Exploring Spaces: Evaluating Visitor Experiences at the Henry Art Gallery

A Front-End Evaluation

*New Directions* Yearlong Project

Spring 2013

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**1. Executive Summary:**

The Henry Art Gallery is an internationally recognized center for the exploration of visual culture. Founded in 1927, the Henry Art Gallery serves as the Pacific Northwest’s premier museum of contemporary art, attracts more than 50,000 visitors on-site and provides educational resources online to over 115,000 users annually. Over the next several years the Henry Art Gallery will initiate changes to its facilities creating a welcoming and comfortable atmosphere that will foster creativity among the visitors. The Henry Art Gallery strives to become a “hub” where visitors feel they can come often and stay for extended periods of time – to view art, attend an event, engage in conversation, hang out, meet up, learn, explore, create, and experiment.

In conjunction with the *New Directions in Audience Research Initiative,* this front end evaluation at the Henry Art Gallery focused on how visitors currently interact with gallery staff and spaces.  The Henry Art Gallery faces several structural (architecture and gallery layout) and perceptual (reputation and internal practices) challenges which may impede the museum’s ability to create a welcoming environment and this evaluation sought to identify some of these areas for improvement. The project team employed three separate, but interrelated, instruments to assess these aspects of visitor services. The instruments used were: an observation of staff-visitor interactions in the lobby and two gallery spaces, an exit survey for visitors in the galleries, and surveys of the patrons inside Molly's Café.

The findings from this evaluation suggest that the leading inhibitor for viewing the art was time constraints, but visitors also commented that confusion about museum information detracted from their experience. Through the gallery surveys and observations, the study found that few visitors are having verbal interactions with Guest Service Representatives in the gallery spaces, but those that did have longer exchanges generally discussed directions, art on display, and gallery events. The results also identified that most visitors did come to the Henry Art Gallery to view art and more than half of the visitors to Molly’s Café indicated they have seen the art on display before.

**2. Introduction:**

This front-end evaluation was conducted as part of the *New Directions in Audience Research* initiativeof the Museology Graduate Program at the University of Washington. Originally funded by the Institute for Museum and Library Services, *New Directions in Audience Research*is a special initiative of the University of Washington Museology Graduate Program partnering with the Woodland Park Zoo.   *New Directions* is designed to train Museology graduate students to understand, support and engage in audience research and evaluation within informal learning settings.  A key component of the training is partnering with local museums who serve as learning laboratories where students work to conduct on-site audience research under the guidance of evaluation mentors and support staff. This evaluation is a product of the collaboration between the *New Directions* initiative and the Henry Art Gallery which allowed students from the Museology Graduate Program an intensive opportunity to conceptualize, develop, and execute research that ascertains what physical and perceptual barriers affect visitors’ use of the Henry Art Gallery and how visitors currently interact with museum spaces and staff.

**2.1 Project Background:**

The Henry Art Gallery opened its doors in 1927 as Washington’s first public art museum. The Henry Art Gallery’s permanent collection of over 25,000 objects spans from the Horace C. Henry Collection of 19th century landscape paintings to an expanding collection of contemporary art. In 1997, the Henry Art Gallery underwent an expansion that more than “quadrupled the size of the museum and included an auditorium, café, renovated and new galleries, classrooms, and work space.”[[1]](#footnote-1) Over the years, the Henry Art Gallery has established itself as an internationally recognized center for visual art and culture and features the only Collection Study center in the region. The Henry Art Gallery exhibits dynamic and thought-provoking exhibitions which attract more than 50,000 visitors annually.[[2]](#footnote-2)

In Spring 2012, a front end evaluation was developed, conducted, and analyzed over the course of ten weeks by a team in the University of Washington’s Museology Audience Research course. This evaluation had three major findings: Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays have the highest rate of visitation; most visitors are not aware of The Reed Collection Study Center and the Digital Interactive Galleries (DIG) that are resources provided by the Henry Art Gallery for members, visitors, students, researchers and University of Washington staff; one third of visitors to the Henry Art Gallery are only utilizing Molly’s Cafe and do not visit the galleries. Building upon these findings, this year-long New Directions project at the Henry Art Gallery focused on how visitors currently interact with museum spaces and staff.

Over the next several years the Henry Art Gallery will initiate changes to its facilities to make visitors feel more welcome and comfortable as well as to foster creativity. The Henry Art Gallery strives to become a “hub” where visitors feel they can come often and stay for extended periods of time – to view art, attend an event, engage in conversation, hang out, meet up, learn, explore, create, and experiment.

