



# Kids & Their Grownups:

New insights on developing dynamic museum experiences for the whole family

DENVER ART MUSEUM



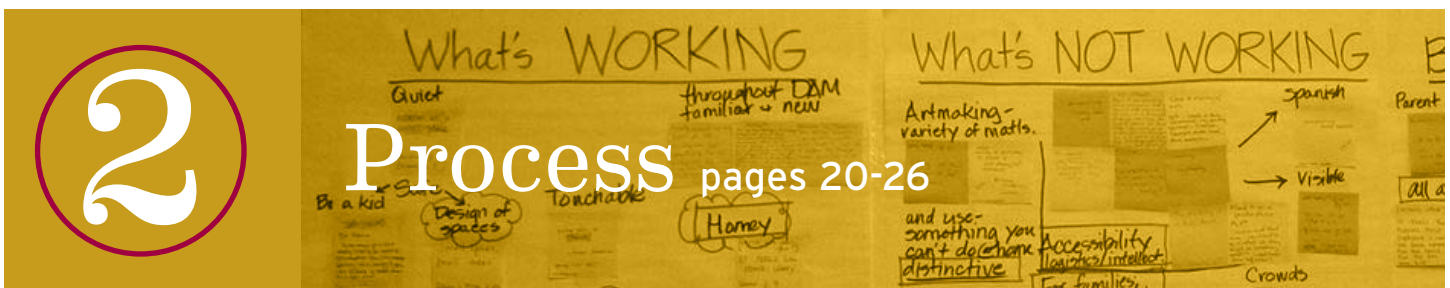
With generous support from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the Denver Art Museum has undertaken this project to explore how to increase our relevance and meaning to family audiences and how to build family participation in the museum—how to **bring in the future**. This project challenged us to **permeate the galleries** with new experiences for children, parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and caregivers.



The process of audience evaluation has pushed our practice by cultivating a critical mass of **museum practitioners who are passionate about listening** to visitors and creative about transferring their learning into family interpretive projects.

**For the reader:** There are four main sections to this report, each of which may be of interest to different museum professionals—*Findings*, *Process*, *Projects*, and *Evaluation Tool kit*. Much of the information can be accessed in multiple ways, for example, family audience evaluation protocols can be found through links in the text or in the *Evaluation Tool kit* section.

 RESOURCE LINK = *Colored Italics*





# Introduction

# What we set out to do

Our **primary goals** centered around serving the needs of families.

We sought to:

- ➔ Gain a deeper understanding of parents and kids as visitors
- ➔ Advance our thinking about art making and play-based activities for families
- ➔ Expand our reach by including options for children as young as 3 years old

Our **secondary goals** revolved around professional development—we sought to build a core group of staff members who are individually and collectively engaged in evaluation and reflective practice. Our goals were to:

- ➔ Learn and practice techniques for interviewing parents and kids
- ➔ Innovate with unusual data-gathering techniques
- ➔ Gain practice analyzing data



# Family projects to enjoy in their own time on their own terms

To complement existing family programs, we completed 15 new in-gallery projects that families can enjoy in their own time and on their own terms—new backpacks, new family landing pads in gallery spaces, and new games in familiar formats. *Family Backpacks, Create Corners, and Games Spec Sheet.*

**BACKPACKS.** Developed at the Denver Art Museum more than 25 years ago, backpacks are still our hallmark family program, yet they're anything but business as usual. We've ramped them up with authentic materials, extreme craftsmanship, and over-the-top formats. Families—kids and adults alike—delight in unpacking games, puzzles, and artmaking activities and choosing those that appeal to them. Their experiences transform the otherwise adult spaces of the galleries into family environments where kids and their grownups can connect with art. We added three new backpacks for 3- to 5-year-olds and four for 6- to 12-year-olds, including:

**Animals and Heroes in India** We created this backpack for our Indian gallery to invite families to engage in imaginative play and storytelling. Inspired by a statue of the Hindu deity Hanuman, Bastar Bronze figures, and a large-scale shadow puppet, the backpack encourages families to explore traditional art of India.

**iViva la Vida!** Encouraging a discovery of daily life in Colonial Mexico, these games and artmaking projects are inspired by three works in the Colonial Mexico gallery.

**CREATE CORNERS.** Family landing pads, where we've carved out spaces in the galleries, are designed so families can make their own creations while surrounded by original works of art. We know it's inspiring to create in the presence of world-class art, so we've figured out new ways to do that with the safety of the collection and the comfort of visitors in mind. We developed four new create corners:

**Looking West Create Corner.** Harnessing the essence of the Western landscape, this create corner explores layering of skies and panoramas from the paintings in adjacent galleries. Families work on a light table to mix and match transparencies, printed with foregrounds and backgrounds of paintings and different mood shades, replicating works they may have seen in the galleries or creating one from their own imagination.



Looking West Create Corner



iViva la Vida! Backpack

**Bosch Create Corner.** This cozy corner in the gallery immerses families in the fantastic creations of the Follower of Bosch painting nearby. With whimsical activities and a story-starter flipbook, families use imaginative play and humor to build their own puppets inspired by the painting. This space also uses previously developed interpretive information to support adult engagement.

**GAMES.** We've used familiar game formats to help kids and adults feel at home in the galleries and encourage them to look closely and make their own discoveries about works of art. For this project, we've created four new games, including:

**Arcimboldo Portrait Building.** Inspired by Arcimboldo's *Summer* and *Autumn*, both of which hang in this room, this portrait-building activity utilizes everyday objects—fake fruit, hardware pieces, and squishy sea creature toys—to invite families to create their own versions of these iconic portraits.



**Looking West.** This board game invites families to scour the galleries for snow-capped peaks and spinning lassos among the western landscapes in a familiar game-board format similar to bingo.

## Why focus on families with young children?

In the last several years, the biggest catalyst for growth of DAM family programs has been our youngest audience, children between the ages of 3 and 5. Welcoming our youngest visitors and their grownups to what may have been an unfamiliar environment builds their comfort, invites them to visit again, and creates family memories that can last a lifetime.

Just as important, museum experiences can have a big impact on the formative learning experiences of young children. And because kids don't visit the museum alone, they can be entry points for the adults in their lives, helping us to attract and serve more diverse audiences. Much of what we've learned in this project also applies to families with older children—6- to 12-year-olds—an audience we'll continue to serve.

**Research supports it.** Though many family programs in art museums (ours included) have targeted families with children age 6 and older, a recent study by Reach Advisors suggests that families with younger children particularly enjoy visits to art museums because they introduce their children to the creations of different cultures.<sup>i</sup> However, many parents question whether art museum visits are age-appropriate for young children, so we have to strive to make them feel welcome. In a literature review commissioned by the Smithsonian Early Enrichment Center, MEM & Associates summarized the qualities of museums that foster learning in young children—real artifacts, immersive exhibits, and familiar contexts. We were drawn to the report's mention of the importance of play for both children and parents and the role of adult interaction in learning, findings that further supported our work for this audience.<sup>ii</sup>

**Admission counts support it, too.** When the DAM opened the Hamilton Building in 2006, attendance counts revealed that 2,409 visitors were under the age of 5. In 2012, that number had risen to 7,894. This dramatic growth has changed the way staff members think about family programs, suggesting an important new audience to cultivate.

## Why focus on grownups?

In studying families we gained a heightened awareness of parents and other adults who are active participants in museum visits. With that came a new appreciation for serving their needs, both as individuals and as facilitators of family experiences.

