

Abstract

The Art of Being: Feelings, Memories and Imagination

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The purpose of this project was to create a participatory exhibition for Museum of Glass in Tacoma that leveraged the narrative potential of studio art glass to engage visitors in thinking about meaning-making and empathy. The exhibition was inspired by research stating that empathy, with its many benefits to society, could be increased through repeated practice. Rather than use a specific narrative or experience to try to inspire empathy, the exhibition focused on building the skills of empathy: emotional connection and perspective-taking. Visitors were invited to connect to and interpret art objects through four elements of meaning-making: feelings, identities, memories and imagination. Visitors' feelings and stories were then displayed next to the art, creating additional objects through which to experience empathy. Covid-19 limited on-site evaluation of visitor responses, so visitor inputs were archived by the museum for analysis. The empathy framework created enabled latitude in art selection, seemed popular with visitors, and was adaptable to many different objects and settings.

Key Words: Empathy, Participatory, Personal Objects, Studio Art Glass, Meaning-Making,
Feelings, Memories, Imagination

Supplemental Materials

A. Final Label Text with Related Object Photos

Introduction

**This exhibition is not about Art.
It is about people.**

Think of the art as a buffet table full of interesting food for you to try.

The food is ready, but the party does not begin until the guests arrive, connect, and share their stories.

Please bring the artwork to life by adding your own feelings, memories, and stories about the art for others to connect with and enjoy.

Just as you would approach the buffet table at a party--be adventurous!

“Taste” each piece of art and consider what you are experiencing.

“Is the dip spicy?”, “salty?”, “just like my mother used to make?”

As you move through the Grand Hall, “tasting” each piece of art visually, you will be asked to share your thoughts. Add your own dish to the buffet by telling us what the art means to you.

I FEEL

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I AM



Do others see the real you?

Have you ever felt frustrated by being bucketed into just one identity? All liberals..., all conservatives..., all millennials..., all baby-boomers..., all wealthy..., all working class....

In the same way a slight curve added to the back of a mirror can distort how you see yourself, these shorthand groupings applied by society can distort how others see you and how you see others.

As you look at your reflection in the mirrors, think about how you see yourself and how others might see you.

Do any of these buckets ever completely capture your perspective or the fullness of who you really are?

I REMEMBER



September 30, 1934 - May 10, 2002

The Hot Shop at the Museum of Glass is dedicated to the memory of Jane T. Russell in honor of the Russell family. Jane and her husband George F. Russell co-chaired the Museum's founding Board of Trustees, providing critical leadership and vision and philanthropic support.

The Hot Shop was Jane's favorite place at the Museum. Those who knew her believe Jane's spirit is represented here in the work of creativity, strength and teamwork of the Museum's artists and staff.

George F. Russell, Jr. served as chairman of the Frank Russell Company after transforming a small brokerage firm in Tacoma, Washington into a global investment company. The Museum is one of the many significant projects in the community that were initiated and supported by the Russell family.



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Theater

MUSEUM OF GLASS - CASTING LIGHT ON GLASS

A large wall display featuring a grid of images, text panels, and a central graphic of a glass eye. The images include various glass art pieces and historical photographs related to the museum's history.

I IMAGINE





Acknowledgements:

This exhibition is part of the Emerging Curator Initiative (ECI) at the University of Washington Museology Graduate Program. ECI is a collaborative venture shared between the UW and Museum of Glass. It provides a graduate student with the opportunity to plan and execute an exhibition as part of the student's master's thesis project. This collaboration provides a bridge between the academic and professional world and creates an educational experience that benefits the "emerging" student curator, regional artists, and the public.

The curator, Debbie Ward, would like to acknowledge and thank her thesis committee: Wilson O'Donnell, MA (Chair), Jessica J. Luke, PhD and Katie Buckingham, and Museum of Glass Curatorial and Education staff who helped realize this exhibition. She would also like to thank to her generous family and friends for their constant support and for their willingness to be both guinea pigs and cheerleaders during the development of this exhibition.

