘I can’t believe the MET paid forty-five million dollars’ in the article, insinuated it was a fake Duccio.” The story continued that The MET had to re-authenticate it for another three million dollars, giving this object validity with a monetary value of one million dollars per square inch. Immediately the group started asking questions and inquiring into the finer details, successfully engaging with the art. Kevin adds another level to their thought processes and asks, “Is it worth it?” This is met with a mix of equivocation from the group, unsure of their answer to the question.

Kevin adds another element, rounding out the whole story with a touching portrayal of a young, pregnant woman in the 1300s, coming to light candles under the image of the Madonna,

praying for a safe childbirth. Kevin conveys the truth that in this time, the idea of birth was a terrifying and potentially deadly ordeal, aligning it to the violence of the popular HBO series, *Game of Thrones*. The candle burnout is still visible on the frame of the painting, making this a pivotable moment for this woman as she was not being judged for her sins. Kevin then asks the group, “Does that change your mind?” For besides the value of what a person is willing to pay for something, the second most important thing that causes value of a piece is the story behind it, and that is why we are here today.

Kevin’s Birthday Party Challenge, Part I

Kevin stops us on our way out of the European Galleries. Making clear his intent of not wanting to “talk to you guys this whole time,” he proposes that we play a game. Sharing the fact it was his birthday last week, he begins by asking everyone to pull out their cell phones and stating the rules of photography in the museum, which prohibits the use of flash. He asks that from this point on, until the end of the tour, it is our task to take a picture of anything in the museum that we would see fit to bring to his birthday party. Learning more about him on the tour will add to the game as we strive to pick an item that fits his character. At end of the tour, we will be asked to present this person, place, or thing to him and the group. The person with the most creative idea will win a prize. He clarifies that the award is a tactile object to take home, and not an intangible prize like a “free high-five.” Asking for an acceptance of the challenge, and being met with enthusiastic confirmation, we continue the tour.

Goldfinger



Figure 5. *Diana* by Augustus Saint-Gaudens, 1892-1893

Walking through the galleries on our way to the next stop, Kevin makes an effort to learn more about the tour participants. He makes small talk, asks questions, gives responses, and is genuinely friendly, open, and inviting. We push our way through two large glass doors to find ourselves in the American Wing, standing on a balcony terrace overlooking a grand courtyard. The opposite wall consists of a magnificent building facade of stone with doric columns, triangular pediments, and multiple sash windows. The courtyard contains statues, fanciful lampposts, and even a church pulpit. Kevin begins to tell us about the architecture, the glass ceiling, and the facade of the First National Branch Bank. The area where we are standing was

originally part of the outdoors, and in the 1970s a man named Charles Engelhard paid for The MET to become one cohesive building, engulfed in brick and glass.

His name may not be familiar to us, but we might know of him. Kevin asks if anyone can name a specific *James Bond* villain. Lisa holds up her finger and gives the answer, Goldfinger. Kevin cheers and continues with the story of how Engelhard was the real life inspiration for the character penned by James Bond author, Ian Fleming. He states the two men were friends, but the rumor was Fleming thought Engelhard was “a rich asshole,” and subsequently made him the villain who dips women in gold and kills them. Kevin includes this piece of trivia to address The MET’s very small sense of humor, which is subtly present in this room. The sculpture which stands in the center of the courtyard is a tall, naked, golden woman. It is Diana, the goddess of the hunt. Kevin quickly calls out to John to avert his eyes, drawing upon our earlier conversation at *Diana and the Stag*. Laughter once again ensues, and we follow Kevin along the balcony terrace and into the American Galleries.

Hands are Hard to Draw



Figure 6. *Tench Francis* by Robert Feke, 1746

We stop in a gallery with portraits from the 1770s, and Kevin begins to tell us some of the history about the creation of the rooms and the artwork housed within. He begins to tell a story of the failed European painters that came to America in hopes of becoming successful in the new world. The most noticeable theme throughout the portraiture galleries is the poor rendition of the human figure. Kevin points to a few artworks giving them names in simplistic and comical terms, such as “one-shoulder lady” and “big head, hands are hard to draw guy.” He then directs our attention to a painting of a man in a brown coat and a powdered wig. It appears to be a traditional portrait, with no prominent defining details. However, Kevin begs us to take a closer

look and asks us what is wrong with this painting. Inspecting the painting with a dedicated focus, I notice his right hand is deformed. I share my discovery with the group and am met with praise from Kevin for finding the answer. He goes on to tell the group how he completed extensive research on this man, named Tench Francis, in attempt to discover if he actually had only four fingers on his right hand. His findings produced a medical history of a very healthy individual with no deformities or disfiguring. Thus, we can deduce from this artwork that the painter was unskilled in rendering hands and, as Kevin plainly put, “made a whoopsie-daisy,” and only painted four of the five fingers. He then “gave up” on the left hand, and instead painted it disappearing into the interior of his coat. Summing up the caliber of artwork surrounding us, Kevin concludes with a slightly sarcastic comment, “Welcome to the American Wing.”

Five Kids, One Face



Figure 7. *Mrs. Noah Smith and Her Children* by Ralph Earl, 1798

At this point in the tour, Kevin reiterates to the group his truthfulness concerning the information he delivers, no matter how far-fetched it may seem. Museum Hack's policy is to not mislead or misinform its customers, and on many occasions has been fact-checked by other organizations. The end result proved Museum Hack to be genuine and factual in their material. Kevin explains his statement of disclosure due to the fact that most tour participants suspect misguidance in the information that he is about to say. Kevin stresses that we should pay attention to the way he presents the material. For example, he uses the introductory phrase, "in my opinion..." when commenting on a specific piece. He does this when he stands in front of a

painting of a woman with her five children. The children range in age from infant to young adult, and the representations of their faces are irregular and disproportioned. Kevin gives his opinion that early American art is poor quality portraiture art, and he informs us of the historical fact that only the very rich could afford portraits because of their high cost. One of the ways artists were able to charge their clients was per detail, hence the more details that are required, the more expensive the work becomes. On the other hand, if the client wanted to cut down on the cost of the artwork, they would have ask the artist to take “a shortcut.” In this case, the woman is painted in fine detail, however her children would have been painted to resemble her to avoid extra sitting fees for each child. Therefore, the painting has six people whom all have similar faces, despite their obvious age ranges. Thus, in a short amount of time, we were able to make a connection to this painting, as well as other similar works, by learning a simple economic fact of American life at the time. Not only is it understandable, but relatable.

Washington's Cherries



Figure 8. *Washington Crossing the Delaware* by Emanuel Leutze, 1851

Kevin continues with some lessons on early American history by bringing us to the very well known painting of *Washington Crossing the Delaware*. This work holds an imposing and larger than life presence within the gallery. We all stand in front of it, eyeing as many details as we can, while Kevin sets the scene for the story he is about to tell. He gives background information about the American Revolution, the sequence of events, the rules of war, and even adds the voice of a Hessian soldier, meant to lighten the tone of the history lesson. Stating that the painting is one of his favorites, he is enthusiastic, passionate, and genuine as he begins to share his knowledge concerning this very epic piece. He continues to tell some facts that are

generally not known about the piece, such as, it was painted by a German artist seventy years after the American Revolution, and contains several historical inaccuracies. The group listens intently and all eyes glance back and forth from the painting to Kevin; there is no need for the participants to look about the room for their attention is focused on our guide while he gives us all an alternative look at our nation's history.

While introducing new information, Kevin ties each topic to the corresponding area depicted in the painting. For example, for the multitudinous pieces of ice floating on the water, said to be the Delaware River, he describes the scene is in actuality a more factual representation of the Reine River in Germany. Adding to this, he lists the geographical and environmental qualities of the area to further support his claims. After discounting the portrayal of information by the artist, he brings out his smart phone and introduces a new artwork done by another artist, which claims to be a more accurate representation of the historical event. We gather around the phone, in close proximity to each other, eager to see, experience, and learn. I compare the two pieces, amazed by the vast differences in the work. The painting displayed on the phone is dark and rough, missing the grandeur of the piece before us.

Despite the long list of inaccuracies in the artwork, Kevin commends the artist on his accurate portrayal of George Washington, the central figure and focus of the piece. Kevin tells a story of the large amount of research Emanuel Leutze conducted before attempting to paint America's first president. Not wanting to insult the man, nor the country, Leutze was particular about what and how the uniform of Washington was depicted. Continuing with this line of

narrative, Kevin reminds us that this painting is usually chosen to grace the covers of most schools' American history textbooks. However, there is one detail from the artwork that is generally removed before it goes to print, and can we guess what this thing might be? Not wanting to give away the answer so soon, he waits for our guesses and responses. Lisa speaks up, sheepishly referencing the region of Washington's crotch. Laying upon his right leg, near his groin, are two small red circles peeping out from under his coat. Kevin quickly makes the situation humorous and removes any embarrassment by cracking a joke, and we all laugh in unison. Affirming Lisa's correct answer, Kevin moves on to explain what those two small objects might be. At this point we get another history lesson, but made lively by the addition of a suggested narrative involving a textbook printer from Texas who deduced that the artist was being insulting by painting small cherries on Washington's crotch, henceforth he quickly removed them from the textbook. In actuality, the truth is much more mundane. They were, in fact, part of Washington's watch fob—a common piece of utilitarian jewelry at the time. To add another element to the story, Kevin produces an image on his phone of a historically accurate watch fob owned by George Washington. Adding a depicted history to an actual historical object, Kevin has blended the two together in an entertaining and informative manner.

Quickly, Kevin asks which of us is the most confident. There is silence; we are confused by what is about to happen. He calls on Lisa and directs her to the front of the painting, telling her exactly where and how to stand. At this point I recognize the gallery game he is setting up, the *tableau vivant*, and one by one we follow his instructions. Pointing to certain characters in

the artwork, Kevin tells us to mimic their body positions and facial expressions to the best of our ability. Soon, we are all pretending to be a part of the painting and Kevin takes a picture of it all, commenting on how great a job we are doing. Afterwards, there is laughter and chatter, followed by more interesting facts as we move on to the next gallery.

Visible Storage

We descend a narrow staircase leading to a part of the museum I had never seen before. We turn a corner to find ourselves in some sort of storage area, with multiple rows of glass cases filled with various types of artifacts. The collection seems massive and the room feels like a maze, one that you can become easily lost in. Kevin gathers us in a circle, and repeating a question asked earlier, he calls upon the group to raise their hand if they have been to the museum before. More than half the group raises our hands. Keeping them raised, he then asks who has been in this area of the museum. The entire group puts down their hands. Right away we are aware that we have reached a very special and often unseen area of the museum. Kevin points out the location and significance of the room, which is the mezzanine of The American Wing. Keeping with the theme of the importance of American art, Kevin explains that The MET likes to showcase the large collection of American art they own because they are the first museum to have such a dedicated space. Hence, this place we are standing in is called visible storage. To keep us from getting lost, Kevin lays out the floor plan and directs us to the location of types of artworks, such as statues, painting, and furniture. He tells us that we are going to play a game called “burn it or steal it.” Telling us to pull out our smart phones, Kevin gives the

instructions to start the game. We are to go to one of the areas previously mentioned to find and photograph an object we would either burn or steal. He elaborates that you should find a work that is so hideous and seemingly worthless that you would want to burn it, or find an object that is so beautiful that you would be unable to live without it, therefore you would steal it. He gives three minutes to find our piece and tells us to reconvene at this location.