Parents interact with their kids in very different ways in the museum, falling somewhere on the spectrum from directive to laid back. At one end are those who want to know what they need to know to teach their children—to present information and make sure their kids “get it.” At the other end of the spectrum are those who enjoy any type of family engagement, whether that’s sitting back and watching their kids engage in any way that interests them or jumping right in and exploring together.

**Adults wear several hats** when they bring children to the museum. While they may spend the majority of their time functioning as parents or caregivers, they also have their own individual needs. Grownups run the gamut from young adults with their own interests in art and culture, to grandparents with time and energy to pursue lifelong learning.

**New programming for young adults** has resulted in an increase in visitors ages 20 to 35. As these visitors begin to form families, it will be increasingly important to move them from young-adult-oriented to



family-focused programs. Generation X and Y parents are generally highly educated and tend to have children later in life; they appreciate opportunities to spend time with their families and pursue their own interests.

**New insights for museum staff members** include recognizing differences in parenting styles and their impact on visitor experiences. For years we’ve focused on children’s ages, behaviors, and learning styles, but we’ve discovered that parenting styles are every bit as much of a factor in shaping unique family experiences.

*It made me think deeper about the parent piece. It's so interesting when parents are fully engaged because they're actually being challenged themselves instead of being on the sidelines and hoping their kids are having fun. Parents have a better time; their kids see that they're having a good time. Trying to really get that parent piece is what stands out for me from the evaluation.*

**LINDSAY GENSHAFT, COORDINATOR OF COMMUNITY & FAMILY PROGRAMS**



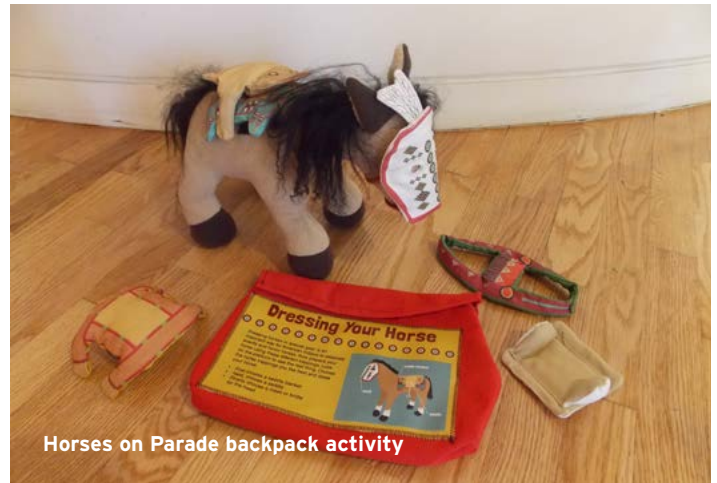
# Where we started

This project was built on three fundamental principles.

**1. We support families in being the kind of families they want to be.** “Serving with choice” is a core concept for us—one that we’ve iterated on for years. To give family visitors a variety of ways to access the art, we’ve built a repertoire of different types of play from which they can choose. Kids and their grownups can put things together in creative ways, kindle their imaginations through dress up and storytelling, develop social skills through game playing, and practice small and large motor skills throughout the museum.

**2. Our way of thinking and working involves continual exploration and experimentation.** Our experiments are rooted in two things: our evolving understanding and the continual feedback we get from visitors. This project gave us many opportunities to exercise our problem-solving muscles, which have gotten stronger with use. The perpetual cycle of evolution and iteration means that we’re never done; certainly not now.

**3. We typically favor low-tech/high engagement activities** that encourage visitors to use their fingers and hands, eyes and ears, brains and emotions. We believe that simplicity can lead to profound experiences for families.



Horses on Parade backpack activity



Parents participate at Visitor Panel

CHILD'S PLAY  
+  
INTUITIVE ACTIVITIES  
+  
SIMPLE DESIGN  
=  
RICH EXPERIENCES FOR  
COMPLEX KIDS AND FAMILIES



# 1

## Findings

# What have we learned about family experiences at the DAM?

Visitor panels were a key part of our curriculum in learning about families with young children. Front-end evaluation began with a visitor panel of parents and grandparents, whose discussion was transcribed and plumbed in a debriefing workshop with staff. Formative evaluation added fresh, new perspectives as each adult brought a child or grandchild to participate with them. Summative evaluation also incorporated adult and child perspectives in a new protocol that combined video documentaries, family interviews, and online surveys. In each debriefing meeting, staff members continued to identify noteworthy trends in our thinking about families and how we can best support their individual and collective meaning making. We created a ***Family experience checklist*** of ways to support successful family visits.



As is often the case with ongoing collaborative thinking, our lists of goals for family experiences and techniques for realizing them became more cohesive and concise with each iteration. When it came time to write this report we found that all of these principles fit into four categories.

- ➔ Focus on comfort.
- ➔ Build bridges between the museum and family life.
- ➔ Embrace and leverage the unique and distinctive.
- ➔ Support a range of family styles.

*It's not so much that we came up with a radically new idea, like comfort; we just "made things more." I can see this in how we're defining things, how we're pushing ourselves, being more explicit, more bold. Quality and authenticity have been around with backpacks for a while, but we've taken those even a step further. The fabrication level and format "got blown out of the water."*

MELORA MCDERMOTT LEWIS, DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION



## First things first. Focus on comfort.

Considering comfort is nothing new, but as we listened to families, their needs in physical, emotional, intellectual, and socio-cultural comforts became clearer. As this video shows, parents and children of different ages are able to have a variety of different experiences and come back together to share in ways that meet their individual and collective needs.



*This room is spectacular in every sense: the artwork is fabulous and imaginative and we felt very cozy and comfortable on those couches. It encourages curiosity about the art in an intimate setting.*

PARENT, SUMMATIVE EVALUATION

### 1. Design for kids and adults

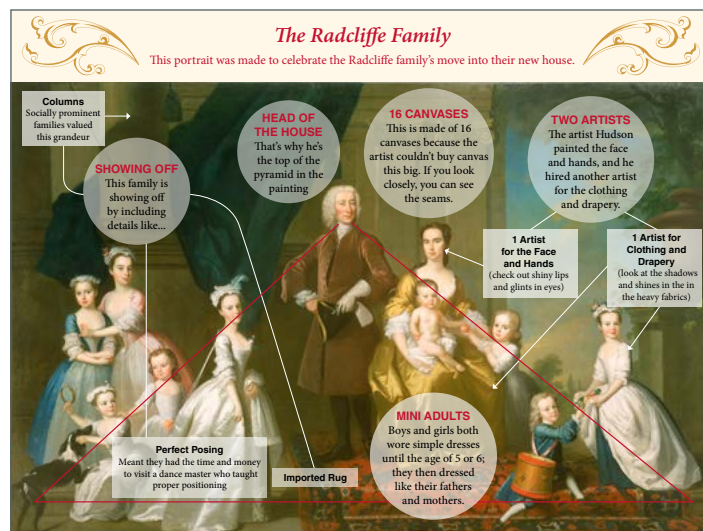
Design plays a critical role in successful family engagement. Early in our thinking we realized that spaces do not have to be "kidified" in order to attract families; instead, we need to consider how to design with furniture and finishes that fit everyone.

*I like that it looks like home. It looks like anybody's house and they have books on the shelves. The kids are very interested in doing what they're doing and you can just grab a book and sit on the couch and read.*

CRISTINA, VISITOR PANELIST

### A variety of design factors contribute to family comfort:

- Activities that are intuitive
- Furniture that fits everyone
- Designated "landing pads" to allow families to spread out
- Spaces that are designed to be family friendly without being "kidified"
- Activities that are clearly connected to works of art



Parents kept reminding us that **we need to be more explicit**. Things that were obvious to us were not obvious to our family visitors. Parents asked us to answer such general questions as:

- ➔ What can we do here?
- ➔ Why are we doing this?
- ➔ Which work of art is this activity related to? Where can I find it?