The Henry Art Gallery faces several structural (architecture and gallery layout) and perceptual (reputation and internal practices) challenges that currently impede the museum’s ability to create a welcoming environment. Specifically, the entrance to the museum is located on the top floor of the institution, creating a spiral layout that winds down to the largest lower gallery. Additionally, the institution has minimal signage that directs visitors from gallery to gallery.

**2.2 Purpose Statement:**

Our purpose is to determine what physical and perceptual barriers affect visitors’ use of the Henry Art Gallery, and how visitors currently interact with museum spaces and staff. These findings will support guest service training and changes in the museum’s physical infrastructure.

**2.3 Evaluation Questions:**

1) Are there barriers affecting visitors’ use of the Henry Art Gallery?

2) What motivates visitors to use certain spaces at the Henry Art Gallery?

3) What experiences are visitors having with Henry staff Art Gallery?

**2.4 Timeline:**

In Fall of 2012, project members met with key stakeholders of the Henry Art Gallery staff to begin formulating the evaluation plan. Pilot testing took place in November and the instruments and evaluation plan were finalized in December of 2012. Data collection took place February through March of 2013 and analysis commenced immediately afterwards until May. Reporting took place in June.

**3. Literature Review:**

**3.1 How Museum Environments Affect Visitors’ Experiences**

While there is limited existent research about the Henry Art Gallery’s audience, research has been conducted in the field regarding the museum environment’s effect on visitor experience. In 1981, Marilyn Hood identified six main attributes that determine how adults choose to spend their leisure time: being with people, doing something worthwhile, feeling comfortable or at ease in one’s surroundings, having a challenge of new experiences, having an opportunity to learn, and participating actively.[[3]](#footnote-3) Museums that provide an environment that fulfills a combination of these requirements are more likely to attract and keep adult visitors. John Falk, in *Identity and the Museum Visitor Experience*, identifies three contexts that determine a visitor’s museum experience: Personal, Physical, and Socio-Cultural.[[4]](#footnote-4) While museums cannot control the visitor’s Personal Context, they can control the Physical Context and, to a lesser extent, the Socio-Cultural Context (through interactions between staff members and visitors). Falk specifically notes the influential role that museum staff can have on shaping the Socio-Cultural Context of visitor experiences:

How a guard is dressed is not the only impression he conveys. How he responds in word and gesture to the visitor during those first few minutes of the visit is critical. … The tenor of the visit can be influenced by the demeanor of the guard. In many cases, encounters with the guards are the fine tuning on the behavioral-setting dial. The visitor's expectations are either reinforced or modified by these embodiments of the museum establishment. Like all first impressions, these shape attitudes that will be long-lasting and difficult to change.[[5]](#footnote-5)

Carole Henry’s article “How Visitors Relate to Museum Experiences: An Analysis of Positive and Negative Reactions” and Randi Korn & Associates, Inc.’s evaluation *Young Adult Study*, address key factors for museums to have positive impacts on their audiences. Both Henry and Korn state that a welcoming environment creates positive experiences for visitors.[[6]](#footnote-6) [[7]](#footnote-7) However, since different visitors have different expectations and needs to be met by the same museum, determining what a “positive” experience looks like to the visitor is a challenge.[[8]](#footnote-8) [[9]](#footnote-9) This evaluation will help the Henry’s staff understand how the shape of their physical environment and the state of social interactions with staff affect visitor experience.

**3.2 Previous Evaluation of the Henry Art Gallery**

Prior to the 2012 evaluation, Communication Master of Arts candidate Claudia J. Bach conducted audience research at the Henry Art Gallery for her thesis paper published in 1995. Her study, entitled “A Gateway to Diversified Museum Audiences: University Students and Campus Art Museums,” explores the connection that college art museums have to their target audience--students--and how that connection is created, maintained, and strengthened. Bach used the Henry Art Gallery as a case study for exploring her research questions. In 1995, which was prior to the massive expansion mentioned above in Section 2.1, Bach noted that approximately 35% of the 60,000 average attendance was made up of UW students.[[10]](#footnote-10) Of Bach’s eight research questions addressed in the paper, the ones that most inform the current evaluation are: Question 3: “What are students’ reactions to their experiences at the Henry Art Gallery?” Question 5: “What are students’ motivations for attending art museums?” and Question 6: “What are students’ expectations for an art museum visit?”[[11]](#footnote-11) In response to Question 3, Bach found that 81% of visitors surveyed felt “comfortable” in the Henry Art Gallery, 75% felt that their experience at the Henry Art Gallery was “worthwhile,” and 61% felt that it was a “good activity to do with friends or family.” [[12]](#footnote-12) In response to Question 5, the most prevalent reasons why visitors came to the Henry Art Gallery were “out of curiosity” (41%), “to see a specific exhibition” (40%), and “part of a class or tour” (24%). [[13]](#footnote-13) Finally, in response to Question 6, 99% of visitors surveyed wanted the museum experience to be a chance to see new things, 98% wanted to stimulate their minds, and 91% wanted it to be entertaining and fun.[[14]](#footnote-14)