Figure 9. *Unveiling Dawn* by Chester Beach, 1913

Those who came together to the tour walk off in pairs. Meanwhile, I go off on my own to explore the treasures held in this room. I find a gorgeous sculpture, made from flawless white marble standing about two feet tall, portraying an upward stretching female nude. I take a photograph of the piece, and then take another of the exhibit label so I may look up the piece at a

later date. The artwork is untitled *Unveiling Dawn*, and the sculptor is Chester Beach. I make my way back to the meeting point and find about half of the group already there. They are chatting and talking while they wait for all the members to return. They circle a small blue table, and on it are eight small instant photographs lying face down. No one is touching them or even mentions them, expecting their purpose soon to be revealed. Upon the arrival of our last tour participant, Kevin begins to explain the second part of the game. With our phones in our hands, we listen intently as Kevin explains the next step. One at a time, we have to show the photograph we took to the person sitting opposite to us. They have to guess whether the object is one we would choose to burn or to steal. Meanwhile, the rest of the group can play along silently. If the person guesses the answer correct, they get to take one of the instant photographs from the table. One by one, we go around our circle sharing and guessing at the purposed intention of an individual with their chosen object. Some of the photographed objects were a top hat, a tea cup, a bust of a man with an animated expression, and a painting of a mother and child. Almost everyone chose an object they would steal, although there was one who chose an object to burn. In addition, there were many incorrect guesses, thus they were not able to claim a prize. At the end of the game, Kevin congratulated us for playing so well and declared that everyone gets a prize, hence they could gather their photograph from the table. Each instant photograph was exactly the same, with its dimensions about two by three and a half inches, reading “Fujifil Instax” on the back. The image was our *tableau vivant* rendition of *Washington Crossing the Delaware*. The painting was

in full view, and we were all lined up with our particular character, mimicking their pose in our best efforts. Everyone was thrilled to have such a memento and expressed their thanks to Kevin.



Figure 10. *Cain* by J. Stanley Connor, by 1883

Moving on, as we exit visible storage we pass by the sculptural bust previously photographed. The expression carved into this piece of marble is exquisitely crafted and perplexing as to the nature of its origin. Later through the online databases of The MET, I learned that the piece is titled *Cain* and was sculpted by J. Stanley Connor. Kevin decides to stop and talk about it for just a minute or two. We discuss what kind of emotion it portrays to each of us, and what about the piece is either aesthetically pleasing or displeasing. At the end of our brief conversation, Kevin decides to give us another memento. Individually, we stand in front of the

artwork and try our best to reproduce the expression of the man in marble while he takes our photograph with our own camera. I try to simulate the perplexed and shocked face of the man, thinking of a situation that would raise those feelings inside, and thus produce the outward expression. As silly as I might have felt in the moment, I am glad to have this photograph today. It is a humorous keepsake that holds a memorable story of my Museum Hack experience at The MET.

The Flying Dutchman

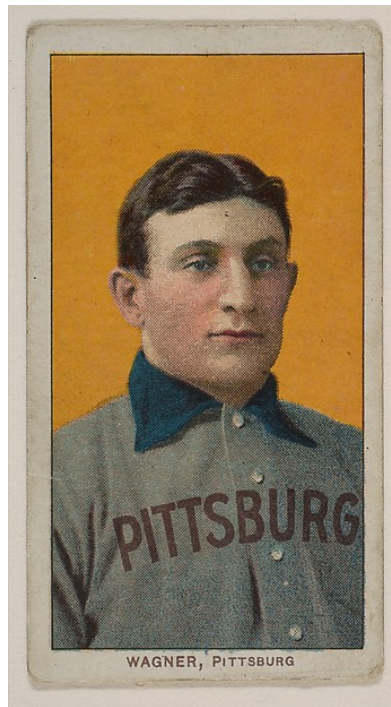


Figure 11. *Honus Wagner*, Pittsburgh, National League, from the White Border series (T206) for the American Tobacco Company, 1909-1911

We are about to leave the visible storage area when Kevin stops us just short of the doorway. We cannot see the contents of the adjacent gallery nor are we aware what subject we are going to focus on next. Kevin poses a question by reciting a list of countries, and asks what they all have in common. These eleven countries are so vastly different in geography and culture that the group, including myself, is quietly confused. Giving us a hint, he asks what sport do they all play. Soccer is the first guess, followed by a few more, yet all are incorrect. One tour participant calls out “baseball,” and Kevin declares it the correct answer as he exclaims with

enthusiasm, “BASEBALL! Wooooo!,” and leads us around the corner into a small narrow gallery. On the wall is a sizable display of small baseball cards, grouped into sections depending on the publisher and collection. The group emits sounds of awe and wonder as they gaze upon these rare, colorful cards. As we look, Kevin tells some background information about The MET’s collection of baseball cards, including the size, conservation, rotation, and rarity. He discusses popular cultures as he delves into such topics as the movie, *A League of Their Own*, which was about all-women baseball teams in the early part of the last century. He does this in order to facilitate a connection and understanding of the artwork, which achieves success as the group is intently focused and attentive.

Walking over to one section of the gallery wall, we stand in front of a collection of extremely small baseball cards, about two and a half inches tall, by one inch wide. Unlike anything I have seen before, these little slips of lithograph printed paper hardly seem like baseball cards. Kevin addresses our confusion by taking us back to the origin and purpose of the baseball card. Pointing to the other, more recognizable, cards further down on the gallery wall we just passed, he lists their distribution method in reverse order. From gum and Cracker-Jacks, he takes a step further and asks what was before that? Lisa replies, “cigarettes.” Kevin affirms her correct answer, congratulates her, and gives her a hearty high-five for her participation. Calling us in for a closer look, Kevin names the cards as part of the White Border Collection, the most exceptional group of baseball cards in the world because it contains the rarest card known to exist. He asks us to name the person featured on this card, and immediately Frank names

“Honus Wagner.” Surprised by the immediate and correct response, Kevin gives an exclamation of shock and complement to this tour participant who bested him at his own game. The mood is light and humorous and Kevin continues to explain and share his knowledge of this interesting and unique piece. Although the Honus Wagner, nicknamed “The Flying Dutchman,” card is not on display, we are told a detailed and fascinating story of the remaining cards, including the reason for their scarcity, the type of person Honus Wagner was, the acquisitions, and the purchase price that grew exponentially as the years progressed. The current estimated value of the card is now more than three million dollars, and one of which now rests in The MET’s collection. Kevin concludes the session by expressing the reality of the situation, that despite what may be suspected about art museums, you never know what you may find within the collections. Furthermore, he articulates that it is best not to judge anyone regarding what they consider to be art. Leaving the subject on a playful note, he suggests that you never let your kids throw anything away, for you never know what may be valuable one day.

William the Hippo



Figure 12. *Hippopotamus* (“William”), Middle Kingdom, circa 1961-1878 B.C.

We continue on to the next stop along the tour, the Egyptian Wing. The galleries are very crowded as school groups, tourists, and other visitors occupy much of the space available. It seems that we have come to a popular spot within The MET’s walls. Although it is difficult to navigate through the crowds, especially with a group, Kevin walks along with ease and is keenly aware of those in the group who may fall behind. He makes sure not to lose anyone in the process of our movements. When we arrive at the tight-spaced gallery that holds the next piece of art as the subject of our focus, Kevin finds there is a small group in front of it. He waits patiently and makes conversation with all the tour participants, commenting on aspects of the

galleries or the museums. When the other group moves on, Kevin gathers us around a singular statue of a little blue hippopotamus encased in glass on its own. The pedestal on which it rests is about average eye level, thus giving everyone a proper view of the piece. Kevin jumps right into a brief historical discussion about the ancient Egyptians and their beliefs. Giving significance to the animal within Egyptian lore, he describes that the importance of these animals was paramount in the afterlife, and they acted as protectors. As a dangerous creature with the ability to kill, it was a desired bodyguard to have by your side as you crossed the perilous River Styx. However, the Egyptians also knew the threat hippopotamuses posed to their owner. In order to combat this problem, they devised a way to limit the power of the hippopotamus while it accompanied you on your journey to the afterlife. Bringing us closer to the glass case, Kevin points out the material that comprises three of the four legs on the statue. It appears to be a modern blue clay, much different from the glazed ceramic that makes up the rest of the piece, and thus suspected to be a more recent addition. To make sure that your hippopotamus was not a danger to you, they would give it only one leg to slow its speed and give you time to escape if need be. He goes on to explain that we would see many hippopotamuses within the Egyptian galleries, as well as other museums, as they were frequently placed in tombs with their dead.

Beyond the history lesson, Kevin begins to talk about the connotation this blue statue has to The MET. A story not often told, this statue has an interesting relationship to the museum and is related to a more modern audience. As a fledgling museum at the beginning of the twentieth century, The MET had an issue with branding. Kevin compared it to the *Mona Lisa* famously

being housed at The Louvre in Paris, as The MET was looking for this kind of recognition for itself. All at once, Kevin directs us to the front of the statue to look at the face and calls attention to the lack of expression displayed on the hippopotamus. Elaborating, he gives a series of emotional possibilities that could be deduced from the stare of this animal. We look into the black outlined eyes drawn into the glaze, notice his sculpted droopy eyebrows, and try to imagine what emotion is conveyed through the downward position of his head. As we study this puzzling piece, Kevin begins a story about a man who bought a postcard of this hippopotamus at The MET in the 1930s. He brought this card home to his family and put it in a place for all to see, in this case he said it was the refrigerator. The family decided to name him “William,” and gave him the position of oracle, asking William his opinion before making decisions concerning family affairs. Kevin paraphrased what would have been a formal descriptive story, and added his own flair with tonal inflection of the voices belonging to both William and the kids. Whether the question was, “Should the kids eat ice cream before dinner?” or “Should they go to the rollercoaster?,” William had all the answers, good or bad. Kevin continued his narrative, as all eyes were on him, including other museum visitors who were standing nearby. The story goes on that one day the family asked William if they should go on a picnic, and despite the disapproving stare of the hippopotamus, the family decided to continue with their plans. Here, Kevin gives pause for effect, and reveals that they all died. Two seconds pass with a stunned silence, and Kevin interjects that he was just kidding and, in actuality, it had only rained instead. Relieved laughter ensues from our group, and he continues to explain that the man in the story was a

writer for a satirical British magazine, and wrote of his experiences with William. The article went viral, the modern day equivalent of becoming very popular, and is picked up by The MET. The museum takes the opportunity to claim its brand and adopts the story of William. Soon, the story is associated with the museum, and as proof he tells us that if we go into the museum gift shop, we will see “William the Hippo” on umbrellas, pillows, books, and everything. He is the “unofficial official mascot of the museum,” and further proof can be found in the exhibit label, displayed as: *Hippopotamus ('William')*.

Jackie's Nightlight



Figure 13. The Temple of Dendur, Roman Period, by 10 B.C.

The tour continues as Kevin leads us to a grand room containing one wall of large glass windows facing Central Park, a feature resembling a mote accompanied with one lone green plant, statue lined walking paths, and a very imposing and magnificent Egyptian temple placed at the highest point. This is the Temple of Dendur. We stand near the windows, the north side of the room, with a view of the entire gallery and the park outside. Kevin describes what we are looking at is considered one piece of art, and is the largest in the museum. He continues telling facts about the piece, including that it is only one of two complete Egyptian temples in the world outside Egypt. Although the statement seems complex in its wording, Kevin explains its

significance due to the structure in the foreground, which is the gate. Most surviving temples do not have the gate, and are technically considered incomplete. This fact led us to understand the worldwide recognition given to The MET for owning a rarity such this. Furthermore, the story of its acquisition is part of what makes the piece so interesting.

The narrative that followed incorporated elements of gossip, intrigue, and murder. But before he began, Kevin called on Frank to do him a favor of saying “dum-dum-dum” as a sound effect whenever he said the word, “murder.” Frank agreed, and the story began. Kevin sets the scene in the 1960s and recounts some of the economic and political happenings at the time, including the damming of the Nile River in Egypt. This action put more than a hundred ancient temples in danger of destruction, yet the Egyptian government did not have the money to move the structures elsewhere, and thus created a “Go-Fund-Me page.” This interruption of incorrect period-specific terminology elicited giggles and laughter from the group. Kevin thanks the group for recognizing his joke, and moves on with the story.