**Less is more when it comes to information.** To build parent confidence, we aim to strike a delicate balance between too much and not enough information.

*It's too much information. If I need to read all of that one and then I need to explain exactly what they need to do before they do their part... That would drive me crazy!*

DIANA, VISITOR PANELIST

*I really appreciated that right there on the object was iron, ivory, whatever. I could look and then I could say, 'Do you know what ivory is?' I didn't have to look and make all these connections.*

CAROLYN, VISITOR PANELIST

*I feel like we need "Art museum for dumb parents" or something like that. That's how I feel.*

CAROLYN, VISITOR PANELIST

*The art feels less accessible to me and my children than, say, the Butterfly Pavilion, where everything feels very accessible. I can explain that to my children, as opposed to saying, 'I have no idea what that is.'*

BROOKE, VISITOR PANELIST

Many scholars used these beautifully painted bottles for storing snuff (ground up tobacco), which they sniffed up their noses. Back then, people thought it was good for you, like medicine.



Study the dolls and compare these bottles to the ones on the wall. Can you spot the 2 differences on each?

Present information in ways that are comfortable for parents and kids. Many parents, including those for whom English is not their native language, like to read information out loud. Knowing this, we've made special efforts to write labels, instructions, and interpretation in read-aloud language.

*It seems conversational for the kids and it has a very easy language for them to understand. So they have a chance for conversation with me.*

CRISTINA, VISITOR PANELIST

**To communicate with families we will:**

- Be conversational
- Write text that's meant to be read aloud
- Make instructions explicit and succinct
- Send "at-a-glance" messages that provide visual cues



**3. Make everyone feel at home**

To truly be welcoming, we need to be inclusive in all respects. For a family to have a successful visit they need to see themselves in the museum. They also need to experience diverse cultural perspectives, including their own.

*I really recommend that all these instructions need to be in Spanish, too, because in many, many areas it's only English.*

DIANA, VISITOR PANELIST

*Most of the dolls, I believe all of them, are female dolls. I would like it if there were maybe a couple of male dolls they could work with, too.*

EVAN, VISITOR PANELIST

**To make the DAM inclusive we will:**

- Incorporate Spanish in family prompts
- Mine the collection for cultural connections that are relevant to our audiences
- Use gender-neutral language
- Use male and female examples and models
- Recognize the impact of cultural values on family values



**ARCONES DE TESORO**

Los arcones fueron hechos para guardar objetos especiales. En la Colombia colonial, hábiles artistas decoraban estos arcones con imágenes de plantas y animales de Sudamérica y diseños europeos. Mezcla los diseños para decorar tu propio arcón del tesoro.

# Build bridges between the museum and family life

In talking with families we learned that they take their museum experiences home with them, into their dining rooms during family dinners and in their cars on family vacations. Knowing this, we want to be more intentional about building real-life connections during their museum visits and strengthening those connections afterwards—be it through a shadow puppet made at the DAM that lives on their fridge or through family conversations about Western landscape paintings while driving through the mountains.



Trivia Game in iViva la Vida! Backpack

We can help families make connections with daily life by supporting what they're already doing in the unique environment of the museum.

*Activities seemed to support the moment of growth that was already happening in his life, making the museum visit part of daily life...We observed everyday life happening as conversations in the museum.*

**MOLLY MEDACOVICH,  
MASTER TEACHER OF WESTERN AMERICAN ART**

In our summative surveys, which were conducted four to six weeks after their museum visits, parents talked about connections they'd observed between their museum experiences and real-life experiences.

*We have been driving and looked at the mountains and said how it is like the pictures we created at the museum.*

**PARENT, SUMMATIVE EVALUATION**

*Being from New Mexico in the area where many Santos are created, it was interesting to learn about something that I actually never knew about that was from where I grew up.*

**PARENT, SUMMATIVE EVALUATION**



Bandana artmaking in On the Trail backpack

*I think it's a place that shows kids that aren't really familiar with what humans are capable of, a little bit more of what we are capable of. Some of the stuff you see ... it blows you away that most people out there couldn't do that and for some people, it's even easy. I think that's a cool thing for kids to see and helps them realize there's a lot that they are going to be able to accomplish.*

JAMES, VISITOR PANELIST

**To connect with daily life we will:**

- Use familiar formats as entry points, such as puppets and puzzles
- Choose readily available but unexpected materials for artmaking
- Create open-ended activities that capitalize on discovery and appeal to children with different aptitudes



## Embrace and leverage what is unique and distinctive

When comparing ourselves with other family-friendly venues we've always thought that we had to compensate for the quieter, more contemplative environment of the art museum. What we learned is that the Denver Art Museum is different from other family experience options—different in positive ways.

*What the museum offers that these other places don't... is that it is more of a discovery process for adults and children together.*

CAROLYN, VISITOR PANELIST



Parents reminded us that **the quiet atmosphere and slower pace is one of the art museum's greatest assets.** Embracing what makes us unique—from encounters with world art objects to one-on-one conversations in quiet



corners—quickly became a guiding principle. Opportunities to express creativity set us apart from many other family experiences. Creativity is an institution-wide goal at the DAM and we learned it is also a family value. Whenever family programs can piggyback on initiatives that support the museum’s mission and vision, they’ll gain traction with internal stakeholders and create cohesive experiences for external audiences.

*Going to the art museum is a very different experience than going to the ice cream store. Both are enjoyable but a museum visit is educational and experiential in terms of the quality of life, not just immediate gratification.*

DEAN, VISITOR PANELIST

*My oldest is sensory sensitive...When we come here he can enjoy it more because it is a little more quiet.*

CRISTINA, VISITOR PANELIST

## 1. Spark family conversations that don't happen anywhere else



The unusual objects that families encounter in the art museum, coupled with the slower pace of time spent in museum visits, can lead to family conversations that are deep, rich, and lasting. Minda Borun says that “Conversation is the ‘currency of family learning.’”



### Parents put it this way:

*Sometimes...you have the same type of conversations with the family a lot...At the art museum there's new topics and things to talk about...It's a change of pace where you can talk about different stuff.*

JAMES, VISITOR PANELIST

*You are going to have a dialogue. It is not about presenting information. I think it is more about questioning and letting them discover things...In a way it requires more, but it has great value.*

CAROLYN, VISITOR PANELIST

*Without a doubt, our visits to the Museum make for more interesting dinner conversations.*

PARENT, SUMMATIVE EVALUATION

## 2. Support engagement with the real thing

Our goal for every family activity is that it be grounded in the story, context, history, or creation of one-of-a-kind works of art. Whenever we’re developing a family experience **we start with the object, dissecting and unpacking it for everything it can reveal**, from the creative process to why it was made, who used it, and how it was displayed. All of those things become fodder for experiences we recreate for families. Mining each object to find the nuggets that will resonate for families is what makes our activities feel so authentic.



### 3. Create experiences that families CAN'T do at home

In this virtual world, **the real is more important than ever**. Families get it. They told us again and again how much they appreciated the attention to details and authenticity of materials in the backpacks, create corners, and games. To maximize this we:

- Use high quality materials that are as authentic as possible, connecting visitors to the essence of works of art.