University of Washington Museology graduate students conducted a front-end evaluation at the Henry Art Gallery in Spring of 2012 entitled “Visitor Demographics & Motivation for Visiting the Henry Art Gallery.”[[15]](#footnote-15) This study provided the Henry Art Gallery with updated demographic and visitor motivation information post-expansion. The pertinent evaluation questions for this study were: Question 1: “Who is coming to the Henry Art Gallery?” and Question 5: “Why are visitors coming?” [[16]](#footnote-16) In response to Question 1, Arredondo et al. found that 59% of visitors surveyed claimed to be affiliated with the University either as a current student, alumni, or staff/faculty.[[17]](#footnote-17) Specifically, 31% reported being current students, roughly the same percentage as Bach found in 1995 (35%). In response to Question 5, Arredondo et al. found that 26% of respondents mentioned Molly’s Cafe as the principal motivation to visit, 13% came to see art in general, and 9% came out of curiosity about specific exhibits.[[18]](#footnote-18) This data showed a significant change in visitor motivations between Bach’s results in 1995 and 2012, with Molly’s Cafe replacing curiosity as the main factor bringing visitors to the Henry Art Gallery. The Spring 2012 evaluation provided an up-to-date baseline understanding of the Henry’s audience, leading the current evaluation to explore how visitors perceive the overall environment of the museum as well as to gain a more nuanced understanding of visitor experiences in the galleries.

**4. Methods:**

Three methodologies were used in this study to triangulate data around the evaluation questions: 1) Are there barriers affecting visitors’ use of the Henry Art Gallery?; 2) What motivates visitors to use certain spaces at the Henry Art Gallery?; 3) What experiences are visitors having with Henry Art Gallery staff? All modules were used during hours that the museum was open to the public, both on weekdays and weekends. The authors of this study as well as other Museology graduate students served as data collectors. Each of these methods is described below.

**4.1 Gallery Observation**

A total of 159 Gallery Observations were made at the Henry Art Gallery in three different museum spaces: the main lobby area, the South Galleries, and North Galleries. Data collectors used visitor observation cover sheets (see Appendix A on page 23) to record their location, the date and time, the presence of Henry Art Gallery staff and any comments. They used “encounter” sheets (see Appendix B on page 24) to record the length and topics covered in conversation or noted if no encounter occurred. Data collectors discreetly positioned themselves in particular spots in these three areas to observe museum visitors in half hour periods of time. Data collectors observed every other visitor group (excluding tours) that entered the established observation area. If a verbal encounter between Henry Art Gallery staff, mainly Guest Service Representatives (GSRs), and visitor(s) was noted by the data collector they would mark who initiated the exchange, the length of the exchange, and select subjects covered in the observation checklist. Alternatively, data collectors noted if there was no verbal encounter exchanged for that visitor or visitor group. All data collectors were given a “Data Collector Training Sheet” for reference (see Appendix C on page 25).

**4.2 Gallery Exit Survey**

A total of 75 gallery exit surveys were collected from visitors as they exited the North and South Galleries (See Appendix D on page 26 for full instrument). Every visitor who exited the gallery was invited to complete the survey, and those who assented were given a clipboard with the survey and a pencil. Most visitors completed the survey immediately, but some took it with them and brought it back later. The survey consisted of 17 questions ranging from general visitor demographics to the affective outcomes of their experience.

**4.3 Molly’s Cafe Questionnaire**

A total of 78 Molly’s Cafe questionnaires were collected (See Appendix E on page 28 for full instrument). Questionnaires were handed to all customers in the Molly’s Cafe during pre-selected data collection dates and times, and asked to return the completed form to the barista. This instrument was used to understand the needs and experiences of cafe visitors and to assess whether or not they also visit the museum galleries.

**5. Results:**

**5.1 Summary of Primary Findings:**

The majority of verbal interactions between visitors and Guest Service Representatives (GSRs) occurred in the lobby, and visitors who have longer exchanges with GSRs discuss directions, art, and gallery events. Visitors rarely talk to GSRs in the galleries, but when they do it is generally about the art on display or about guidelines for behavior in the gallery. Visitors who did interact with GSRs were satisfied with their interactions.