Intertwining factual aspects of history such as UNESCO, John F. Kennedy (JFK), the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Aswan Dam project, and Egypt’s request for millions dollars, Kevin paraphrases the interactions among the organizations, people, and events mentioned. We are given a shorthand version of events that transpired at that time. Kevin adds the disclaimer that he is not outright implying that this is the only reason for the allied relationship between the United States and Egypt, but that it might have been an influencing factor. However, the truth is the Egyptian government did give the United States a gift in the form of an ancient Egyptian temple

in gratitude for their help. Kevin interjects a multiple-choice question to the group at this point: “Who do you think should pick out a temple as a gift for an entire country? (a) museum curator; (b) Egyptian historian; or (c) other. No one answers, but Kevin relates the answer almost straight away, saying the correct choice is either (a) or (b), however they were not chosen. So, he poses the question of who did the United States pick to choose this massive temple? The group is quiet and this time Kevin waits for the answer. After several seconds, Monisha says in an unsure tone, “Jackie Kennedy?” Kevin yells out, “correct!,” while we all laugh at the ridiculous reality. He describes Jackie as having gone “temple shopping,” adding a comment about it being a very “American story” all the while laughing and joking with the group as everyone is smiling and playing along. Kevin brings the narrative back to a serious approach and gives Jackie Kennedy credit for her research and picking a temple with a gate and a goddess. Specifying the gate is dedicated to the goddess Isis, he announces that we are not going to call it the temple to Isis because she is “having a really bad PR problem right now,” inferring to the terrorist group under the acronym, ISIS. From here on, Kevin only refers to it as the Temple of Dendur.

Picking up where he left off, Kevin introduces the next event in the story. With a mysterious inflection in his voice, he says, “murder.” At this point, remembering his favor to Kevin, Frank gives a reserved, “dum-dum-dum.” The group sheepishly snickers, and Kevin rates his performance as good, but not great, yet decent enough to elicit a “golf-clap,” and precedes to do so. Taking it back to the storyline, the assassination of JFK put the entire temple project on hold; meanwhile the Temple of Dendur remained in Egypt for several years afterwards. Fast-

forwarding through the story, Kevin introduces Jackie Onassis who funds the project herself as a memorial to her dead husband, choosing to have the temple installed in Washington, DC along the banks of the Potomac River. The director of The MET at this time is a man named Thomas Hoving. Declaring him to be his favorite past director of the museum, Kevin described Hoving as a man who was very forthright and when it came to the Temple of Dendur. Kevin imitated him and stated, "I'm getting this and you're giving it to me." He goes on to rephrase the conversations between Hoving and Onassis, in which they are arguing over the placement of the temple. Introducing the gossip pertaining to the event, Kevin references his source, Hoving's autobiography, *Making the Mummies Dance*. In the book, Hoving discusses the late night phone call and conversation with Onassis that resulted in the complete relocation of the Egyptian wing from the south side of the museum to the north side. The direct result of this was an agreement that the Temple of Dendur would be placed in The MET. Even though Hoving had previously promised to continuously light the temple at night, provide a water feature, a plant, and glass wall, it was the change in location that swayed her decision. Kevin poses another question, inquiring as to why placement of the gallery was more important to her than how the gallery was arranged. After a moment, Frank points out a specific window on the tall buildings lining 5th Avenue, and comments that the temple can be seen from there. Kevin gives him an earnest high five for his correct answer, further commenting that Onassis had recently purchased a penthouse apartment with her bedroom overlooking the north side of the museum and Central Park. Kevin adds the final piece that ties it all together, which upon hearing this story, *The New Yorker*

magazine dubbed this room “Jackie’s Nightlight.” Kevin reiterated his previous statement, claiming, “If that isn’t the most American story you’ve ever heard, then I don’t know what is.” Kevin announced that we will take a small break to look around the temple, and gave a friendly reminder of the continuous game we were playing, “Kevin’s Birthday Party Challenge.”

Bashford Dean and Henry VIII



Figure 14. *Field Armor of King Henry VIII of England, circa 1544*

After reconvening, Kevin gives an option to the group of where they would like to go next on the tour. Our possibilities are: (a) Arms and Armor; (b) African, Oceania and the Americas; (c) Greece and Rome; (d) Japan. The first response is Arms and Armor, and with no disagreements from the rest of the group, we follow Kevin as he leads the way through the maze

of rooms and people. We enter the gallery from the side door, and come upon four mannequins completely dressed in suits of armor, riding life size horse mannequins. They are also covered in large and elaborate suits of armor. Standing in the middle of the room, we take a look at our surroundings, amazed by the objects contained in the gallery.

Just as he did with the other areas of the museum, Kevin begins by telling us about the history of the Arms and Armor collection. However, here he takes a different approach. Turning his attention to me, Kevin remarks on my intelligence, a comment which is based on the knowledge he gained from our short conversations, including the fact I have been in graduate school. He presents a situation with a role for me to play: I am a museum curator and my museum does not have an arms and armor collection. Yet, we want to start collecting this new piece of art, how would I go about beginning this endeavor? My answer expressed finding a collection started by another person, and identifying a way to acquire said collection through purchase or some other means. Stating my answer is “super close,” Kevin gives me a high-five on a job well done. Furthermore, he connects the question to the actual acquisition of The MET’s Arms and Armor collection, of which we are currently viewing. Instead of finding someone who is looking to move their collection to a museum, as I had suggested, the museum found a person with a vast collection of pieces, offered them a position as curator of the newly formed Arms and Armor department, then gained control of the collection upon their death. As ridiculous as it may sound, Kevin assures us that this method is actually quite common. This person’s name was Bashford Dean, and to give us an idea of his strange character, Kevin shows us photographs on

his phone of the man, while telling of his affection to dress-up in amour on the weekends for the children in a park in Yonkers. Using another period-specific term current to our modern culture, Kevin names him the first LARP-ing Cosplayer³, gaining recognition and laughter from the group. Kevin states that if any of us understand that term, they are a nerd just like him. He continues with the fascinating story of Dean and his peculiar traits, telling jokes and paraphrasing conversations he had with The MET. He tells interesting facts, other little known pieces of history, and public information such as the underground forge housed just two floors below our feet, and how Dean had convinced the museum to approve its construction. Kevin's humor shines through even the most mundane facts, like when eventually the museum de-commissioned the forge only when someone brought up the idea in the 1940s that it might not be a good idea to have fire in a building with millions of dollars worth of artwork. Each quip and joke is met with smiles and laughter from the group, yet even more so when he brings popular culture into the conversation, such as comparing the hall and its layout to the portrayal of the castle halls on the widely popular television series, *Game of Thrones*. Within the gallery are several display cases with numerous objects. Knowing we only have a limited amount of time left in the tour, Kevin asks one member of the group to choose our next stop from his list of possibilities. The topic of Henry VIII is preferred, and thus Kevin leads us to the far side of the hall where a few suits of armor are displayed in glass cases.

³ LARP stands for Live Action Role Play, and can be described as a role-playing game where participants portray fictional characters and perform live interaction game play with other members. Cosplay refers to the act of costume-play, when individuals dress to resemble a fictional character.

This time, the history lesson is more of a refresher as most people have a general knowledge of the Tudor king through modern media. Kevin makes another pop culture tie to the king and his love of jousting, in the form of the movie, *A Knight's Tale*. He remarks that although the movie is not historically accurate, what is truthful is the portrayal of rules of jousting. Outlining the play and point structure of the game, and adding other fun facts about King Henry VIII, he creates a life narrative of the man and his suits of armor, including some interesting comments concerning his swoon-worthy calves. Furthermore, he presents knowledge of modern medicine and applies it to the historical events and occurrences that surrounded King Henry VIII's life. All this information had a deeper purpose other than informing us on British history; it explained the armor we were viewing. The young Henry VIII's armor was a far cry from the old Henry VIII's armor. His last suit resembled a lobster, as it had to have been able to expand to accommodate the weight gain of a diabetes and gout stricken old man. Kevin brings the whole lesson to an amusing end as he adds the moral of the story, which is despite all the king's hardships at the end of his life, he finally got to flaunt his attractive calves. To which, Kevin draws our attention to the expandable suit with the armor missing from below the knee. The group is still laughing and joking as Kevin leads us to the opposite end of the gallery.

The Cod Piece



Figure 15. *Armor of Emperor Ferdinand I* by Kunz Lochner, 1549

Before any of us know what is happening, Kevin calls on Laura to come to the front of the group and stand before the next piece on the tour, a suit of armor completely enclosed within a glass case. Immediately Kevin begins to tell her that he couldn't believe what John had told him, and said that she had a photographic memory. He asks her if this is true, to which she reacts with a puzzled facial expression, and replies, "no." Without skipping a beat, Kevin responds, "That's awesome, that's really cool that that's true, I'm really excited about that!" The absurd reply makes the entire group laugh. Kevin quickly moves along and states he has a game just for Laura, named, "One of these things is not like the other." He asks her to memorize all the details

of the suit of armor standing before her, to include the skirt, the shoulders, the face, and more. He asserts that because she has a photographic memory, the game is easy for her, and moves her and the rest of the group to the next suit of armor in line. As he does this he says to Laura, “What is the difference between that one, and this one? Give me one guess.” At this point Laura lets out a loud giggle and says, “it’s pretty obvious!” Kevin plays along, inquiring as to what has her so convinced. She tries to explain it as it being “very protected,” and points to the large, erect, and armored cod piece⁴ peeking out from the skirt of the suit. Kevin feigns embarrassment and jokingly declares he only meant to point out the expertly engraved decoration of Madonna and Jesus Christ upon the chest. Everyone is in hysterics now, and probably a little abashed by the ridiculousness of the subject matter. Kevin commends Laura for her good sport and gives her a high five.

Addressing the subject at hand, Kevin explains that despite its obvious characteristic signifier, the exhibit label mentions nothing of the cod piece, leaving the viewer with more questions and curiosity about what the museum’s considerations are on what is deemed “art.” To combat this, Kevin gives an explanatory history of why this suit of armor is designed in this fashion. Not complicated or scandalous, the story gives no notion of why such description has been omitted. Kevin recognizes this shortcoming on the part of The MET, and voices his opinion that even a small sentence about the cod piece and what it is would be helpful for any viewer in the museum.

⁴ A piece of clothing, used primarily by Europeans in fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, designed to cover and accentuate the genital region on males.

The Fig Leaf



Figure 16. *Adam* by Tullio Lombardo, circa 1490-1495

Following the theme of the previous artwork and subject matter, Kevin takes us to the European Sculpture galleries. We stand in a small gallery with classical marble statues along the walls. Acknowledging that some of us have been to other museums such as The Louvre and seen other Greek and Roman sculpture beyond what is in this room, he asks the question, what is usually missing from the male marble statues? There is a quite pause as the word “penis” is whispered. Kevin breaks the nervous energy from this reply with another joke, again feigning seriousness and confessing that he had been thinking of the nose instead. The laughs help ease the moment and Kevin confirms the correct answer then promptly asks why. Now, the

participants are more eager to comment and respond to Kevin's questions; all the while he encourages their efforts to speak and engage in the conversation. Consequently, he describes the historical introduction of the fig leaf and reasons behind the missing genitalia. Giving an insider perspective, he recounts the occurrences when Vatican employees have participated in a Museum Hack tour, thus sharing some non-public information to further deepen the intrigue over these statues. Kevin asks us to use our imagination and he divulges the existence of a room deep within the Vatican basement, where therein lies hundreds of marble male genitals. The group is struck with disbelief and awe at the story, while Kevin maintains and professes his opinion to the group that some of the best parts of the museum are the stories held within it. Promising one more story, he continues to the last piece on the tour.