Parents appreciated knowing that family experiences are designed around specific works of art in the collection. Even though these **collection connections are fundamental to all of our family experiences**, we can't assume that all parents will pick up on them. As the following comments show, some do and some don't, underscoring our need to be even more explicit than we might think necessary. It's better to mention things that some parents may know than to leave other parents wondering.

*I thought the connections between the items in the backpack and the actual exhibit were quite interesting.*

PARENT, SUMMATIVE EVALUATION

*I think we missed the connection with the artist and paintings. The kids didn't seem to understand why they were doing it ... they just thought playing with the magnets was fun.*

PARENT, SUMMATIVE EVALUATION

- Ensure that all components are thoughtfully made, paying attention to the smallest details.



*Touching the things on the board from the Samurai outfit was not something we'd get to do anywhere else.*

CHILD, SUMMATIVE EVALUATION



Living like a Chinese Scholar Backpack activity

# Support a range of family styles

As we processed what we heard and observed, we realized that we need to be more nuanced in the ways we tease apart the idea of “family.” Through this project we’ve gained a more sophisticated understanding of a wide variety of family inclinations—educational, experiential, imaginative, or culturally oriented.

## 1. Accommodate the incredible variety of parenting styles

As these videos show, **parenting styles determine the approach families took to engaging in activities** and shaped the overall tone of their museum experience. Recognizing and celebrating these differences among families, our goal is to provide layered content and interactive opportunities to help each family find the experiences they’re looking for. As we design family experiences, we’re mindful of the need to offer experiences that appeal to different kinds of families. This mother is very focused on working with her daughter to follow instructions and achieve the goals of the activity.

These parents are comfortable letting their three children do whatever they like, whether it’s engaging in the activity or retreating to a quiet corner to read a book.



We don’t always have to start from scratch. We’ve found that developing new family experiences in galleries that already have a critical mass of interpretive opportunities helps us support a wide range of family interests. This video shows how the European Discovery Library serves as the setting for a game that accommodates the learning styles of a younger and older daughter and triggers the interest of their mother.





What adults said...

exploratory new connecting helpful  
 present entertaining bonding  
 cultural fun different  
 enjoyable surprising  
 shared engaging creative  
 adventure family educational cool

What kids said...

adventure educational learning  
 happy amazing  
 busy fun mexico  
 great cool  
 artistic exciting  
 awesome armor bottle

## 2. Strike a balance between parents' needs and kids' needs

Parents want to help guide their children's experience, but they're also interested in learning themselves. So **it's not only a matter of where parent and child needs converge, but where they diverge**, and how we mediate between the differing needs of adults and children. Parents feel torn between their own needs and those of their children, which often take precedence, and tend to put their needs aside in order to let their kids make their own discoveries.

*I think that's interesting—to think about our needs versus their needs...A lot of times when I come I want to say, 'Let's look at everything. Now let's do the activity.' But they're gone by that point. To have them jump into it, then take some time to start making a connection, that's a totally different way for me to think about interacting with my child in the museum.*

CAROLYN, VISITOR PANELIST

*It gives me a more in-depth way of how to explain a different culture...not just for my kid, but for me.*

EVAN, VISITOR PANELIST



We've been rigorous in remembering that **we are not planning children's programs**; we are planning family programs. In every family group there's at least one adult who we need to focus on every bit as much as the children, and that has implications for how we design each family experience.

*A family was children "accompanied" by an adult; adults were not the priority, they were the designated driver. Listening to the visitor panelists I heard the parents say they want to learn, too; they want to participate. It's not about engaging the adults or the kids but engaging them both, at least in the same proximity, if not in the same label or experience.*

ANGELICA DANELO, ASSOCIATE CURATOR OF PAINTING & SCULPTURE

### 3. Provide a variety of choices that stimulate parents and children

Serving families with choice means creating wildly different kinds of experiences, from the Bosch Create Corner, where kids can go wild with joy, laughing, and screeching to the Scholar's Desk, where they are quiet and contemplative, looking carefully and talking softly. It's interesting to see how the dynamics can be so radically different even with the same family members.

As we design family experiences, we're mindful of the need to provide a variety of entry points that create challenges for everyone from preschoolers to grandparents. For example, very young children may not be able to design faces in the Arcimboldo Portrait Building activity, but they can have fun manipulating the magnetic pieces.

*It's fun for a grandparent to point out different things... 'Oh, look at how the light shines on the statue, look at the color. What color is this?' It's fun to interrelate from a grandparent's perspective on all of those kinds of things, not just personally to discover some new piece of art.*

DEAN, VISITOR PANELIST

*Kids are working right next to adults... it's nice for my four-year-old to see an adult working with the same materials he's working with. They're both creating different things and looking at each other's creations.*

LEANNE, VISITOR PANELIST

#### To provide multiple entry points we will:

- Use graphics and text to attract and engage different skill levels and age levels
- Provide a critical mass of interpretive opportunities from which family members can choose
- Level the playing field by creating activities where parents don't always have to be the experts
- Incorporate different levels of complexity within activities, with simple examples for the youngest and complex variations for older kids or adults who want more of a challenge
- Create activities and spaces where different generations can work side by side



# In the end, here's what we want for families

As we reflected on the findings of two family-visitor panels we began to articulate Family Experience Goals, which have become touchstones for the project.

## Serve parents' needs and desires

*Support* parents so they're comfortable engaging with art that may be unfamiliar

*Give* parents tips for talking about art with their children so everyone enjoys the visit

## Provide engaging experiences that make art accessible for ALL ages

*Realize* that parents are also adults and develop experiences with their needs in mind

*Design* activities with multiple entry points for different skill sets and interest levels

## Support family experiences that don't happen anywhere else

*Start* conversations at the museum that can be continued over the dinner table

*Inspire* families to wonder about artistic creations they encounter at the museum

## Maximize engagement with the real thing

*Exploit* the uniqueness of materials and techniques used by artists

*Focus* on connections between art and daily life

*Create* opportunities for shared parent/child exploration and discovery

*We referred to the Family Experience Goals so often that I really latched on to that, carrying it around in my purse and using it as my guiding principles. Things like sparking conversations that visitors can't have anywhere else, providing high quality experiences, fulfilling parents' and guardians' needs and desires are always in my head. They impact every aspect of my practice.*

LINDSAY GENSHAFT, COORDINATOR OF  
COMMUNITY & FAMILY PROGRAMS

## "Sticky words and phrases"

These words from family-visitor panelists stuck in our minds; we couldn't shake them so we decided to use them in communicating with and about family audiences:

- unique and distinctive experiences
- a special place for families
- intergenerational
- shared exploration and discovery
- sustained looking
- authentic experiences
- s l o w down
- not a run thing
- make art accessible to me and my kids
- build bridges between museum experiences and family life





Because of our longstanding interest in capacity building, the DAM has a history of working with consultants in projects that actively involve staff members in conducting audience evaluation. This creates a shared knowledge base that allows us to keep pushing our practice in family engagement.



**DYNAMIC AND ITERATIVE PROCESS +**

**VALUING VISITOR VOICE +**

**CULTURE OF INQUIRY AND INTENTIONAL  
EXPERIMENTATION**





By now it goes without saying that evaluation is not just a percentage of the budget in grant-funded projects; it's an integral part of most museum processes. To build staff capacity and comfort around evaluation that supports program development, we:

- 1) Enlisted a critical mass of staff members to practice a variety of evaluation techniques with skilled evaluation consultants
- 2) Listened—frequently and systematically—to our visitors
- 3) Developed our skills in prototyping to get honest feedback



### Expanding our knowledge base

Building on a long history of learning about families, this project reinforced successful strategies for serving families and took family programming in new directions. A library of previous studies shows the evolution of our thinking about the best ways to serve families at the DAM.