Most visitors who come to the Henry Art Gallery do so to see art, and more than half of the visitors to Molly’s Cafe indicated they have seen the art on display before. General interest in art, events, and exhibitions were the main motivations for participants to view the art on display. The leading inhibitor for viewing the art was time constraints. Data from the cafe and exit surveys showed that confusion about museum information also detracted from the visitor experience.

**5.2 Gallery Observation Findings:**

Over the data collection period, 159 encounters were observed in which visitors and Henry Art Gallery representatives occupied the same space. 57% of the encounters observed were in the Lobby, 22% were in the North Galleries, and 21% were in the South Galleries. Of the 159 encounters observed, 100, or 63%, involved a verbal interaction between the visitors and the Henry Art Gallery staff. However, 84% of the 100 verbal encounters occurred in the Lobby area, whereas only 8% occurred in the North Galleries and 8% occurred in the South Galleries.

Of the 100 verbal encounters recorded, 49% were initiated by Henry Art Gallery representatives compared to 29% by visitors. For 8% of the encounters, data collectors could not tell who initiated the conversation and for 14%, the data collectors recorded that the exchanges happened simultaneously. Verbal encounters were typically brief, with 71% being 30 seconds or less. Only one encounter was recorded as lasting over 5 minutes in length.

Figure 1: Length of verbal exchanges (n=100)

*Figure 1: Length of verbal exchanges, n = 159*

The most common subject areas covered by the verbal encounters were **Greeting** (present in 83% of verbal encounters), **Molly’s Cafe** (present in 28% of verbal encounters), and **Ticket Sales** (present in 21% of verbal encounters). These subject areas are also the three most prevalent in the Lobby verbal encounters when considered on their own. However, outside of the Lobby, different subject areas were more prevalent. In the North Galleries, the most frequent subject areas were **Rules**, **Greeting**, **Artwork**, and **Other Topic Related to the Henry** Art Gallery. In the South Galleries, the most frequent subject areas were **Artwork**, **Greeting**, and **Visitor Needs Directions**. See Figure 2 for a more detailed list of topic frequencies.

Figure 2: Frequency of topics discussed by location, n = 159

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Topic Discussed** | **Lobby** | **North Galleries** | **South Galleries** |
| Greeting | 78 | 3 | 2 |
| Ticket Sales | 21 | 0 | 0 |
| Visitor asks directions | 13 | 1 | 2 |
| Henry offers directions | 13 | 0 | 0 |
| Purpose of Visit | 7 | 1 | 0 |
| Molly’s Cafe | 28 | 0 | 0 |
| Artwork | 12 | 2 | 3 |
| Events | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| Rules | 11 | 5 | 1 |
| Other related to Henry | 12 | 2 | 0 |
| Other unrelated to Henry | 1 | 0 | 0 |

**5.3 Gallery Survey Findings:**

A total of 75 Gallery Surveys were completed over the course of the evaluation. Surveys were conducted during peak visitor hours (between 11:00am and 2:00pm) during weekdays and weekends. Surveys included both open- and closed-ended questions and were administered to all visitors as they left either the North or South Gallery. Questions were specific to the gallery, unless otherwise stated in the instrument. The instrument attempted to answer all three evaluation questions.

The average time spent in the museum was 49 minutes, and the large majority of visitors listed that their main reason for visiting was in order to view the art (83% of visitors). Nineteen percent of visitors acknowledged that their main reason for visiting was for class. See Figure 3 for a full summary.

One-third of the survey-takers interacted with GSRs while in the gallery. Of these 25 interactions, 14 were initiated by the GSR, and most conversations (12) included art as the main topic. General information about the Henry Art Gallery (6 conversations) and visitors’ opinions (5 conversations) were also popular topics. See Figure 4 for a complete description of conversations reported. Forty-seven percent of survey-takers also visited a second gallery during their time at the Henry Art Gallery. Of these, four visitors interacted with GSR’s while in the second gallery. In contrast, 62 survey-takers interacted with GSRs the Lobby with 19 interactions being initiated by staff and 14 interactions being initiated by the visitor.

In order to determine visitor disposition while at the Museum, surveys included both Likert scales and a word matrix to assess their sentiments during their visit. Survey-takers were asked which words best described their feelings as they left the gallery that day. Word options included positive, negative and neutral emotions, and an “other” option provided survey-takers the opportunity to write in a word of their choice. By and large, the results of the word matrix were positive. “Interested” was most popular and was chosen by the majority of survey-takers (53%). Most of the neutral and negative words were chosen the fewest number of times. However, “confused” was chosen by one-fourth of the visitors. The six write-ins in the “other” category included “rage,” “a little warm,” and “wish I had more time.” See Figure 5 for a full summary.