Materials and Memory



Figure 17. *Between Earth and Heaven* by El Anatsui, 2006

Kevin stands in front of a large wall hanging, similar to a rug or a carpet, yet made from hundreds of small metal pieces. He confesses that although he may jest about art and certain artworks, he does have a favorite piece in the museum, which he presents to us now as the work by El Anatsui. The importance of artwork for Kevin is expressed through his memories and how art can help a person recollect past experiences, even ones lost or forgotten. He shares his thoughts with the group, recalling a childhood memory and how it left an emotional tie to common material. For Kevin, the small aluminum bottle caps which comprise *Between Earth and Heaven* are evocative to discarded Starburst wrappers. In a manner similar to the

repurposing theme of the artwork, Kevin's experience was the gift of a bracelet made from those multicolored candy papers combined with an adolescent girl's romantic proposal to attend the eighth grade dance. Before the group can utter a sympathetic response of endearment, Kevin interjects by adding a sad truth that, in the end, "she broke his heart." The group is silent for a small period, possibly reflecting on their own personal ties to rejected or forgotten material objects.

Moving along, Kevin contributes information about the artist, the types of materials used to create the piece, and other interesting aspects surrounding its significant association with African and Ghanaian culture. Such topics include the issues of alcoholism and recycling, portrayed through the reuse of liquor bottle caps included in most of Anatsui's works. Another subject concerns the classification of the artwork's theme, and the subsequent disagreement between two curatorial departments within the museum. Kevin affirms that Anatsui is both a contemporary and an African artist, yet questions whether his work falls into which curatorial department housed within the museum: Arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas or to Modern and Contemporary Art. Although we are standing in the galleries of Arts of Africa, Kevin offers no answer, and instead shares a piece of behind-the-scenes knowledge with the group. Apparently The MET could not solve this quandary either, and now owns two pieces by the artist, each belonging to the respective department. Kevin ends his talk with a hypothetical question about the ownership of art, asking us to think and discuss amongst ourselves, if we choose to do so.

Kevin's Birthday Party Challenge, Part II

The final activity of the tour was coming to an end as Kevin asks each of us to show our photograph of the special object we would bring to his birthday party. After we each present our findings and recount reasons for our selections, Kevin awards the winner on his own accord a small, blue eraser in the shape of "William the Hippo." He thanks us all for being a part of the tour and we all part ways.

Conclusion

Research is a process, and although the initial idea is portrayed to be simple in nature, in actuality the content discovered can be monumental. In this case, my research into the educational techniques and methods used by Museum Hack produced an overwhelming amount of information. My efforts to condense, edit, and tell a story of what I encountered with Museum Hack at The MET left a partial representation of what Museum Hack presents. Yet, this account captures what I believe to be an authentic representation of the Museum Hack tour experience from my perspective. It is an appropriately descriptive narrative of what Museum Hack presents to museum visitors and teaches to other museums, including the CMOG. In order for the reader to gain an understanding of the strong influence in education that has been made by Museum Hack, it is imperative to portray the experience they strive to create. I have done so here. Listing talking points, gallery activities, and games alone would not suffice to recount the sensory, emotional, and physical feelings experienced on this two hour tour. Hence, I have given a detailed account

of the tour in order to offer the reader a perspective of an alternative approach that goes beyond the typical museum tour, and has the capability of reaching far beyond the museum walls.

In the following chapter, I discuss certain elements found within this Museum Hack tour and compare them to the operations, programs, and other forms of museum education that are being conducted in the CMOG. To gain a full understanding of the kind of experience promoted by Museum Hack, the best course of action is to attend one of their tours. As such, for the purposes of this study, I have sought to give the reader a rich and thorough description of the tour I participated in, provided so that they might imagine the event in greater detail. I hope to portray more than the transfer of information, but the feelings expressed throughout the experience. Conceptualizing the tour will help the reader when discussing the insights into the foundations of Museum Hack's philosophy. Other aspects of their goals are revealed next, including information on behind the scenes events, and how they are aiding other institutions, such as the CMOG, in their endeavors to improve the museum visitors' experience.

Chapter Four: Data Analysis

The Corning Museum of Glass (CMoG) is located in Corning, a small town of roughly eleven thousand inhabitants, in the south west corner of New York State. Their geographical location has awarded them some benefits including the breadth of visitors it attracts each year, to include internationals, domestics, and locals. Driving times are reasonable, as they are four hours from New York City and two hours from Niagara Falls. The summer months are the busiest time of the year with more than half of their total yearly attendance arriving between Memorial Day and Labor Day. Consequently, the CMoG was in need of a structure that could accommodate and support a wide range of visitors. The answer came in the form of new management, as the museum underwent an extensive remodeling and reconstruction process starting in 2011. With these changes happening, the director saw the opportunity to re-evaluate the museum's focus and their goals for the future in terms of relationship to the community and to its visitors. Therefore, in the past several years the CMoG has been in the process of encouraging visitor engagement through new methods of training, introduction of innovative programs, and re-interpretation of their galleries, both permanent and temporary.

When the CMoG invited Museum Hack to their museum, they were clear about their intentions for the implementation of the techniques they were about to learn. They wanted to attract more visitors to the museum, and to encourage an enjoyable museum experience with the passing tourists and local community. Since their first efforts in this regard, they were in the process of gaining more participants, but this was not enough. For first time visitors, many were

shocked by the content, possibilities, and enjoyment available in the institution. “I had no idea!” was a common reaction produced by these visitors, and the CMOG sought to elicit more of this type of response. Acknowledging that a majority of the population in Corning could be described in terms of “not the museum type,” the museum wanted to change this perspective. Museum Hack’s mission aimed at addressing this problem, amongst others, and was the perfect fit to match what the CMOG was looking to accomplish.

Although the museum employs other methods of instruction for their staff, Museum Hack has been a significant factor in their growth and endeavor to be a visitor centered museum. By participating in their “bootcamps” and “museum consultation workshops,” the CMOG has been able to add a wealth of information, techniques, methods and more to their repertoire of museum education tools. However, beyond what is applicable to the education department, now even the curators and the executive director have benefitted from the teaching methods of Museum Hack. There is an added bonus of team building as well, as changes have created an open, creative, and collaborative environment across all departments in the museum. The CMOG recognizes the participatory nature of the work advocated by Museum Hack is crucial in creating a positive and successful museum experience for all its visitors. However, the information is only as useful as its proper application. Education and Interpretation Supervisor at the CMOG, Troy Smythe, describes the situation: “To be able to have that quiver full of arrows, you have to learn how to use each one before you can decide whether or not it’s good for this or that” (personal communication, November 28, 2017). For each technique, its application can be varied in its

delivery and can be accessed differently in its reception by the audience. How to gauge a group of visitors and determine which arrows are used and which ones are not, are skills gained and improved through practice and learning. Because of this ideology, it is difficult to summarize the techniques used by Museum Hack throughout their tours. Therefore, for the purposes of the study, I have given a detailed account of the Museum Hack touring procedure and operation from my perspective. From there, I connect aspects of their operation to some of the lessons, events, and changes happening to and within the CMOG. In addition, a comparison of their distinctive approach to the techniques shared is acknowledged. This analysis provides evidence to answer my central research question regarding how the CMOG is developing an alternative approach to museum education, and furthermore evaluates how these changes are affecting other educators in the field and the community.

In order to properly evaluate how Museum Hack has influenced the CMOG in terms of their approach to alternative museum education, I have divided Museum Hack's long list of methods and processes into four main components or categories. These are (a) the narrative; (b) the museum visitor experience; (c) interpretation; and (d) social media and relationships. From these categories, I have connected essential features of CMOG programming that correspond with Museum Hack techniques seen in my research. Furthermore, I have compared the similarities and differences between the two entities, paying close attention to the revisions and adaptations made by the CMOG to accommodate their personal needs. By this process, the application of Museum Hack's practices to other museums, institutions, and educators is

possible. In summary, this process of analysis and evaluation has resulted in an answer to my research question, supporting my inquiry into the transferability of Museum Hack's practices as a valid and fruitful endeavor.

The Narrative

“Stories are more precious than gold. Magic happens through crafting stories because you make what you are saying accessible to everyone” (Museum Hack, 2018). What makes a good story? How is it structured? How do you tell it? Museum Hack is very deliberate in their concepts of storytelling. They answer questions like these in their workshops and through evidence in their tours. Breaking down the process into separate components, Museum Hack has developed a formula for constructing their stories. This blueprint is suitable for use with any object or subject, making it possible for tour guides to use much the same method at either The Metropolitan Museum of Art (The MET) or the Natural History Museum. In my research of Museum Hack, I experienced several stories told during the tour. Each one was different in their content, yet the manner and structure in which it was delivered was similar in form.

Feature: Storytelling

The CMoG shared the “Museum Hack Story Components” (Wetterlund, Smythe, & Fay, 2017) as it was explained to them in the workshops that took place at their museum. They have added their own examples in their training materials to help the staff and docents understand the components while in the setting of their own museum. There are five steps in the process, with the first and last being the most crucial, and the three in-between as happening in any order seen

fit. The first step is “Engagement,” or to “Begin with a promise” of what is to come. Some interpret this by striking a pose, making voices, or impersonating a character. In this case Kevin, at our first stop, immediately began his narrative by inserting a tour participant, John, in the story. The engagement was not forced as much as it was suggested, however John did not seem to mind and the group was now focused intently on what was going to happen to him. Experienced at the CMoG, they posed a story based on an English mid-nineteenth century etched drinking goblet. Afraid visitors would question why they should care about such an ordinary object, the CMoG developed a story to give it reason and purpose. They “hooked” their audience with the introduction of a fictitious English character, while using William Hogarth’s painting series, *A Rake’s Progress*, completed in 1733, to give the story another visual element.

The second step in the process is, “What’s the Story,” or “Add uncertainty” and “Make it emotional.” This is the point where the narrative takes hold. Here the tour guide begins the introductions to the story, setting the place, the time, and who is involved. However the storyteller begins the tale, the outcome should be to add an element of unpredictability, leaving the audience questioning what will happen next. In John’s story as a German Baron, we are introduced to the lavish, yet uneventful party he has hosted. Although Kevin could have continued with how the piece of art is introduced, instead he added an emotional aspect to the story, creating a problem for John in the form of his guests leaving the party too soon. For the English gentleman in the story created by the CMoG, they spun a tale of his life and his occupation, combining paintings with actual modern day photographs of the same places

mentioned in the story. He is going on a journey to visit his Aunt in London and must devise a way to get there.

The the third step is “Mind=Blown,” or “Create wonder,” introducing an amazing or mind-boggling component to the story. This creates a sense of shock for the audience members, as they try to comprehend the new piece of information that has been introduced. Used frequently in modern culture to include memes on social media, this phrase is a shortcut for the expression of being stunned and impressed. In this circumstance for John, it was an intricate, glistening figurine that amazed the audience because it combined fine motor works with one’s affinity towards intoxication. The CMOG decided to connect their upper middle class English gentleman travels with the actual story of the birth of the stagecoach, otherwise known as the Royal Postal Service. This unsuspected relation in the story caught the audience off guard, not expecting the narrative to contain elements of truth and real historic events.

The fourth step is “Connection,” or “Make it personal,” constructing the narrative to contain a personal element in which the audience can either relate to, or understand in a manner that is feasible for them. Kevin did this in a couple of ways. One approach was to let the viewer imagine their favorite alcoholic beverage being consumed in this fashion—a task most everyone would want to experience—and by introducing the reason why one would care to listen and retell the story. The previous owner of the piece, J.P. Morgan, is still known by many individuals and his effects on the country remain intact today. This fun fact is worthy of a re-telling, especially if the simple act of stepping on a train is enough to remind you. Throughout the journey of the

CMoG's wealthy gentleman on his way to London, he is described as partaking in some of the normal and everyday occurrences at the time. The story paints a picture of tavern life and some of the obstacles reached along the path to his Aunt's residence. Here, a connection is made to some of the other glass pieces that can be found in these locations, such as a lamp, a vase, or another type of drinking glass.