- **Family focus groups, 1998-2001.** Research conducted by Margie Marino and David Barrett revealed issues that still resonate for families in this study. Parents appreciate the power of quiet in the museum environment and prefer playful activities to passive interaction. In presenting information, we need to hit the sweet spot between too much and not enough and aim for clarity in helping parents talk with their kids about their museum experiences.
- **Families and Art Museums grant, 1998.** A four-year grant from the Pew Charitable Trusts laid the foundation for family programs at the DAM—an approach that emphasizes in-gallery experiences and a focus on play to foster family engagement. A balanced mix of live, installed, and self-guided programs has proven effective in attracting family audiences from Denver's diverse cultures and communities.
- **IMLS grant supporting family engagement, 2005-2006.** Further development of family-oriented, in-gallery experiences in the Hamilton Building resulted in the creation of kids' nooks, gallery games, and new types of family interactives such as creating postcards to mail home, integrating video in family experiences, and using unusual materials for artmaking. The project included a peer review and assessment of family programs by leading thinkers in family research and program design. Participants included Jeri Robinson, vice president of early childhood, Boston Children's Museum; Lynn Dierking, Sea Grant professor in free-choice learning, Oregon State University; and Susy Watts, consultant in arts curriculum assessment, and museum education. After assessing family offerings, they recommended expanding the range of ages served by family programs to include 3- to 5-year-olds.

# Learn by doing (hands-on lesson in evaluation)

Our three-phased evaluation was an iterative process. In the words of one staff member, “It was a continuous cycle of observation, participation, integration, modification, and adaptation.” Evaluation consultants Daryl Fischer and Kathleen Tinworth wove capacity building throughout the project from start to finish, involving staff members in identifying research questions and collecting data.

After consultants did an initial analysis of data, staff teams were involved in debriefing meetings where they reflected on findings and how to incorporate them in their own practices. This allowed staff members to own each phase of the process, greatly increasing the likelihood of integrating what they learned and building an internal culture of practitioner evaluators.

*This “nutrition” is critical. It’s not generalities, which you could think of without ever listening to a visitor. When the words of visitors go through this group process with expert evaluators...that reflection added to the words of the visitors is inspiring. It enables people to do their creative best.*

**PATTERSON WILLIAMS, MASTER TEACHER OF ASIAN ART  
(FORMER DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION)**

## How the evaluation process worked:

- ➔ **Consultants** and **staff members** worked together to articulate questions
- ➔ **Consultants** developed protocol, facilitated visitor panels *front-end* and *formative*, and trained **staff** to conduct video interviews *summative*
- ➔ **Consultants** led debriefing meetings with **staff** contributing to shared analysis
- ➔ **Staff members** continuously circled back, reflecting on what they’d learned earlier in the process

## Project team

The project team included seven educators with a broad spectrum of age and experience levels, two curators, one marketing and communications staff member, and one exhibit designer. Their collaboration has set the stage for growing interest and greater participation from colleagues across the museum. Their comments reveal the profound impact of participatory evaluation.



Video documentary during Summative evaluation

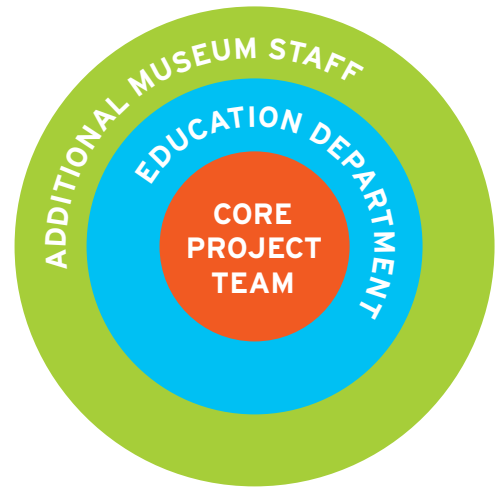
*It’s a growth experience for inexperienced, moderately experienced, and very experienced staff. It’s equally useful to all...In addition to providing the beginnings of understanding for a more junior staff, those who are delivering family programs, it’s tremendously important that senior staff members are re-excited about pushing even further. Leaders need inspiration as well as those delivering programs.*

**PATTERSON WILLIAMS, MASTER TEACHER OF ASIAN ART  
(FORMER DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION)**



Poster making at Visitor Panel

**Core project team**—those who developed backpacks, games, and create corners based on feedback from families comprised the core team



*This coming together around evaluation brought the department together, creating a sense of cohesion—almost like an “outward bound” in terms of the intensity of doing something together. With all of the staff changes it’s helped the new group to bond more quickly. It’s the creation of that culture that’s promulgated with a shared vocabulary and a shared commitment to inquiry.*

**MELORA MCDERMOTT LEWIS, DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION**

*I volunteered because it sounded like something I could learn from and it exceeded my expectations. We all have our own little expertise but whenever we meet and delve into things together we learn.*

**ANGELICA DANE0, ASSOCIATE CURATOR OF PAINTING & SCULPTURE**

**Education department**—the learning culture of the entire Education department seized on this project as a professional-development opportunity that provided a deep dive into family audiences and evaluation techniques

**Additional museum staff**—colleagues from curatorial, marketing and development departments, as well as a contract exhibit designer, observed evaluation activities and lent their perspectives at debriefing meetings



# Go to the well (visitor panels, video documentaries, and online surveys)

Staff members gained new insights about family audiences thanks to the enthusiastic participation of parents, grandparents, and children throughout the process.

## Visitor panels

This visitor panel was a first for us in combining the perspectives of parents and kids in a single study. Rather than asking adults what they thought their children would like, we took kids and their grownups on family tours of the galleries so they could explore prototypes together. Then each pair returned to our meeting room to create posters that combined both of their perspectives.

Their voices have resonated in the minds of staff members as we've worked to incorporate their feedback and make family experiences better and better. Staff members shared how powerful it was to get away from their desks, watch visitors, and listen to them talk about their experiences.

*Educators work so much better when they start directly quoting visitor panelists or families they observed. The immediate inspiration that comes from hearing visitors' own words—you can't underestimate how that impacts our work!*

**HEATHER NIELSEN,  
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION**

*Having the chance to spend two hours with a family as they dig into a backpack- the impact on our projects was incredible. It reshaped my sense of evaluation. Now I know how to build evaluation in a format that suits our goals and gives me feedback that I can use immediately to tweak an activity.*

**JODIE GOROCHOW, COORDINATOR OF  
COMMUNITY & FAMILY PROGRAMS**

*I hear these little voices saying "I need to have someone be explicit about this..." or "I need to be able to read this out loud to my kids..." The big thing is to have those visitor voices fresh in my mind.*

**LINDSEY HOUSEL, MASTER TEACHER OF  
ARCHITECTURE, DESIGN, AND GRAPHICS;  
MANAGER OF DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT PROJECTS**