The Likert scales asked survey-takers to rank their satisfaction during their interactions with GSRs regarding how informative, welcoming and approachable the GSRs using the categories of “Strongly Agree,” “Agree,” “Disagree,” and “Strongly Disagree.” A total of 56 survey-takers filled in the Informative section, with 21 strongly agreeing that GSRs are informative, 33 agreeing and two disagreeing. A total of 66 survey-takers filled in the Welcoming section, with 33 strongly agreeing that GSRs are welcoming, 31 agreeing and two disagreeing. A total of 64 survey-takers filled in the Approachable section, with 35 strongly agreeing that GSRs are welcoming, 28 agreeing and one disagreeing. No survey-takers strongly disagreed that GSRs are informative, welcoming or approachable.

Survey-takers were also asked if they had visited the Henry Art Gallery in the last six months, and 30 acknowledged that they had. Of these 30 visitors, 17 recalled having a staff interaction during that previous visit. These 17 visitors were asked to rank their satisfaction regarding this previous encounter on a scale of one to five, one being very unsatisfied and five being very satisfied. The results were by and large positive, with six visitors ranking their satisfaction as a “5” and 11 ranking their satisfaction as a “4”. No visitors ranked their previous interaction as a one.

In order to determine possible physical barriers to visitors at the Henry Art Gallery, survey-takers were given five options, in addition to an “other” write-in option, for possible physical changes to the Henry Art Gallery and asked to choose which change they would like to see. Of the 54 survey-takers who answered this particular question, 18 wanted a change in directional signage and 17 wanted seating in between or in the exhibitions. There were also 15 write-ins, seven of which specifically mentioned more or better art or exhibits. Others asked for such physical changes as “earlier hours and open more,” “a few degrees cooler,” “more access to main hall,” “lighting,” and easier gallery navigation.

Figure 3: Motivations for Visiting Henry Art Gallery

Figure 4: Topics of Conversation Reported

Figure 5: Visitor Emotions Reported When Leaving the Gallery

**5.4 Molly’s Cafe Questionnaire Findings:**

A total of 78 participants submitted the Molly’s Café Questionnaire. 92% of participants indicated that they have been to Molly’s Café before. Of those who have been to Molly’s Café before, 52% come to Molly’s Café zero to one time per week and 37% come two to three times per week. A majority of participants heard about Molly’s Café word of mouth (68%) in comparison with Henry Art Gallery sources which accounted for 7% of those surveyed.

Two questions explicitly asked participants if they have seen the art on display. Responses indicated that 59% of participants have seen the art on display before.

Figure 6: Have you seen the art on display before? n = 78

An additional question allowed participants to select from 3 answers: “I have checked out the art on display”, “I’ve considered checking out the art on display”, and “I have not and do not intend to check out the art on display”. This question yielded some different results because 45% of participants indicated that they have checked out the art on display before, which diverges from the number of participants who indicated they checked out the art on display before when only having the option to choose “yes” or “no”. Forty percent of participants indicated that they have considered checking out the art on display but have not yet and 15% indicated that they have not checked out the art on display and do not intend to.

Figure 7: Which of the following is true?

Participants who have never checked out the art on display were asked what prevented them from doing so. Of the 38 participants who answered this question, 66% named time constraints as a barrier. Next most commonly, 32% of participants indicated that a lack of information about the museum, including opening hours, admission prices, and exhibitions prevented them from checking out the art on display.

Figure 8: What prevented you from checking out the art on display? (n =38)

The questionnaire asked participants why they came to Molly’s and to select all that apply. The two most popular reasons were coffee (88%) and food (71%). Other answers also pertained to food and coffee as well as student related reasons such as meetings (21%) and studying (16%).

Half of those surveyed also indicated what motivates them to check out the art on display. Of those that responded, the most common answer was general interest in the art (26%). Other common responses included events at the Henry Art Gallery (18%), specific Henry Art Gallery exhibitions (18%), and for social reasons or a recommendation (18%).

The questionnaire also asked participants how often they come to the Henry Art Gallery to view the art on display. Responses (n = 74) were split down the middle with 50% of participants indicating that they never come to the Henry Art Gallery to check out the art on display and 50% indicated that they come zero - one times per month.

Participants were also asked which Henry Art Gallery events they had attended in the last month. Specific results were inconclusive with only 16 participants (20%) indicating that they have gone to any Henry Art Gallery event in the last 6 months.