The fifth and last component of the storytelling structure is "Drop the Mic," which references the action of dropping a microphone after a performance. Today, this has come to be translated as a dramatic end to the successful delivery of a public display. It can also be described as "Know what your story is about," which focuses on bringing the story full circle. The storyteller must know what the story is about before beginning, as this will help in the formulation of the conclusion and transition, leaving the audience dazzled from the experience. For Museum Hack, it is the final piece to the story and establishes a transition to the next phase or section of the tour. Kevin accomplished this by posing a hypothetical question to the group, implying that the foundations of America's economic growth can be credited towards this piece of art and some very good brandy. For the CMoG's story, the final chapter comes when the artifacts housed in the galleries become a part of the story. The glass chandeliers on display are described in detail as hanging above our English gentleman's head when he arrives at his Aunt's townhome in London. Or the colorful drinking glasses next to the English goblet are now placed on the dining room table in preparation for the supper about to be experienced by the two

characters in the story. It is these connections and associations that create a meaningful and memorable story that the visitor will take with them beyond the walls of the museum.

Application: Museum writers group

The CMoG has also transferred these techniques into various aspects of their programming. The list has been tweaked slightly to fit a vernacular understood by docents and students. In the previous paragraph, the secondary listing beside each “Museum Hack Story Component” is the CMoG’s equivalent. They re-named this list, “Ingredients for a Great Story,” and added an additional step, adjusting the second Museum Hack component, “What’s the Story.” For the museum’s purposes, they broke it into two sections: “Add uncertainty (what will happen next?),” and “Make it emotional.” This separation enables staff, docents and students to format their writings and stories with ease, adding elements as they move down the list.

In addition to this extension in storytelling techniques, the CMoG researched what is considered to be the classical principles of a good story. Here, they discovered the “Story Embryo” technique used by modern day writers in television productions and the like:

1. A character is in a zone of comfort,
2. But they want something,
3. They enter an unfamiliar situation,
4. Adapt to it,
5. Get what they wanted,
6. Pay a heavy price for it,
7. Then return to their familiar situation,
8. Having changed.

Having this academically themed outline in place helped the CMOG achieve results that were not only transferrable to a younger crowd, but accepted by seasoned professionals, which differs from the Museum Hack approach. In addition, they went back further to reference the structure of more classical works, such as *The Iliad*, and their use of the form titled, “The Hero’s Journey” or “The Monomyth Structure” (Wetterlund, Smythe, & Fay, 2017). Both of these narrative arrangements detail a framework similar to the “Museum Hack Story Components” list, but with more detailed character roles and the possibility of displaying an inner monologue. Using these elements combined, Museum Hack has conducted successful interpretive writing workshops for the members of the CMOG staff who compose and construct publications and other content for the museum, such as the marketing and the curatorial departments (Mieke Fay & Troy Smythe, personal communication, November 28, 2017).

Application: Docent training

In preparation for the changes in administration and focus throughout the museum, the education department at the CMOG hired a new body of docents, co-training them alongside the curatorial department, utilizing the skills and knowledge shared from Museum Hack as a methodology for creating the desired outcome. Starting from the beginning, special attention was given to how trainings were conducted and their relation to how visitors experience tours: “We tend to train our docents in a way that we don’t want them to tour...in the galleries....We lecture them, so why wouldn’t we expect them to lecture?” (Troy Smythe, personal communication, November 28, 2017). With this concern in mind, a new format was developed for teaching

docents. One of the techniques included was adding an element of storytelling while conducting a tour. By demonstrating the methods used in narrative touring, the docents were introduced to the concept in a fashion that facilitates acceptance and application. Docents were encouraged to use the “Ingredients for a Great Story” and the “Museum Hack Story Components” techniques to guide them in their development of touring procedures. However, they were not limited only to these methods. Another factor at play was the application of research. In order to tell a story in the manner of a Museum Hack tour guide, a large body of knowledge is required. Museum Hack guides confess to spending countless hours in libraries and registries searching for accession numbers and hidden histories. Knowing more about your subject can help in its relation to a story, and thus contribute to the visitor’s experience.

Understanding that some docents would not be comfortable with the kind of methods used by Museum Hack, the education department at the CMOG strives to exhibit new ways of communication and delivery in their docent training sessions. Adding activities and stories helps diversify the trainings, encouraging docents to think outside the box. In their execution of the techniques exhibited, some docents were successful and others more reluctant to accept the plan; however, the CMOG realizes this change process takes time and is geologic in nature. A positive outcome, not foreseen by the education department, was the self propelled initiative taken by a number of docents who wished to start developing more interactive tour techniques, similar to the ones suggested in the trainings, in order to make a larger body of touring knowledge

available to the entire core of CMOG docents. This, in turn, benefitted the education staff, aiding them in adding to their programming content.

Museum Hack and the CMOG both realize there are a variety of ways to tell a story, just as there are many kinds of stories to tell. One technique that is suggested by both institutions is the emphasis placed on personal meaning making. By establishing a personal connection to an object, the guide—or docent—ends up telling their story in the process. This approach adds complexity and diversification to the tours. In a manner of self reflection, the CMOG also gives voice to the efforts of diversity and inclusion promoted throughout education, yet recognizes that it must also be applied to their touring techniques in order to create a cohesive and meaningful learning environment.

Application: Exhibit labels

Beyond the narrative told by the tour guides and docents at the museum, are the stories contained in the exhibit labels. Using the opportunity of redesigning a portion of their “35 Centuries of Glass Galleries,” the CMOG has re-written all the exhibit labels using the story writing techniques practiced in their staff writing workshops. The process starts with a collaborative, cross-departmental meeting, where the exhibition layout is displayed for the purpose of gathering input. Working closely with the curators, the education staff has aided in the creation of a re-telling of the history of Corning, New York, named “The Crystal City Gallery.” In preparation of the re-writes, an informal evaluation was conducted by staff members. They entered the galleries with sample exhibit labels in hand, asking visitors for their opinion

concerning which sample text was the most understandable, entertaining, legible, concise, and educational. From their responses, the museum was able to determine what methods worked best for the format of the exhibit labels. Continuing such development, the CMOG plans to re-install sections of the historical galleries one at a time, using the feedback from “The Crystal City” exhibit as a model for the plan and execution for the rest of the museum.

Feature: Humor

It should also be noted that throughout the stories told by Museum Hack tour guides, there exists a very prominent and noticeable detail—humor. However forefront as it may seem, this is only a byproduct of the process, not a goal. Although used widely throughout their tours, Museum Hack does not consider humor a requirement for storytelling. More emphasis is placed on the communication of the story, which is helped by certain skills possessed by the tour guide. Museum Hack does not seek out art historians to become guides, and would rather prefer a theater influenced personality. This is due to the energy, delivery, presence, and other traits most performance driven people possess. With these talents also comes a sense of humor, which is useful in tours in order to create an informal and relaxed environment. Throughout the tour, Kevin initiated multiple instances of rolling laughter by simple jokes, puns, or unabashed triviality. This was accomplished through a few guidelines Museum Hack gives to their tour guides. These are discussed in the next section, “The Museum Visitor Experience.”

Application: Improvisation

The CMOG knew it had a need for this type of alternative thinking within their galleries. In an effort to accommodate this engagement, they also conducted a workshop led by the comedy and improvisation group, The Upright Citizen's Brigade. This activity helped many staff members in their efforts to be able to think quickly while touring, add humor, and actively engage with their visitors. One of the most valuable lessons learned was the ability to listen, to "not be the mouth that only speaks to ears, but be the ears that hear the mouth" (Troy Smythe, personal communication, November 28, 2017). Taking these tools, the CMOG has applied them to their docent trainings, staff teamwork sessions, creation of exhibit labels, creative writing workshops, and training of youth summer tour guides: The Explainers, which will be discussed later in the chapter. With all these programs in full swing, the museum is now fully focused on the creative and innovative side of what it means to be visitor centered.

The Museum Visitor Experience

Both the CMOG and Museum Hack are dedicated to the museum visitor experience, but for what purpose? These two institutions have devoted their time, money, and workforce to improve visitor experience, exploring how people visit a museum, and why knowing this is important? One explanation suggested is for obtaining admission numbers and increased revenue. Although this recognition is essential in today's economic environment, and it could all boil down to survival, is there a possibility the reason to know this is more complex? Falk (2009) argues,

Visitors are at the heart of the twenty-first century museum's existence. Understanding something about museum visitors is not a nicety; it is a necessity! Asking who visits the museum, why and to what end are no longer mere academic questions. These are questions of great importance. (p. 20)

Although the likelihood of the former is highly possible, there is a belief about museums which has been an underlying current since the beginning. In the case of art museums, Burnham and Kai-Kee (2011) profess their belief that, "the experiences people have with works of art in museums are essential to a life lived fully" (p. 1). This view is also held by many educators and museum professionals today. For Museum Hack, their cornerstone of thought comes from the idea that museums possess an "awesome-ness" that enables visitors to gain more than an academic or artistic experience. It enables them to have an important life experience with an added element of engagement, entertainment, and enjoyment.

Feature: Who is your audience?

When Museum Hack visited the CMoG, they worked on creating a personalized workshop experience for the museum staff. However, there are some steps and processes that must be considered no matter the type of museum, the tour group, or the consultation. These questions are also relevant for museum educators in their efforts to give visitors their desired museum experience. These include: "What's your goal? What's your focus? Who is your audience?" (Troy Smythe & Mieke Fay, personal communication, November 28, 2017). Essentially, the first two questions are dependent on the last, arguably the most important of the three, and asked by countless educators in and outside the museum. "Who is the Audience (and What Do They Want)?" is asked by Serrell (2015) in relation to exhibit labels. However, the

question is applicable over the far reaching area of the total museum experience. Serrell (2015) continues and elaborates, conveying the simplicity of the topic:

Museum visitors are a diverse group of fairly well-educated, mostly middle class people seeking a culturally oriented, leisure social outing. They come to the museum with a variety of interests, but despite their diversity, they have many expectations and needs in common. (p. 49)

The CMOG is not a stranger to this line of thinking, and continually tries to identify their audiences. They have recognized tourists, veterans, teenagers, and teachers as a sampling of the types of visitors that come to the museum. Their goal is to be a visitor centered museum, adjusting to the ever-changing needs and wants of those who visit the CMOG.

Museum Hack has a similar assessment of the types of people who attend their tours. Aware these individuals are mainly novice in their knowledge of art and museums, and are generally not considered art history connoisseurs, they adjust and change tours in order to fit the individual needs of their tour groups. Promising an experience unlike any other had in a museum before, Museum Hack endeavors to convince the unsuspecting visitor that museums are “cool,” and they are going to show you why. Museum Hack caters primarily to the millennial generation, as they recognize them as “the least-engaged demographics in the museum world” (Museum Hack, n.d.). They might have started with this focus for their company, but the techniques used to engage millennials are also transferrable to other groups of visitors. Today, they advocate a museum experience applicable to all, articulating:

We’re not advocating simply catering one’s museum exclusively to a millennial audience —higher levels of engagement make the museum experience more enjoyable for all

guests, and they have the welcome side-effect of bringing more millennials and younger professionals through the doors of your institution. (Museum Hack, n.d., p. 3)

Application: The Explainers

Every year, the education department at the CMoG takes a group of about twenty-five teenagers in the community and trains them to be tour guides during the summer months. In doing so, The Explainers give tours to youth groups ranging from three years to nineteen years of age. Contrary to the name's implication, these impressionable and malleable young students are part of a program that encourages alternative museum education. Each tour guide has a cart full of materials to aid them on their tours, enabling sensory play, storytelling, and deeper engagement with visitors. Mieke Fay, Youth and Family Programs Educator at the CMoG and in charge of training for The Explainers, has taken a new stance in their approach to the museum tour. No longer labeled as "tours," the CMoG introduces the trainees to the undertaking of giving a "museum experience" instead. As the word "tour" often implies a lecture based structure, she aims to remove this entrenched association by omitting the word altogether. By taking away the default connotation, she has let the students focus on the purpose and reality of the job—young people speaking about art to other young people.