## Video documentaries and online surveys

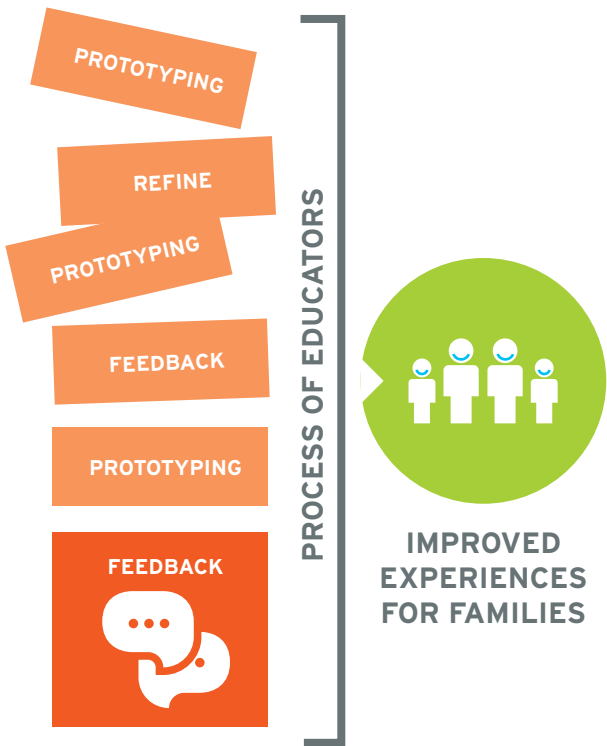
Also new was the use of video documentaries, which supported our goal of pushing our practice with innovative data-gathering techniques. Staff followed 26 families to our newly installed activities and recorded firsthand what worked and what did not. To add a longitudinal perspective to our study, each family received clips from their videos as part of an online survey, which provided the basis for reflecting on their museum experiences. Everyone who participated in the study agreed that this methodology took us into new territory, allowing us to observe as anthropologists. In transcriptions sometimes it's easy to focus on the answers to the questions; videos allow more texture, a chance to observe behavior.

**Use lots of cardboard and tape (Prototyping to get feedback)**

The iterative, experimental nature of our work doesn't require highly finished products to help us learn more about what visitors value. Our Family Programs team has become skillful at creating quick and dirty mock-ups and models that invite visitors to give concrete feedback at each stage of the design and development process. We presented rough drafts and prototypes to visitor panelists, reflected on their feedback at debriefing meetings, and incorporated suggestions in new iterations.

*If I hadn't worked on this grant and been exposed to the process, including prototyping, I wouldn't have known how important the iterative process is across all of our projects.*

**MOLLY MEDACOVICH, MASTER TEACHER OF WESTERN AMERICAN ART**



**PROTOTYPING →  
 FEEDBACK FROM FAMILIES →  
 REFLECTIVE PROCESS OF EDUCATORS =  
 IMPROVED EXPERIENCES FOR FAMILY AUDIENCES THROUGHOUT THE DAM**

**Complete and repeat.** Once we completed this iterative cycle we repeated it, improving the family experiences we were working on in each round. This continuous cycle means that even our “final products” are not really final. We consider the latest iterations as “refined prototypes” which will become the testing ground for the next iteration of backpacks, games, and create corners. We plan to continue testing prototypes and conducting informal interviews with families on all of the new family activities that are currently being produced in order to keep improving their experience.



These photos show the evolution from our first rough prototype to our finished family experience.



# 3

## Projects

# Family backpacks, create corners, and games spec sheet

This illustrated list provides an overview of all 15 projects developed during the past 24 months. It's organized according to the three different categories of family experiences: backpacks, create corners, and games. Backpacks are geared to either 3- to 5-year-olds or 6- to 12-year-olds, whereas the create corners and games are for all ages.

*PDF Spec Sheet download*

## BACKPACKS

### Packs for 3- to 5-year-olds

#### Animals and Heroes in India

We created this backpack for our Indian gallery to invite families to engage in imaginative play and storytelling. Inspired by a statue of the Hindu deity Hanuman, Bastar Bronze figures, and a large-scale shadow puppet, the backpack encourages families to explore traditional art in India. This backpack is all about "doing," as families have all the tools to bring their art-inspired stories to life—a shadow-puppet made with vellum and brads that can be animated with a mini flashlight, a textured landscape that acts as a backdrop for plushie replicas of bronze figures, and a storybook that prompts toddlers to act out the story with a tiny Hanuman toy.



➤ Shadow puppet art making with vellum, brass brads, and a mini flashlight



➤ Textured landscape with bronze plushie animals



➤ Plush storybook about the hero, Hanuman, with an accompanying toy doll

#### On The Trail

In this pack inspired by a single piece of art, Dunn's *Chuckwagon*, families are engrossed in the daily life and work of a cowboy, which is reinforced in the surrounding artwork. Families decorate cloth bandanas using pencils and tie their bandanas around their necks to inspire storytelling and conversation. The pack also includes a magnetic dress-up board that encourages families

to dress up a cowboy with clothing designed to spark meaningful conversations about the purpose of each item. A textile storyboard—as much fun to touch as it is to look at—allows kids to practice sequencing.



➤ Cloth bandana and colored pencil art making activity



➤ Magnetic cowboy dress-up board with handmade clothing



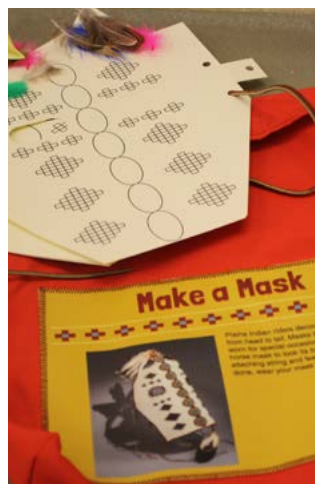
➤ Day-in-the-Life-of-a-Cowboy storyboard roll

## Horses on Parade

Building on young children’s interest in small-world play, this backpack engages families in careful looking and direct application inspired by iconic pieces in the American Indian collection—the Tipi and American Plains Indian horse trappings. Families can choose which saddle, blanket, bridle, and mask to use in dressing their plushie toy horse. They can make their own wearable horse mask, while seated directly in front of the real thing. And, elevating our use of dice games to a new level, families are invited to decorate a mini-tipi as directed by their last roll of the die using replicas of horse paintings from the collection’s Tipi.



➤ Plushie toy horse with saddle, blanket, bridles, and mask accessories for dress-up



➤ Horse mask artmaking with colored pencils, beads, and feathers



➤ Tipi game with replica horse painting attachments



## Packs for 6- to 12-year-olds

### iViva la Vida! Life in Colonial Mexico

Although each backpack we produce is also translated to create a Spanish-language pack, this backpack is our first integrated bilingual pack. Encouraging a discovery of daily life in Colonial Mexico, these games and artmaking are inspired by three works in the Colonial Mexico gallery. A trivia game encourages families to take a closer look at the details of a painting while they're quizzed about trends and traditions of Colonial Mexico. A magnetic game helps transport families to a different time as they create their own family scene based on the *Casta* paintings. And a paper guitar, drawn directly from the imagery in the *Garden Party*, gives them an opportunity to "string" their own guitar.



- Paper guitar artmaking with elastic bands and a custom-made guitar case



- Trivia game inspired by *Mystic Dinner*



- Pocket-sized, build-your-own *Casta* painting magnetic game
- Is it a Dama or a Dude? Families guess who they are looking at with this board game

### Living Like a Chinese Scholar

Families immerse themselves in the world of Chinese scholars in this backpack, inspired by the Chinese Scholar gallery. Families can take a seat and discover the life of a scholar through activities and interpretation at all levels. Families learn the purpose and choose between two options of brushes, ink sticks, stamps, brush holders, and scholar rocks to arrange on a wooden desk. In our evaluation, nearly every family walked over to the nearby scholar's desk before or after this activity, emphasizing the importance of having direct connections with the collection. Two other activities: a textile snuff bottle activity which encourages comparison with snuff bottles in a nearby case and a scroll artmaking project further encourage engagement with the real objects in this gallery through close looking and personal creativity.