Overall, the results from the Molly’s Café survey indicate about half of visitors to Molly’s Café have checked out the art on display in the Henry Art Gallery galleries. The majority of those surveyed reported hearing about Molly’s Café word of mouth. This seems to indicate that people who go to Molly’s Café are likely to recommend it to a friend. The data indicates that visitors to Molly’s Café do not necessarily know much about the Henry Art Gallery. Participants indicated that they did not know when the galleries are open, what they have to do with their bags, and how much admission is. This last piece of data is especially problematic for student visitors, who get into the Henry Art Gallery for free. The number one impediment to visitors to Molly’s Café checking out the art on display is time constraints. This may also be compounded by potential lack of information about the Henry’s opening hours. The data also indicates that visitors to Molly’s Café do not come to Henry Art Gallery events. Molly’s Café visitors are a potential audience for the Henry Art Gallery but in order to engage them with the art, the Henry Art Gallery must tailor their outreach keeping in mind the different motivations and needs of this audience.

**6. Discussion:**

**6.1 Significance:**

The Henry Art Gallery has existed for 86 years and in 2012 began evaluating visitor experiences at the museum. The 2012 evaluation provides the Henry Art Gallery with a baseline understanding of their audience leading this evaluation to explore how the Henry Art Gallery can improve the overall operations of the museum, as well as to build an understanding of visitor experiences in the galleries. The results from this research will inform the Henry Art Gallery in designing, developing, and instituting changes in order to become a “hub” for contemporary art.

**6.2 Limitations:**

1. Some of the galleries were closed for exhibition installations during observation times.

2. Larger group of data collectors makes for some variance in the categorization of particular terms and verbal encounters

3. Relatively low visitorship at the Henry Art Gallery.

4. Working within the constraint of peak visitor hours.

5. Molly’s Cafe has few customers, so the sample size dwindled as we continued to collect data

6. The data collection in Molly’s Cafe took place Tuesday - Friday, as the customer base on Saturday and Sunday was very low.

9. As with most surveys, biases could be reflected in visitor responses from those that answered what they thought was expected from the evaluators or the Henry Art Gallery.

**7. Conclusion:**

In conclusion, this evaluation assessed the visitorship of the Henry Art Gallery, analyzing the ways visitors engage with the museum and the staff, barriers that impact their experience, and the ways visitors use spaces inside the Henry Art Gallery. The study determined what physical and perceptual barriers affect visitors’ use of the Henry Art Gallery, and how visitors currently interact with museum spaces and staff. The findings from this evaluation will support guest service training and lead to changes in the museum’s physical infrastructure.

When answering our first question “Are there barriers affecting visitors’ use of the Henry Art Gallery?”, the study found that the primary barriers for visitors included directional signage and seating in the Henry Art Gallery. Many of the findings noted that visitors wanted the Henry Art Gallery to be open earlier and have more open hours. Seating, signage, and hours were three assumed barriers of the Henry Art Gallery; however, visitors also noted temperature and access to main hall as limitations of the building. The Henry Art Gallery was also curious about how the museum was being used, and the Gallery Observation found the average time spent in the gallery was 49 minutes; however, many visitors came to the Henry Art Gallery for a University of Washington class.

The Henry Art Gallery was also interested in the interactions between staff and visitors. The Gallery Observations found most encounters between staff and visitors were in the Lobby, followed by the North Galleries, and the least amount of interactions occurred in South Galleries. There interactions were by and large verbal interactions between the visitors and the Henry Art Gallery staff mainly tied to the Lobby area where visitors are greeted, usually lasting less than 30 seconds. The findings of the Gallery Observations exposed some of the general assumptions of the Henry Art Gallery staff and offer valuable insight into guest-staff interactions.

Another component of the evaluation was visitor experience in the Henry Art Gallery spaces. The study found that while in the Henry Art Gallery over half of respondents felt “interested,” followed by “happy,” “calm,” “curious” and “creative”. Following these emotions in the Likert scale 25% of visitors felt “confused.” In contrast to a general assumption of the Henry Art Gallery staff, a relatively small percentage of visitors feel “confused” compared to those who feel “interested”. The visitor experience is also based on the interactions between staff and visitors, while the study found that many of the interactions between staff and visitors occurred in the lobby as a greeting, respondents strongly agreed that GSR’s are informative and welcoming. Staff interactions with visitors are a benefit to the overall experience of the Henry Art Gallery and, when compared to their visits in last six months, 30 respondents acknowledged that they had interacted with staff. The staff interactions continue to exceed the Henry Art Gallery’s goals for visitor experience. Both the interactions between staff and visitors, as well as the Likert scale assessment of the visitors, create an environment that aligns with the Henry Art Gallery’s goals for visitor experiences.