Application: Evening for Educators

Understanding that a portion of the CMoG's audience were teachers, the museum sought to include programming that focused on educators as adult learners. Many times institutions treat teachers as a conduit for their students, giving them only the information and tools that fit in with the curriculum. The CMoG flipped the script and introduced teachers to the museum as not only

a learning environment but also a place where alternative education techniques were practiced and creativity was free flowing, and also fun. Teachers were given a look behind the scenes of the museum, pulling back the curtain on some of the mystery that surrounds the institution. This new perception changed the way educators viewed the museum, and the CMOG has seen great success come from it. They also accept that there are some educators who need more than a fun evening at the museum, and would like help with their lesson plans and materials. The CMOG answered the call a few years ago by opening their library to these educators, giving them access to the primary sources required by the Common Core Standards accepted by New York State. Since then, the museum has combined Museum Hack foundations with original programming in order to better serve the visitor, or in this case, the educator experience.

Application: Visitor studies

While some museums have focused on schools and other large groups of learners, the CMOG has taken a step back from this priority. Their goal is to make the galleries approachable for all kinds of people. But the larger question that results from such a dedicated focus is, who is coming to our museum? While Museum Hack saw a lack of attendance in the millennial generation and created a focus based on such, the CMOG does not want to cater to one group or another. They offer a variety of options to many different people. So, with this in mind, they set out to discover who were the CMOG visitors. Through the marketing department, they have a standard-length survey given to visitors, with an incentive of a gift upon completion and return of the survey. This gives a large amount of information, yet is lacking due to the fact there was

no mechanism in place to review the data gathered from these paper based interviews. The CMOG has since changed tactics and developed an evaluation matrix team comprised from people from all departments throughout the museum. Headed by the Chief of Digital Media, the new evaluators report back to high level operators within the museum. This has provided for a stronger, highly strategic voice. Further expansion with the evaluations has included how visitors experience parts of the permanent collection in the museum, comprised of data on the length of time spent at works of art, navigation through the galleries, use of interpretive data, and more. This information has now been applied to the re-installation of the historic permanent galleries, currently in process. By doing this, the reinstallation design supports an improved visitor experience, at the same time becoming an example from which other gallery designs will follow.

Feature: Rapport

Museum Hack likes to keep things informal. In order to appeal to their targeted audiences, they need to combat the old museum reputation of being a stuffy and aristocratic establishment. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, humor is a tool used in this effort. However, another helpful guideline given to tour guides to help create a relaxed environment is the use of cursing. As evidence by their slogan, “Museums Are F***ing Awesome,”⁵ they break down the barriers that separate the tour participant from the tour guide and strive to be a friend more than an authority figure. In order not to offend any person on a tour, they are truthful, upfront, and honest about what the tour contains and what is to be expected. No smokescreens or illusions are

⁵ The slogan is used in this format when used for public view, however is spoken fully by Museum Hack employees when among proper company.

created by the tour guides, leaving the audience member open to experience more than just the artwork. Though, sometimes it can be difficult to establish a open and informal situation. In this case, Museum Hack has a few tips and tricks it uses to nurture the desired outcome. The first one is the simple application of introductions. Most Museum Hack tours are attended by small groups of strangers, mostly couples and friends attending with other like individuals. By giving names, backgrounds, and other introductory information, a communal connection is made with the realization that all participants have something in common: they have all come for the museum experience.

Application: Learning and practice

Performing introductions as a way to learn more about the other people on the tour is a crucial step in setting the tone of the tour. It creates a bonding experience within the group, much like the hand stack gesture, or giving everyone pre-written name tags (both of which are achieved on every Museum Hack tour). For the CMOG, they preach a constant learning status for not only the visitors, but for the tour guides as well. No educator, staff member, or docent is assumed, or expected, to be perfect in every regard concerning museum touring. Hence, they remind everyone the CMOG is a learning community, and it is a process that is being ever improved. Teaching is a way of coaching, and the best way for a guide to learn how to tour is for that person to learn by doing. The experience of touring can be a frightful endeavor for beginners, yet there is no quick solution to achieving a veteran-like caliber. Practice takes time, just as the old mantra claims, though there are ways to help the process along using techniques

employed by Museum Hack as well as other museum educators and tour guides around the world. Personal connections are a standard form of assistance for tour guides in their efforts to create a positive learning setting. CMOG docents are urged to share something about themselves with the group, and thus encouraged story sharing by the tour participants. This is also a method used for team building, which is another aspect facilitated by the Museum Hack company.

Feature: Engagement

Throughout the Museum Hack tour with Kevin, he exhibited various forms of performance qualities, engagement strategies, and democratic behavior. All these attributes contributed to the high level of interaction with the tour participants. Without these elements, the tour would have felt very stodgy, with Kevin as our lecturer and leader through the galleries. That is not the kind of touring condition Museum Hack desires to promote. Striving for interaction a more interactive display, Kevin found ways of regularly interjecting techniques to elicit a reaction from his audience. He fabricated voices for inanimate objects, impersonated historical figures, inserted jokes, and added sarcasm and satire in all ways possible. These prevented monotony from occurring on the tour, as often there were periods where an art history lesson was required for the purpose of comprehension. Other methods used by Museum Hack tour guides that promote visitor engagement are games, voting, photography, and the giving of prizes. Consequently, all these techniques were demonstrated by Kevin and added to the breadth of research information I was able to obtain.

Application: Glass Through the Ages

The CMOG is not currently giving Museum Hack style tours in their daily general public tours. However, pieces of Museum Hack's influence can be seen in the actions of the docent leading the group. I attended one of these Highlights Tours offered by the CMOG and conducted by one of their docents, Martha. Although the majority of the tour was lecture based, it was more than that. Martha was able to convey certain levels of engagement through simple techniques. Jokes and humor were tools she used to create an informal environment. She also contributed her opinion on various matters, from the styles of glass on display to the artists featured in certain galleries. These statements were not over-the-top, nor were there assumingly safe for all visitors. She simply spoke her mind about the vast collection held by the CMOG and exposing many of the fascinating aspects hidden within the museum. She asked for the group's opinion as well, and conducted mini voting sessions, inquiring as to what the majority of us wanted to see on this one-hour tour.

Additionally, she implored us to visit the Amphitheater Hot Shop to see a Hot Glass Demo. Martha did not guide me directly to see this demonstration, but her enthusiasm for the event convinced me to attend the session. Happening at certain times posted throughout the day, I was able to watch a master glass artist create a stunning vessel from a small blob of glowing sand. The engagement came in the form of interaction between the narrator and the audience as he asked for a display of excitement from people in the crowd. It was a contest to see who could display their emotions about glass in an outward form. One gentleman was the winner with his

bouncing and hand waving spectacle, earning him the prize of leaving with a handmade blue vase, created in the same hot shop. It was reminiscent of the Museum Hack prize of the “William the Hippo” eraser, although different in caliper, similar in design for a memorable museum experience.

Interpretation

The object is at the heart of interpretation in an art museum. “Museums are storehouses of material culture. Objects are their resource and releasing their potential should be among the core objectives of the institution” (Morphy, 2010). Once thought to be used for informational purposes alone, museums were viewed as temples of enlightenment and their objects, complete with documentation, were there to serve society in perpetuity (Dudley, 2010). This view is being challenged by the re-contextualization of material culture, otherwise referred to here as the object in the museum. Museums have begun to focus on the individual reality of the experience, and the importance of the connections identified and made between objects and visitors. Meaning-making, explanation, conception, and translation are all facets of the process of interpreting, a focus that is now being established as paramount in the museum field.

Feature: Research

Museum Hack are proponents of research, explaining that each tour guide conducts a hundred, if not a thousand, hours of research on the pieces included on their tours. In order to tell stories and explain histories, a considerable amount of research is required in order to create a large base of knowledge from which to pull information. Museum Hack also disclosed that they

are not liars, and contained within their terms of employment they are not allowed to present factual inaccuracies to their tour groups. To further support this case, Kevin informed the group of the several situations where reporters and journalists have tried to disprove their narratives or statements. In each case, they have relinquished their assumption of deception. Museum Hack is confident in this regard, enough so to encourage fact checking. Kevin invited each person to double check his statements after the tour, insisting that he was not stretching or altering the truth in any manner. This kind of open exposure reveals a trust given to the audience and to the institution, further supporting their use of the catchphrase, “In Museums We Trust.”

One result of research is the discovery of the lesser known small truths surrounding a situation or event connecting to a piece of art. Often referred to as “fun facts,” these snippets of factual information are often humorous, short, and memorable. Museum Hack is a supporter of the weird, the unknown, and the “super awkward” when it come to the history and the knowledge linked to pieces in the museum. It presents a different perspective and interpretation, leading to inquiries and further learning. However, a drawback of this type of factual-based tour is that it limits the scope of visitor based interpretation. The narratives told by Kevin had been previously prepared, thus the tour content consisted of his interpretation of the research material. Museum Hack does not consider this a drawback to their touring structure and approach, because what they offer fulfills the perceived and stated needs of their adult clients.

There is a never ending supply of knowledge available to research. As our world changes, so does our understanding and our information about it. What was once thought to be truth can be disproven later. For example, the idea that glass was a liquid and would “flow” over time was a well known reality. However, the truth is exactly the opposite. The CMOG shares this “fun fact” with audiences of the museum, further expanding their learned knowledge and at the same time opening the possibility of inquiry into other accepted facts.

Application: Re-interpretation and prototypes

Because the world is in a state of changing perception and analysis, interpretation is considered transformative. The CMOG has acknowledged this idea and is in the process of re-interpreting the works within their galleries. They have established interpretation teams, where staff members from various departments work together to re-imagine the artworks on display from the viewpoint of the visitor. When fresh perspectives are required, research is called upon in order to identify new pathways of information and knowledge. In the CMOG this happens gallery wide, creating initiatives for each of its works exhibited. Currently they are in the process of re-interpreting the two-hundred inch glass disk in their Optics Gallery. They are creating a mock up with iterations of the object, performing formative evaluations and testing out exhibition related content. This requires a fair amount of background knowledge, beyond the fact it was a first cast for the Hale Telescope. The history and acquisition are important aspects to consider when looking at how an object is perceived.

Application: Modeling and sensory

More than fun facts and history, interpretation also pertains to perception. How a visitor views an object is just as important as how it is deciphered. These modes of viewing can lead to a better appreciation and comprehension of the learned material. The CMOG is promoting new ways of interpretation through various different experimental methods. Some of these are sensory-based, such as an experience based on scent, inspired by their large collection of glass perfume bottles. Creating a model of an ancient perfumery, visitors are given a hands-on opportunity to smell, touch, and see. Scent cards give them something tactile to take away with them, while the smell contained on them remains after the conclusion of the museum visit, contributing to a recollection of an interpretative experience. Combined with visual elements, the whole encounter has many pathways of association and perception, making for a memorable analysis.

Another example for an interpretative experience within the museum is led by The Explainers. Paired with “interpretation carts,” these teenage gallery guides lead young visitors on an exploration of the senses and of the mind. Designed with children in mind, the carts contain items that aid in the learning and understanding of objects throughout the galleries. Giving examples of Museum Hack techniques and methods, the CMOG encouraged The Explainers to conceive and construct a cart that follows this kind of thinking. One technique involves humanizing objects by constructing a narrative from the perspective of the piece, thus creating a

connection to the material through an imagined familiarity. Other methods include props and the use of personal responses, all in the efforts to give a new interpretation to the works of art.