- Build-your-own scholar's desk activity with desk, brushes, ink sticks, stamps, brush holders, and scholar rocks

## Hubble-Bubble, Dance Masters, and Powdered Wigs: Life in 18th Century England

This backpack transports families to 18th Century England with a multi-sensory experience. Focusing on a family portrait in our European & American Collection, *The Radcliffe Family*, the activities encourage close looking related to tradition, dress, and etiquette of the time period. We've incorporated technology and new formats, such as an embedded speaker playing classical music, relief fashion plates, and a posing game, to immerse families in this artwork.

- Fashion plates for mixing and matching 18th Century clothing and making a rubbing
- Perfect Poses, a game inspired by the proper postures in *Rules of Genteel Behavior*, an 18th Century guidebook
- Hubble Bubble, a period term meaning confusion, offers a game mimicking Two truths and a Lie with trivia about everything from powdered wigs to when it's appropriate to sneeze in the company of others
- iPod Shuffle and speakers with a selection of classical music



- Plush snuff bottles are compared with those in a nearby case encouraging visitors to look for slight differences



- Hanging scroll artmaking with popsicle sticks and patterned paper

## Design Detectives

Families take on the role of detectives on an adventure to uncover all the secrets of the Design Gallery. From the Getting Started card to creating a detective badge of honor, each activity engages families in an unfolding mystery. Using a feel 'n find format, Coming to your senses acts as a way for families to feel and smell small samples of different fabrics, woods, and other materials that relate to different furniture in the gallery. A custom-made puzzle allows families to imagine the artist's process behind marquetry and a trivia game challenges them to act like Sherlock Holmes to solve the mystery of the *Mazarin Bureau*, furthering this detective role in their personal discovery of this gallery.



- Wood marquetry puzzle mirroring a cabinet panel in the gallery



- Trivia game, Mystery of the Mazarin Bureau, with locked box and a mix of keys to try on the lock



- Coming to your senses feel-'n-find game with fabric, wood, and other material samples inspired by those in the gallery
- Badge of honor artmaking with eagle and lion paw motifs

## CREATE CORNERS

### Bosch Create Corner

This cozy corner in the gallery immerses families in the fantastic creations of the Follower of Bosch painting nearby. With whimsical activities and a story-starter flipbook, families use imaginative play and humor to build their own puppets inspired by the painting. This space also uses previously developed interpretive information to support adult engagement. We had family comfort and design in mind when developing this space, as is reflected in the oversized armchair, larger-than-life wall graphics, and tree-stump stools, all of which contribute to an environment prepped for intergenerational play.

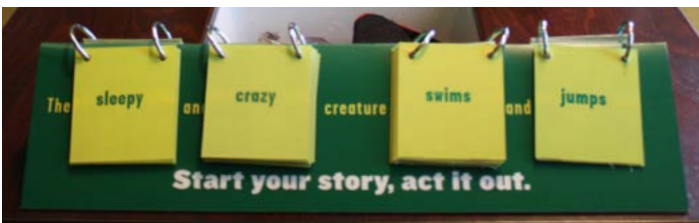




- Puppet bodies with various Velcro eyes, ears, mouths, noses, wings, and clothing
- Child-sized puppet theater with backdrops pulling from the imagery of the painting
- Spin & Find game that encourages close looking and a kid-friendly retelling of the painting's story, *The Vision of Tundale*
- Story starter flipbook, with prompts such as THE hungry AND lazy CREATURE flutters AND leaps
- Children and adult books

### Looking West Create Corner

Harnessing the essence of the Western landscape, this create corner explores layering of skies and panoramas from the paintings in adjacent galleries. Families mix and match transparencies, which are printed with foregrounds and backgrounds of paintings and different mood shades, on a light table to replicate works they may have seen in the galleries or create one from their own imagination. Parallel play abounds in this space as furniture fits everyone and the open-ended activity engages all, from preschoolers to grandparents.



- Light tables with landscape transparencies
- Adult and children's books based on the West

### Southwest Saints Create Corner

Nestled in the corner of the Southwest gallery, this create corner capitalizes on imaginative play with miniature mannequins and play clothing that recognizably mimic those on the Santos in the surrounding space. The attention to detail in all of the clothing and accessories develops a strong foundation for connection and exploration of the art of the Santero.



- Pose-able wood dolls with painted faces and clothing replicating those of the surrounding Santos
- Adult and children's books about the Southwest

### Creative Crossroads Create Corner

Offering a density of activities and information in one space, this corner of the Peru gallery invites families to discover the creative explosion of colonial South America that merged the influences of Europe, Asia, and indigenous artists. With a mural-sized map of



the transfer of artistic and theological ideas across the oceans, this space explains main themes of the gallery in a family-friendly way. To illustrate the blending of cultures, a folding paper treasure chest with embossed details, inspired by a Columbian treasure chest, and three large-scale objects with motifs to mix and match encourage the merging of different culturally inspired designs.

## GAMES

### Arcimboldo Portrait Building

Inspired by Arcimboldo's *Summer* and *Autumn*, both of which hang in this room, this portrait-building activity uses everyday objects—fake fruit, hardware pieces, and squishy sea creature toys—to invite families to create their own versions of these iconic portraits. Handcrafted magnetic boards with fancy frames and figure silhouettes serve as the backdrop for imaginative play by visitors of all ages.

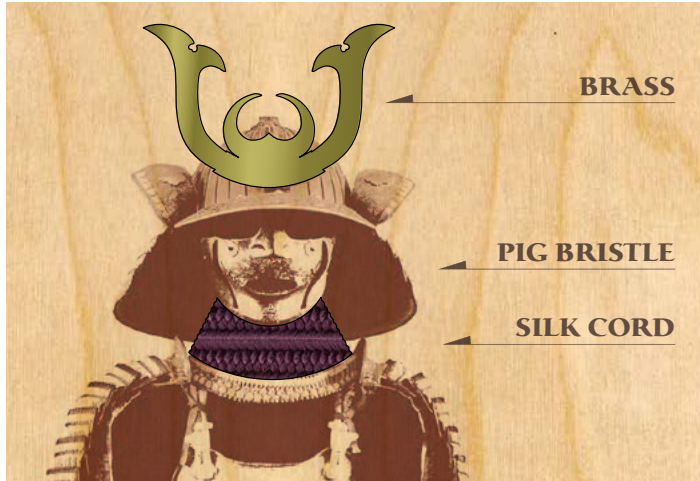


- Three large-scale objects with mix-and-match motifs inspired by different cultures
- Embossed paper treasure chest artmaking with stamps and colored pencils
- Adult and children's books based on Spanish Colonial art

- Three framed magnetic boards with portrait silhouettes
- Various magnetic objects to add to the board (sea creatures, fruits and veggies, and hardware)
- Adult and children's books on Arcimboldo and playing with your food

## Samurai Feel 'n Find

Hung beneath the Samurai armor case, these feel 'n find boards have samples of iron, pig bristle, brass, silk cord, and deer skin to encourage exploration by touch. The laser-cut rendering of the Samurai suit of armor creates direct connection to this object.



- Wood boards with pig bristle, iron, brass, silk cord, and deer skin cut-outs, as well as identification of each material

## Pattern Playing

Families are invited to grab a deck of cards and explore the creative world of Jacqueline Groag, with this installed experience. Each card prompts looking, posing, and wondering, to encourage further discovery of details and play in the gallery.



### GET YOUR BODY MOVING — POSE IT

Pick an object. Now, change your point of view: move your head sideways, squint your eyes, stand on tiptoes – bet, you'll discover something new!