The final component of the study resulted in a better understanding of patrons of Molly’s Café. The study found that most respondents were repeat visitors to the café and had seen the art on display in the past. This is a divergence from the assumptions made by the Henry Art Gallery regarding the patrons of the café and exposes an opportunity to encourage these visitors to stop by the galleries on their way out of the museum. The study did discover the leading limitations that prevent some visitors from going into the gallery are time constraints as well as a lack of information about the museum including opening hours, admission prices, and exhibitions.

This evaluation provides evidence for the Henry Art Gallery to consider changes that will impact visitors’ experiences within the museum. The Henry Art Gallery could consider having additional signage in the galleries, seating, improve outreach to visitors at Molly’s Café and ensure that general information about the museum is readily available, specifically promotion of events, exhibitions, as well as admission prices. Much of the data supports the Henry Art Gallery’s role in being a “hub” for contemporary art, looking for ways to improve the interactions between visitors and the Henry Art Gallery staff in the galleries, as well as ways to better incorporate Henry Art Gallery programming into the café. Continued research will provide evidence for the Henry to develop strategies for overcoming barriers to an ideal visitor experience.

**8. Acknowledgements:**

The evaluation team would like to thank the Henry Art Gallery for its support during this project, particularly site contacts Rachael Faust, Assistant Curator of Collections and Academic Programs, and Whitney Ford-Terry, Public Programs Coordinator, as well as Deputy Director of Art and Education Luis Croquer. The team also received support from professional evaluators Kathryn Owen, Education Research Supervisor at Woodland Park Zoo, and Renae Youngs, Research Associate at Lifelong Learning Group. Finally, the evaluation team would like to express its gratitude to Nick Visscher, *New Directions* Coordinator for the University of Washington’s Museology Graduate Program.

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**10. Appendices:**

**10.1 Appendix A: Gallery Observation Cover Sheet**

**Gallery Observation Worksheet**

Data Collector: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Time:  \_\_\_:\_\_\_ to \_\_\_:\_\_\_  
  
Location: \_\_\_ Lobby/Test Site \_\_\_ North Galleries \_\_\_ South Galleries No visitors \_\_\_  
  
Number of Henrys present: GSR\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_   Staff\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_    Volunteer/Intern\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Notes:

**10.2 Appendix B: Gallery Observation Encounter Sheet**

**Encounter # of visitors: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**No verbal encounter** \_\_\_

**Who initiated?**Visitor\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Henry\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Can’t Tell\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Same Time\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
**Length:**\_\_\_0-:30   \_\_\_:31 to 1:00   \_\_\_1:01 to 5:00   \_\_\_5:01 to 10:00   \_\_\_> 10:00

**Check all topics discussed:**

\_\_\_ Greeting/Thank you

\_\_\_ Ticket purchase or ticket information

\_\_\_ Visitor needs directions

\_\_\_ Henry offers directions

\_\_\_ Henry asks purpose of visit

**Comments:**

\_\_\_ Café mentioned

\_\_\_ Artwork on display

\_\_\_ Events

\_\_\_ Rules/guidelines

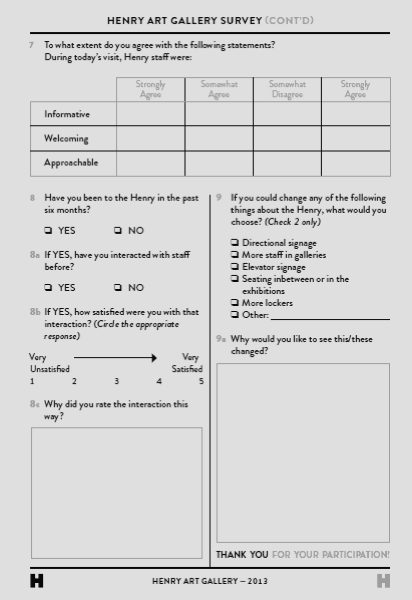
\_\_\_ Other topic related to the Henry: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_ Topic unrelated to the Henry: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_­­­