Social Media and Relationships

“Now, more than ever before, new technologies allow the museum to imagine creating new experiences and enhancing familiar ones in unprecedented ways” (Bradburne, 2008). Since digital technologies first appeared on the market, people have been developing ways of integrating them for the purpose of improving our lives. The museum is no exception in this. Although some institutions have held fast to the traditional model, today we are seeing interaction with technologies become mainstream, and even essential in our everyday lives. Within this new wave is the possibility of forming relationships and connections with the benefits of instant communication throughout the world. One aspect that has established a hold in our society is the use of social media. No matter the content, the value it has to the building of communities and relationships is paramount. Blossom (2009) explains:

Whether we bring our content into our social media community or whether we bring our social media community into our content, we are seeing the presence of social networks in every day content as key elements of its value. The content becomes a launching point for expanding our relationships with people as much as the relationships in our social media communities become a launching point for expanding our insight into content. Social media challenges us to recognize that the power of personal relationships is needed more than ever to make a public media experience valuable to people. (p. 218)

Feature: Accessibility

Museum Hack is about the present, which includes our digitized world. Our devices have become extensions of ourselves and we rely on them for communication and interaction.

Originally thought not to be applicable to museums, Museum Hack has changed this perspective and introduced technology not as a tool for the institution, but as a method of engagement for the visitor. The long standing association of museums as places of higher thinking has made them inaccessible for a large number of the population. This posed a huge problem for museums: “In order to attract and hold audiences, museums must provide resources and technologies that acknowledge various cultures and abilities” (Giusti, 2008).

One method that assists in this endeavor is the use of online ticketing. Purchasing tickets for a Museum Hack tour is simple, quick, and easy, which is exactly what most consumers want. There is no need for paper stubs or a physical token for proof of purchase. The transactions all happen online and in an instant. A confirmation email is sent with a booking number and other information pertaining to the tour. There is no need to print anything either, as the virtual ticket can be stored on any smart phone. Even that is not a requirement, as a simple form of identification will suffice as well. This method of procurement can be achieved by any person with access to the internet, making the possibility of attending a Museum Hack tour an accomplishable reality, with the only conceivable complication being getting to the museum.

Application: Website

The CMOG has also accepted this technological approach and offers online ticket purchasing. Although not directly affected by the actions of Museum Hack, it should be noted that what they have in common is beneficial considering the amount of visitors each entity receives. It also opens a door of engagement for the CMOG, as potential visitors visit their

website to find information on admission prices and hours of operation, they are introduced to the wide array of interactive opportunities. Visitors are invited to make an account, enabling them to design their own personal tours, make collections, and mark favorite items as they explore the museum's website. Information about touring, programs, collection pieces, glassmaking, research, involvement, and shopping are all available, just a click away. The website is thorough, concise, and easy to use, lending to the belief that the CMOG values its online accessibility, and not purely the physical encounter.

Feature: Promotion

In addition to accessibility, Museum Hack recognizes that the technological influence does not stop at the website. Using buzzwords, internet based jargon, blogs, and visual stimulation, they have appealed to a new generation, yet caught the attention of older ones as well. While conducting tours, Museum Hack tour guides encourage selfies, the use of hashtags during and after the tour, and the action of photographing your experience. These all contribute to online comments and communication, further supporting their presence as facilitators of a different kind of museum experience. Another technological instrument at their disposal is the blog. Similar to a message board, Museum Hack is a strong supporter of its use, creating posts on every kind of subject imaginable as it relates to them. From telling interesting stories to “how-to” instructional advice, Museum Hack has have their visitors hooked.

Application: Glass App

In addition to using and promoting hashtags, selfies, blog posts, and other technologies, the CMOG has introduced a new form of interaction available on the website and through an app. Reachable through their website, visitors can explore, play, learn, engage, and communicate through the platform, making it easy and enjoyable to connect with the objects, architecture, and materials. There are also videos that correspond with areas of the museum, all viewable through the app. To combat battery loss on visitors' personal devices, the museum has established charging stations throughout the museum, identified with a special symbol, making it possible to stay all day without losing your connection.

Another step forward for the CMOG toward online interaction is being included in the Google Arts & Culture database. Containing over a thousand works, the CMOG is listed as “The foremost authority on the art, history, science, and design of glass. [The CMOG] is home to the world’s most important collection of glass, including the finest examples of glassmaking spanning 3,500 years” (Google Arts & Culture, 2018). Each work displayed is able to viewed at a close distance through the technology of high resolution photography. Details are made clear as if the viewer were standing in front of the piece with a magnifying glass in hand. Besides making glass art accessible to those who cannot visit the museum, it also gives a taste of what the CMOG has in store, tantalizing the viewer with a visual treat. Furthermore, the museum galleries were documented with a 360-degree camera, allowing the viewer to virtually “walk” through the galleries and see the work on display.

Feature: Relationships

Fostering relationships is a cornerstone quality accepted by many successful companies and institutions. Although the museum is a non-profit organization, there are some guidelines it follows similar to those of a business, like Museum Hack. No museum can survive without the contribution of visitors and others that support their mission, which falls in line with the requirements of any enterprise. Museum Hack is a company who understands this concept and has made a point of establishing and maintaining relationships with museums and their employees. This entails possessing a friendly disposition, with a respectful treatment of all persons who come into contact with it. By treating everyone as a friend, Museum Hack has created a reputation of being non-elitist and amicable. This has resulted in doors being opened for them in many instances, even physically, as some museum staff have given them access to behind-the-scene areas not available to the public. These relationships also extend to the tour participants, making everyone there feel welcome and wanted.

Application: Community

The CMoG is very aware of their position in their community, locally and internationally. This kind of connective breadth encourages and attracts a diverse set of visitors, and the museum embraces this. What may seem complicated and daunting for other museums, the CMoG, in an effort to serve, has graciously welcomed people with a variety of ages, cultures, and professions. Being the foremost glass-based museum, they are multifaceted in their audiences, classifications, and structure. It is partly an art, a material culture, and a decorative arts museum. The acceptance

of this fact is seen in their arrangement of the galleries within their building, breaking them into categories for fluidity of viewing pleasure, which are the following: Contemporary Art + Design; Innovation; and the 35 Centuries of Glass galleries.

The CMOG yearly schedule comprises a long list of activities, programs, and events geared toward the community. Some are older and more established, such as the Junior Curator program that is celebrating its 60th year, while others are new and up and coming like the Cider program, which pairs local cideries with glassmaking. The goal of the CMOG is to be a visitor centered museum, which in turn, means getting to know your visitors and your community. The relationships the museum forms with those outside its walls can be long lasting, and for this reason special dedication has been given to teen programs development. An effort to introduce glass art and culture to young people will help cement a lifelong association with the museum. Programs like The Explainers and the Junior Curators, combined with other multiple visit programs, will encourage return visits and help the museum maintain relationships with the community and beyond. More focus has also been given to educators and teachers, introducing them to the resources available through the museum in order to establish a connection with their profession, and also with their personalities as life long learners. Kids and family programming is also popular at the CMOG with events like Holiday Open House, Spring Break Activities, 2300° Glass Fest, Nature Adventure, and an annual student art show. These are only a sampling of what a visitor can expect to find within the community of Corning, New York and the CMOG.

Conclusion

In my research, my goal was to find a connection between Museum Hack and the CMOG in the use of alternative forms of museum education. I found each institution to be conducting tours in many different forms, methods, and processes. I identified similarities and differences with regard to aspects concerning varying techniques and operations. However, the common thread that was contained throughout both components was the desire to create a positive and enjoyable learning environment for their visitors. Having completed the research work, the study, and the analysis, I have found that this recognition rings true in both cases, affirming the CMOG's approach to museum education is influenced by Museum Hack in many ways. With this recognized, I have also noted that Museum Hack tours contain elements that have been previously employed by museums like the CMOG for years. In conclusion, my research supports a developing alternative museum education that, in collaboration with experienced and seasoned institutions, can greatly benefit educators in many ways and in various locations.

Chapter Five: Conclusions

My goal, through the process of research, was to discover, identify, and witness the application of alternative museum education techniques and methods used by Museum Hack. Employed as a source of inspiration and influencer of change, I regard Museum Hack as not only a company with a new perspective toward museums, but as an incendiary agitator, moving museums away from traditional and archaic systems of educational practice. I believed it valuable to study Museum Hack, but to do so not with the purpose of investigating who they are and what they do, but rather through a focus on the application of their innovative methods in other institutions, in this case the Corning Museum of Glass (CMoG). I set out to study the influence and impact of Museum Hack on a particular museum to learn how their processes could be adjusted to fulfill the needs of other educators and museums. The CMoG had already recognized the potential in applying Museum Hack's practices, and begun the transition in carrying out these new directions in their work. I was able to explore Museum Hack and the CMoG in order to assess what was applicable, what was relevant, and what might be possible to shift in museum education. By evaluating the outcomes of the educational operation at the CMoG, and analyzing their practices based on the experience of Museum Hack, I was able to judge and suggest future uses for these alternative approaches to the visitor-based museum experience.

For What Purpose?

When inspecting the field of museums and museum education, there are several problems that arise which affect the operations and perspectives of the institutions in the present day. The first and foremost quandary is found in identifying the overall purpose of a museum. As our world has changed to a lifestyle based on the immediate delivery of information, satisfying our increased requirement for instant gratification, the very existence of the museum is called into question. Once established on the idea that the museum is the storehouse of knowledge, the applicable purpose for the visitor was to visit the desired destination in order to gain that knowledge. Today, said storehouse is the internet, easily accessible and adaptable to people throughout the world. In light of the fear of becoming obsolete, the museum has recognized that it too must change in order to remain relevant within our world today. Another factor further fueling this alteration is the subject of sustainability, and the ability to survive. Funding is of great importance to museums as they strive to remain open. With these two issues impending, the institution has asked the public what they would like from their museums. The museum is being transformed through a visitor based model, focusing on designing programs and developing content that is worthwhile, interesting, and engaging for their audiences today.

This transformation has resulted in a retooling of the museum in perception and in application. To accomplish this, many institutions have looked to education as a conduit of communication between the museum and their audience. Educators are tasked with the goal of sharing the importance of the museum with its visitors in order to have them return. Furthermore,

another question of ideals comes into play as they are presented with the recent query regarding the museum priority: What is our foremost mission, presentation of content or visitor engagement? As visitor experiences now centralize interpretation, sharing of knowledge in all forms, contexts, and accessibility, two viewpoints direct the museums' purpose, each with its own following and clamor for attention as the forerunning goal of museum education. Should the purpose be academic, with knowledge conveyed to visitors in a fashion similar to school or university teachings, or is its intent about offering visitors learning experiences accomplished through inspiration, engagement, and entertainment? The question has been and will continue to be discussed and analyzed.

Utilizing these two schools of thought, Museum Hack has developed a perspective of the museum being transferrable to the public view. Gaining awareness by their unconventional tours, the company promises a museum experience unlike any other. However, an underlying theme contained in their tours is the support of the academic education gathered through the visitor experience. The question for museum educators lies within the process of how this experience or education is executed.

Central Research Question

My questions about the role Museum Hack plays within the museum context stem from the opposition this business has received. I have heard and witnessed outright disapproval and antagonism directed toward them and their functions within the museum field. Conversely, I have read rave reviews, heard testimonials of praise, and have become familiar with their

operations firsthand. Through careful consideration of these opposing views, I found myself asking, “Why is this considered a bad thing?” Foreseeing no ill-based outcomes from their efforts, I sought to research the benefits that might arise from this form of museum-based experience. Furthermore, if there is an advantage to be had from the use of their instructional and experimental museum-based techniques, why cannot educators use these approaches for their own purposes and interests?

