

Through The Lens:

A study of museum space and design

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How do the design choices museums make affect visitor learning, engagement, and experience?

Why does this matter?

Thinking about the visitor experience is crucial when designing a successful museum or exhibition. The Lehigh Art Galleries provide the campus and community with one of the most diverse and largest art collections in the region. With over 17,000 objects, Lehigh has the opportunity to create an immense public impact. Understanding how humans learn, what they are drawn to, and how to design a welcoming space are instrumental in creating a prosperous art museum or gallery.

As institutions that have been historically private and unwelcoming, museums are finding themselves at a time of reckoning. For many, in order to succeed they must dig deeper to better understand what their communities need.

Case Studies and Data Collection

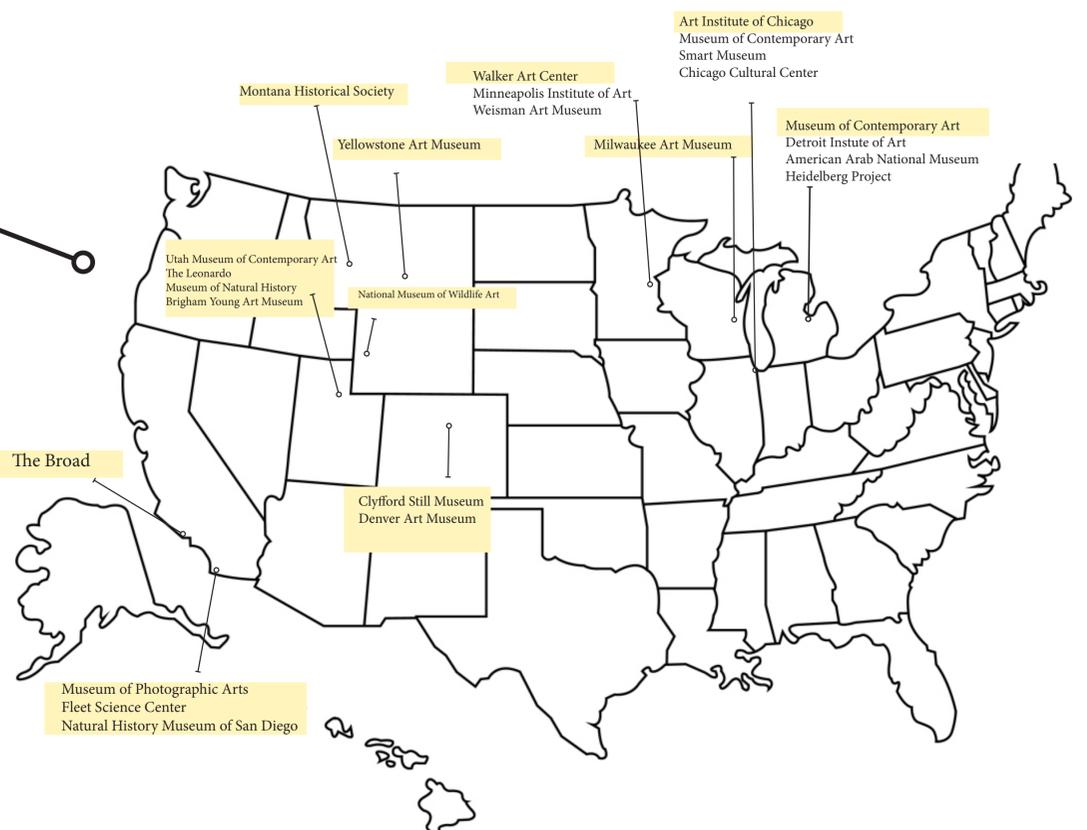
To collect the majority of my data, I traveled to over 25 museums this summer. It was important to my research that I visited a diverse group of museums. I interviewed dozens of staff members, recorded notes and observations during my visits to each location, and used my camera to help me capture and document my findings.

Takeaways and Final Remarks

My conclusions? The most important aspect to a museum is accessibility. To be a space that welcomes every visitor, means people have to feel welcomed and comfortable enough to enter. Where in the community is the museum located? Are there easily accessible public transportation options to get to the museum? Are interior spaces designed properly for all abilities and ages? Is signage easy to follow? Who is the museum's marketing tailored to?

Museums and galleries facilitate learning, exploration, and community engagement. A good museum or exhibition sticks with you, and a great one can change lives. That's an enormous amount of power for an institution to hold, and an immense responsibility for those in charge.

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