### EACH OF YOU WILL SEE SOMETHING DIFFERENT — FIND IT

Find a pattern with paper dolls.

### BONUS!

Jacqueline sketched the idea for this print before making the fabric – can you find the sketch?

### GET CARRIED AWAY BY YOUR CURIOSITY AND ASK — I WONDER

Find the fabric Jacqueline named *Family Outing*. I wonder if you can think of another name? Why?

### WILD CARD

Choose your favorite object. Tell a story inspired by this object. Once upon a time...

- Two decks of cards with looking, posing, wondering and wild-card prompts

## Looking West Board Game

This board game invites families to scour the galleries for snow-capped peaks and spinning lassos among the Western landscapes. Playing on our familiar game-board format, this game uses a tried-and-true concept with design that pulls imagery directly from artwork making it family-friendly, but not “kidified.”



- ➔ Looking game boards offer prompts that encourage visitors to find objects in paintings around the galleries



CAROLYN



Who doesn't like pretty fabrics and the possibility of making a dress. I enjoyed helping my child with this.

I liked that dressing the santos stimulated observation and discussion about the santos in the gallery.



He liked choosing where the animals would go.



He liked the mechanics of poking the fabric into the forms.



# 4

## Evaluation Tool Kit

# Audience evaluation plans & protocols

In this section you'll find an outline of the tools and techniques we used in this 24-month study of family audiences. Each can be tailored to the goals and resources of your museum and the needs and interests of your audiences.

## Front-end visitor panel

Likened to “more focused focus groups,” visitor panels are a versatile, audience-evaluation technique that was invented at the DAM by Patterson Williams, former Director of Education. In this case, panelists came to the museum twice to give concrete, action-oriented feedback on family experiences that were in the works. Using a **telephone screening interview**, we recruited nine visitor panelists in a range of ages—mothers, fathers, and a grandfather, and ethnic backgrounds—two Hispanics, one African-American, and one Asian-American panelist.



They came to the museum for the first time in November of 2011 for a 4.5 hour meeting that included a tour of family spaces in the North Building and the Hamilton

Building, followed by dinner and a discussion, which was recorded and transcribed. Photos in galleries and meeting room. The visitor panel was built on two tools:

- ➔ A **discussion guide** that maps out key questions and provides a framework for prototypical experiences parents had, and
- ➔ **Written feedback**, a survey that helps panelists register their responses in the galleries so they can refer back to them during the follow-up discussion.

## Staff debriefing

Nine staff members observed the visitor panel, eight of whom participated in a three-hour debriefing meeting the following month. They based their reflections on a transcript of the discussion between the moderator and visitor panelists and a tabulation of their responses to written feedback. To give focus to the transcript, they were asked to read it through the following filters:

- ➔ What's working well for families?
- ➔ What's not working well?
- ➔ What were your biggest surprises as practitioners?
- ➔ What were the brightest new ideas suggested by visitor panelists?



To prepare for the meeting, staff members selected two quotes from each filter that stood out for them and wrote them on sticky notes. These formed the basis of affinity diagrams (What's Working, What's Not Working, Biggest Surprises, Brightest Ideas.)



In emergent analysis, the value of visitors' feedback was multiplied as staff members plumbed parents' and grandparents' comments, incorporated them with their own reflective practice, and arrived at new understandings of family experiences.



### Formative visitor panel

The second *visitor panel* was held in May 2012. This time each adult brought a child or grandchild between the ages of 3 and 5. After orienting the adults and reading a story to the children, visitors went to the galleries in the North Building to explore prototypes for new family experiences. Staff members followed along to conduct unobtrusive observations of parents and grandparents interacting with their children. We returned to the meeting room for an evaluation activity in which kids and their grownups worked together to create collages of each of their favorite activities.

To incorporate active participation from both grownups and kids we added to our repertoire of family-audience evaluation techniques, introducing two new methodologies. Both were so useful that we will build on them in the future:

- 1) Staff members conducted unobtrusive observations in the galleries *Unobtrusive observation protocol* and
- 2) Grownups and kids created collages of their favorite activities, choosing from photographs of each activity prototype and posting them on poster board. Children decorated their posters with stickers and glitter and parents recorded comments.



# Acknowledgments

Thanks to the Institute of Museum and Library Services for supporting the DAM over the years, making it possible for us to dive deeply into the experience of family visitors and nurture an internal culture of exploration and experimentation.

*Having the funding to look at a relatively mature program, that's working well, with a history of visitor research in the past provided enormous benefits. Because we're looking at a mature program through sophisticated lenses we're able to do a better job for families at the DAM and push the field forward.*

**PATTERSON WILLIAMS, MASTER TEACHER OF ASIAN ART  
(FORMER DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION)**

*I have a funny twinge when I hear people use the word "luxury" about the time we spend, the resources we put into this. It's not a luxury, not an add-on... It feeds the staff, gives them the energy to keep doing the kind of work they do... The importance of a project being grant funded is that it forces you to be true to what you've committed to, we are going to set aside three hours to process this.*

**MELORA MCDERMOTT LEWIS, DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION**

## DAM team

- ➔ IMLS Project Team: Heather Nielsen, project manager; Kristina Mahoney, Molly Nuanes, Peggy Sell, project assistants.
- ➔ Educators: Melora McDermott-Lewis, Patterson Williams, Lindsey Housel, Molly Medakovich, Stefania Van Dyke, Jodie Gorochow, Lindsay Genshaft, Sally McCance, Sonnet Coggins, Lauren Abman, Lisa Steffen, Madalena Salazar.

- ➔ Additional museum staff: Angelica Daneo, associate curator of painting and sculpture; Alison Bowman, manager of foundation and government support; Ben Griswold, Spatial Poetics, contract exhibition designer; Christina Jackson, assistant photographer.

**Our consultants.** Daryl Fischer of Musynergy, and Kathleen Tinworth of Expose Your Museum, served as invaluable coaches and colleagues throughout the project. Thanks also to Daryl, for her ability to masterfully craft words from our thoughts and guide the development of this report.

**Our families.** Over the course of two years, 41 parents, three grandparents, and 54 children between the ages of 3 and 12 participated in two family visitor panels and 26 family interviews. Their faces and words have left indelible impressions on everyone who participated in the project.

**Our partners.** Several talented designers and artists helped to push us even farther in a new direction, enhancing the sophistication and quality of our products for families. Thanks to Bree Angela Thompson, Sam Mobely, Evan Cotageorge, Jena Siedler, Vicki Anderson, and Sadie Metter. And to Wigwam Creatives Charles Carpenter, Russ Chilcoat, and Pete Larson for bringing our words to life through graphic design.

**Our colleagues.** In the spirit of generosity that is one of the hallmarks of the museum field we engaged with colleagues at the Columbus Museum of Art, the Crocker Art Museum, and the Dallas Museum of Art in a two-year conversation about *best practices* in serving family audiences.

**Literature reviews.** We commissioned Lorrie Beaumont and Jeanne Vergeront to conduct a review of the literature for this project and were also fortunate to have access to Mary Ellen Munley's review commissioned by the Smithsonian Early Enrichment Center.

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- i Wilkening, Susy, and James Chung. Life Stages of the Museum Visitor: Building Engagement Over a Lifetime, (American Association of Museums, 2009), p. 59.
  - ii Munley, Mary Ellen. Early Learning in Museums: A Review of the Literature. Smithsonian Institution, 2012.
  - iii Borun, Minda. USS Constitution Museum Family Learning Project Roundtable, 2005.