These questions, thoughts, and considerations formed the root of my central research question: Employing techniques influenced by Museum Hack, how is the CMOG developing an alternative approach to museum education, and what may institutions and educators learn from Museum Hack to help them create a more positive and enjoyable learning environment for visitors?

My Method

Believing hands-on involvement can provide worthwhile research-based answers, I committed to attending a tour held at The Metropolitan Museum of Art (The MET) conducted by Museum Hack. Through this experience I was able to participate in like manner as a visitor. Taking the role of an audience member, I was able to assimilate into the group, learn and be educated in the same manner as anyone taking the tour. I found a wealth of information in the way the tour was conducted. The information given on the artworks viewed was impressive and educational, yet it was the method of delivery that sparked my interests. Compared to other tours I had attended at various museums throughout the world, this was different in many ways. I was

able to gain an understanding of the experience through my own interactions, insights, and conversations with the guide and other members.

Taking this data in hand, I attended a tour held at the CMOG to see any resemblances or differences that occurred between this tour and the tour I experienced with Museum Hack. In addition to the experience of a tour, I also interviewed two key members of the CMOG education department concerning their interactions with Museum Hack, and inquired about why and how they have changed their educational programming to focus on the visitor experience. Through hours spent reviewing the information gathered from both locations and happenings, I compared and contrasted the methods established by the two entities. I focused on the techniques used by Museum Hack as a starting point. From there, I looked for the ties to the programming present at the CMOG. By asking detailed questions to educators at the museum, I was able to learn about how each program came to be and what influencers were at play within them. In this way I gained both an outsider and insider perspective regarding their museum education. After assessing the connections and differences I gathered from my research, I considered the possible application of these practices for other institutions.

The Outcome

The most important results that emerged from my research included the application of Museum Hack's principles and practices for other educators and their museums. For museum educators, basic elements of these methods may exist in some fashion of their programming, yet they are not applying them to the full extent of their usefulness. Often times, when a person is

too close to the situation, it is difficult to create a proper assessment of what is happening around them. For those involved with the institution, the factors that guide them in their efforts towards museum education can also be the same that are restrictive, sometimes even unbeknownst to them. In the case of Museum Hack, their status as a company, and not a museum, is advantageous in this regard. They are in a position to step back and take an objective look at the situation. In response to the perceived lack of visitor engagement, Museum Hack devised strategies to bring museum education to the populace, simultaneously ushering this education into the spotlight in a whole new dimension. It is this approach that was the focus of my research, and what results is the application of Museum Hack's purposes and practices within the CMOG.

The notion that a museum can be a place to experience entertainment and to be educated is not widely accepted or known, but this understanding is being considered increasingly today. The most important piece of information that I gathered through this research was clear evidence that an alternative method of museum education can be utilized while maintaining a meaningful level of educational purpose. It appears not in the best interest of the museum to reject new methods just because they are new or unconventional. Conversely, the fact these methods possess these innovative qualities is an attractive feature for some museum audiences. In several instances, the CMOG applied similar Museum Hack methods to their operations and had positive results. This too can be a beneficial outcome for other museums who apply some of Museum Hack's innovative concepts and activities.

Another factor that was applied to the use of these techniques was the need to customize them to meet a specific audience. If an institution undertakes a Museum Hack method and applies it directly to their operations without consideration of its application to their specific audience, it could end with mixed results depending on several circumstances. However, if the same museum assessed and analyzed the method, applying it with careful examination of their audience, positive outcomes may well occur. The CMOG looked at their visitors, their location, their community, and a number of other factors to determine the best form of application of methods introduced by Museum Hack. It was only then could they *start* the process of integrating it into programming, with the realization that it would take time to incorporate institutional change. Every museum is different in content, staff, structure, location, and more. There is not one method that is transferrable to every circumstance. It is advisable that each institution look inward before considering the process of integration of all Museum Hack techniques. Some approaches and practices will not apply well in various museum settings, just as was the case for the CMOG. However, with this said, the following are specific considerations I believe to be important for museums to explore and consider integrating into their educational practices, based on this research.

- The importance of the narrative: This subject matter encompasses two main components: storytelling and humor. By using these methods the museum benefits from the certitude that humans are story-centered creatures, appealing to characteristics within every person to form a narrative, connect and recollect with others, and be entertained. Additionally, humor is an

universal form of delivery that is relatable and translatable to every class of person, and was seen often in tours given both by Museum Hack and the CMOG.

- The focus on museum visitor experience: This spotlights the museum visitor, giving them a voice in the presentation of every aspect of the museum. By putting visitors at the center of the museum experience, visitors are more likely to be engaging participants, and most importantly a returning customer.
- The usefulness of interpretation: Unlike the longstanding model of museum education, where information about works of art is imparted to visitors directly, often in lecture form, the role of interpretation of content is becoming more essential. This is especially the case with the application of a visitor centered institution. By not conforming to a specific type of audience, the museum should consider a wide range of ways an object, concept, or historical fact can be grasped and understood by a wide variety of people.
- The need for establishing relationships: Interactions with others, in some form, is a daily occurrence and should be nurtured. In this social world, the use of internet based networks and communication is more than a beneficial tool, it is a requirement. Establishing relationships will not only help promote museum growth and success, it will reaffirm the essential role museums play in all our lives.

Future Research

My research focused on one Museum Hack tour, two museums, and one day of experience at each museum location. Just as in the case of reading a novel or a watching a movie

for the second or third times, the multiple visitation experience produces more information, insights, realizations, and questions. The museum is much the same; it produces a desire for further examination and inquiry. Because of size, some museums would take years to experience, and every visit would be different. The extent of possibilities for viewing art are vast and in one instance, at any singular museum, a visitor has the opportunity to have a completely new experience with every visit. Consequently, the possibilities of research into museum education are broad and extensive. There is always more to be discovered.

I pose a recommendation for future research of subject matter that delves deeper into the facets of education, within the realm of the museum as well as outside this setting. Each of these achievable avenues have multiple secondary pathways that could lead to new horizons of thought and inquiry. To the prospective researcher, I suggest keeping to a small playing field for data collection, yet never limiting the reach of possibilities that may emerge from it. Here I list a starting point of potential ideas that build on and correspond to the ideas expressed in this study, yet expand on them further and with more focus. Future related research could involve the following:

- Interviewing participants of Museum Hack tours, and comparing their experiences on this tour with what they experienced previously on other museum tours. Visitor studies provide an important understanding and response to institutional operations. Yet, too often the task of knowing visitors has fallen to the ill-equipped or over-tasked units within the museum operation. This leaves an underrepresented portion of museum visitors, especially in regards to

their responses to tours that are given. Recognizing this shortfall, the researcher is invited to determine the influence and importance a comprehensive and detailed study could produce, for the benefit of Museum Hack and the museum studied.

- Museum Hack does not operate only in art museums. They also conduct tours in natural science and history museums throughout the country. The questions a researcher might ask based on this information could pertain to the operations and techniques performed by Museum Hack at each various location. The ability to compare and contrast the foci of the museums as it relates to Museum Hack could prove to be a worthy endeavor. These questions could result in an inclusive examination of how various types of museums operate, who their audiences are, and how they are achieving worthwhile visitor engagement.
- Since 2013 Museum Hack has been using The MET as their point or origin for their tours. Expanding and changing in their activities and operations along the way, Museum Hack has evolved from their humble beginnings. However, to what degree has The MET explored the responses to and repercussions of Museum Hack on The MET? As a massive institution with international acclaim and influence, most would consider The MET a powerhouse in the museum field. However, not contained in a vacuum, the museum is susceptible to influence from any number of factors. How has Museum Hack been a part of this, and what are the effects they have had on the institution? Instead of focusing on the outward consequences of Museum Hack, a researcher might consider the internal impact it possesses; the gallery

attendants, the front desk supervisors, and even the museum director might be affected by the inclusion of this company. This may be worthwhile to investigate and know.

- Similar to the use of Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) within the museum and the classroom, some techniques used by Museum Hack can also be applicable to elementary, middle, and high school education in a class or homeroom setting. VTS is a series of specially formatted questions that encourage a new perspective of the item in front of the learner. This technique is used widely in schools and museums through the nation. If a teacher were to apply a Museum Hack method to their curriculum, the outcomes could be worthy of an investigation. For those searching for a way to bridge museum and school education, this subject could be the end of their pursuit and the beginning of their path of research.
- Tasking this study further, one avenue of exploration could be the relationship of the CMOG and Museum Hack over time. The CMOG has expressed their interest in using Museum Hack as an asset for future consultations, trainings, and workshops. By doing so, they are establishing a connection created over years of interactions between the two groups of staff members and executives. How will this relationship evolve and transform over time, and what are the seen and unseen outcomes possible from such a union?
- Ultimately, the impact Museum Hack has on the field of museums is something to consider. I would suggest a longitudinal study of the consequences, influences, developments, and procedures that have emerged as a result of their presence in the field of museums. What have the efforts of Museum Hack produced over time, and what more can and will be done to

further the museum as a pillar in our international community? These questions and more will guide a thorough study into many years and evolutions of the museum and our society.

This list is not exhaustive as there are many pathways of possible research that could stem from this study, and each one appears as fascinating as the next. Museum education is an ever changing field. It is reliant on the condition of the visitor today, which does not mean it will be the same in the future. Each generation must continually examine and question the viewpoints applicable to every portion of museums, education, audience, and their alliance.

Final Thoughts

I enjoyed conducting this study, and in the process discovered a passion that has been kindled with great ferocity. The museum is a location that has, for years produced great enjoyment for me. Yet I have found it concerning when others do not share my affinity, or at least respect, for the museum. I know it to be an important and irreplaceable component within our communities, even more now than I did previously. I have experienced the possibilities it holds and seen the potential of its gifts. Yet, over a short amount of time, I have observed it struggle with a considerable loss of attention, deflated appeal, and loss of support. It pains me to be witness to this, and therefore it is my aim to be an ever supportive advocate of the museum. It is my belief that, an incredibly important and valuable aspect of the museum is its ability to be experienced by all people, for it has something to offer everyone. I feel it is within our best interest to find suitable and productive methods that lead to increased visitor engagement, educational learning, and an overall positive museum experience to be shared throughout our

society. By working towards this goal, museums and educators have the ability to influence the outcome of future generations and the subsequent survival of the institution that encourages its visitors to experience, learn, and grow.

Appendix



OFFICE OF RESEARCH SUPPORT
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

P.O. Box 7426, Austin, Texas 78713 · Mail Code A3200
(512) 471-8871 · FAX (512) 471-8873

FWA # 00002030

Date: 11/22/17

PI: Danielle Grenier

Dept: Art/Art History

Title: A case study of the Corning Museum of Glass and Museum Hack

RE: Non-Human Subjects Research Determination

Dear Danielle Grenier:

The Office of Research Support (ORS) reviewed the above protocol submission request and determined it did not meet the criteria for human subjects research as defined in the Common Rule (45 CFR 46) or FDA Regulations (21 CFR 56). IRB review and oversight is not required because the activities involve:

- No human interactions
- Classroom activities used to teach methodology and technique
- Program evaluation where results are not generalized to other services or programs
- Secondary use of de-identified data set (no direct or links to identifiers)
- Obtaining information that is not about living individuals
- Obtaining information from publicly available sets
- Biographical research that is not generalizable beyond the individual
- Archival research using existing literature
- Other (Explain):

At this time you are free to begin your research as IRB approval is not necessary. You should retain this letter with the respective research documents as evidence that IRB review and oversight is not required.

If you have any questions contact the ORS by phone at (512) 471-8871 or via e-mail at orsc@uts.cc.utexas.edu.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "James P. Wilson".

James Wilson, Ph.D.
Institutional Review Board Chair

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