**10.3 Appendix C: Gallery Observation Data Collector Training Sheet**

1. **Get plastic case** with materials from Henry front desk.
2. Make sure you have a **clipboard**, **plenty of instrument sheets, and a pencil**, then store the rest of your things in a locker.
3. **Note your assigned location(s)** on the data collection schedule and go to that spot:
   1. **Lobby/Test Site** = the bench by the front door of the Henry, near the lockers.
   2. **North Galleries** = the galleries to the left and back as you walk down the ramp on the entrance level. Post yourself in the main room, keeping an eye on the GSR without being obvious.
   3. **South Galleries** = go down to Molly’s Café and turn left to the staircase leading down to the South Galleries. Post yourself somewhere along this staircase looking down at the galleries below.
4. Fill out **one cover sheet** **per data collection session per location**. This means that if you collect data in both the Lobby and the North Galleries, for example, you will need 2 cover sheets.
5. Fill in an **encounter section for** **every other visitor group that enters the space**, even if that group has no encounter with the Henrys.
6. **Check boxes for all topics covered**. So, for example, if a visitor came in and asked the GSR where the café is, you would check both “Visitor needs directions” and “café mentioned.”
7. If the topic is something other than the categories listed, try to **record as much detail as you can** about the gist of what was said.
8. If there are **any unusual circumstances, make a note in the comments section**. For example, during pilot testing there was a Simpson Center event at the Henry, which made visitor numbers higher than they usually are.
9. When your data collection session is complete, **staple all encounter sheets collected in one location to their corresponding cover sheet**. So, if you collected data in the Lobby and the North Galleries, you should have two stapled piles at the end of your shift. **IF YOU DO NOT STAPLE ENCOUNTER SHEETS TO THE COVER SHEET THE DATA WILL BE MEANINGLESS!** So don’t forget. ☺
10. Place the stapled data sheets in the manila folder in the plastic case marked “Completed,” return all equipment to the case, and return the case to the front desk attendant.



**10.4 Appendix D: Gallery Survey**



**PLEASE RETURN TO THE BARISTA**

1. Have you been to Molly’s before?

* Yes
* No

1a. If yes, how often do you come to Molly’s?

* 0-1 time per week
* 2-3 times per week
* 4-5 times per week

2. Why do you come to Molly’s?

* Food
* Coffee
* Meeting
* Break
* Lunch hour
* Happy hour
* Break from looking at the art
* Other \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

3. How did you hear about Molly’s?

* I don’t remember / I don’t know
* Henry Social Media (facebook, twitter, blogs)
* Henry Posters
* Henry Newsletter Email or print
* UW sources (UW Social Media, UW Arts, The Daily)
* Word of Mouth
* I was already here for the art
* Other\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

4. Have you seen art on display in the Henry before?

* Yes
* No

5. If yes, what motivates you to check out the art on display in the Henry?

6. How often do you come to the Henry to view art?

* Never
* 0-1 time per month
* 2-4 times per month
* 5-10 times per month

7. Which of the following is true:

* I have checked out the art on display.
* I’ve considered checking out the art on display, but haven’ t yet.
* I haven’t checked out the art, and don’t intend to.

8. If you have never checked out the art on display, what would you say prevented you from doing so? (List the top 3 reasons)

9. Have you attended an event at the Henry within the past 6 months? If so which types of events have you attended? (check all that apply)

* Open House
* Artist Lecture
* Tour
* Other Lecture
* Mindfulness Meditation
* Workshop
* Family Workshop
* Fall Fête
* Film Screening
* Performance
* Grad Student Happy hour
* Other \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. Henry Art Gallery, *Henry Art Gallery Fact Sheet*, College of Arts & Sciences, University of Washington, 2012, <http://www.artsci.washington.edu/news/factsheets/FactSheet-PDF_Henry.pdf> (accessed May 3, 2013). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Hood, Marilyn Gilbertson Hood, *Adult Attitudes Toward Leisure Choices in Relation to Museum Participation,* Ohio State University, Ann Arbor: UMI Dissertation Information Service, 1981. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. John H. Falk, Identity and the Museum Visitor Experience, (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2009): 159. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Ibid, 87. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Carole Henry, “How Visitors Relate to Museum Experiences: An Analysis of Positive and Negative Reactions”, Journal of Aesthetic Education: Vol. 34, No. 2, Summer, 2000. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Randi Korn & Associates, Inc, *Young Adult Study*, Boston, MA: Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum of Art, 2008. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Hood, *Adult Attitudes Toward Leisure Choices in Relation to Museum Participation.* [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Falk, Identity and the Museum Visitor Experience. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Claudia J. Bach, “A Gateway to Diversified Museum Audiences: University Students and Campus Art Museums”, University of Washington Master’s Thesis in the Communications Department, 1995: 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Ibid, 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Ibid, 70. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Ibid, 73. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Ibid, 74. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Zaira Arredondo, Melissa Beseda, Allison Hoffmann, and Kaylan Petrie. “Visitor Demographics & Motivation for Visiting the Henry Art Gallery”. University of Washington’s Museology Graduate Program New Directions Initiative Report, Spring 2012. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Ibid, 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Ibid, 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Ibid, 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)