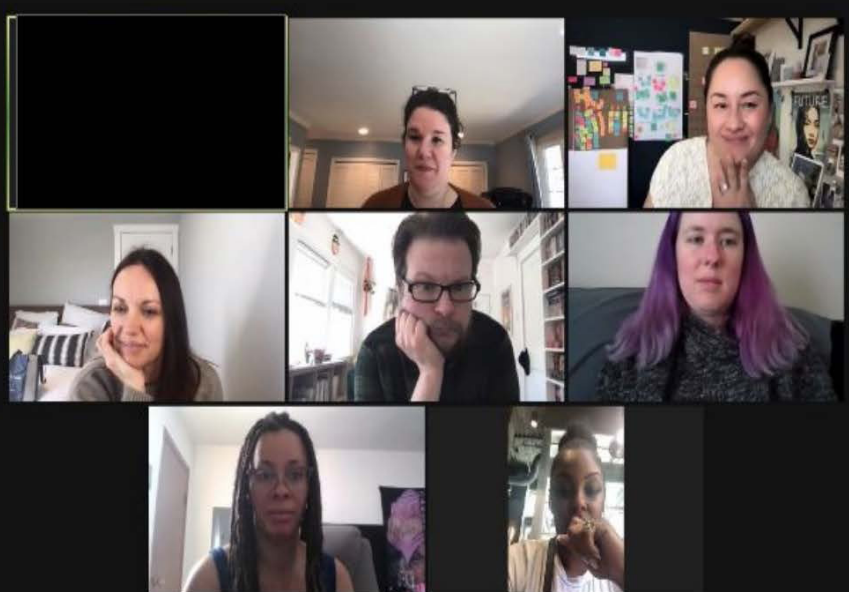
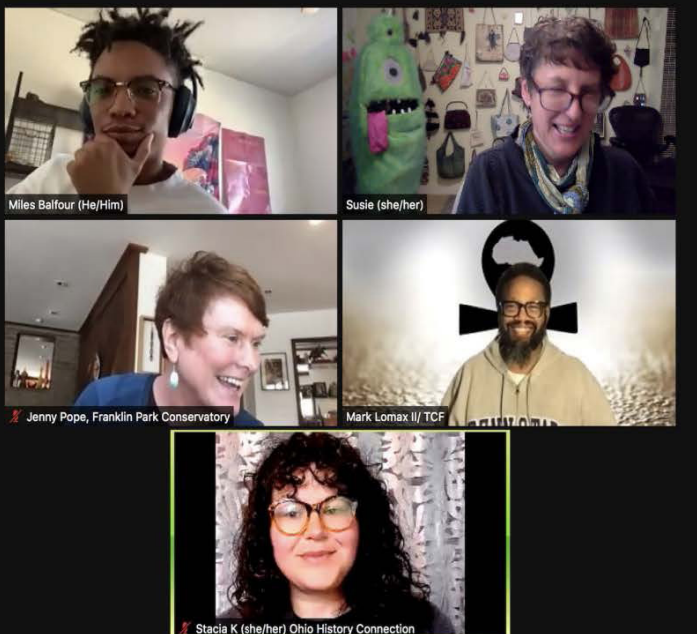


Museums for All

In the spring of 2021 we carried out a design project with six of the largest museums in Columbus to better understand how they might increase belonging in museums for people currently experiencing poverty.



THE PROBLEM

Through the national Museums for All program, those receiving food assistance (SNAP benefits) can gain free or reduced admission to more than 1,000 museums throughout the United States. As museums in Columbus were preparing to roll out a Museums for All program here, they wanted to ensure that all residents felt belonging in museums and that residents eligible for the Museums for All program would be inclined to visit museums.

THE APPROACH

The project was done during a weeklong intensive design sprint in which we conducted nearly twelve hours of interviews with people currently experiencing poverty or receiving government assistance. The interviews helped our team understand how residents view museums and where people felt the greatest belonging in the city in general.

The design team was composed of community members, museum practitioners, designers and was led by The Columbus Foundation team. Community team members included: Miles, Bessie, and Tiara. Museum staff included representatives from Center of Science and Industry, the Columbus Museum of Art, the Wexner Center for the Arts, the Franklin Park Conservatory and Botanical Gardens, the Ohio History Connection, and the National Veterans Memorial and Museum. Designers included Morgan Vien and Susie Wise. The Columbus Foundation included Mark Lomax and Heather Tsavaris.

FINDINGS

Through the interviews, residents revealed that they perceived clear indicators of what is “for them” and what is not, even when programs are meant to be inclusive. Residents cited things like the physical accessibility of spaces, outdoor tents, and the actual museum exhibitions as markers that they did not “belong” in certain places.

Residents were also very clear that free museum access alone was not enough. One resident shared: “Whatever happens in the museum has to be relevant to me, opening the door isn’t enough”.

During the project, we met a woman named Mary Ann. Mary Ann described herself as low income and explained that she doesn’t always want to receive help from others, sometimes she wants to be a helper too. “I know what it feels like when people give me charity. I don’t want that... For me I have to feel a part of it. I have to feel an equal partner. Don’t feel sorry for me.” Mary Ann has expertise about her situation and her neighbors. Our team wanted to be able to offer Mary Ann a way to inform

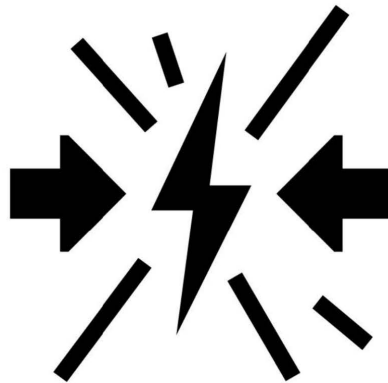
museums about what she and her friends and neighbors want and need from museums. We wanted to offer Mary Ann a way to impact what was happening in museums. We wondered if it might be possible for Mary Ann to unleash her knowledge of both the museums and her friends and neighbors to become a bridge between the two.

A prototype born out of our desire to help Mary Ann was a “Community Navigator” concept that involved trusting, mutually respecting relations between peer-educators helping to provide more easily accessible information about museum resources to their communities.

Another prototype that was co-created during the project was “The Exhibit of Open Conflict”. This prototype specifically engaged with the need for residents to feel agency and truly see inclusive representation in exhibit experiences. This exhibit would entail an interactive, communal space for residents to interact with those who they perceive as both in-groups and out-groups encouraging people to claim power by speaking their truth while learning from others in constructive dialogues. Residents we interviewed about this prototype were particularly interested in it. One sharing: “There is nowhere in Columbus that something like this can happen. If this was real, I could get a hundred people to show up.”

WELCOME TO THE **EXHIBIT OF OPEN CONFLICT**

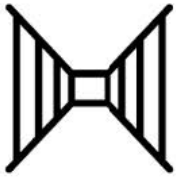
*a place for speaking your truth, saying
no, and holding multiple perspectives*



RULES OF THE FIGHT

- This exhibit is always ON and can house any argument
- This TOPIC changes with the times, and can last from 3-5 weeks
- We come to express ourselves through the provided channels on the given topic
- We come to offer our perspective and witness the views of others
- We cause no harm
- We leave through the Row of Reparations and offer healing as we go

THE HALL OF EMOTIONS



A walkable hallway, the colors of the rainbow on the walls, where you write the emotions you are carrying aligned to the color they feel. Profanity welcome.

THE PARLOR OF PRIVILEGE



A dining experience that changes every two hours, where a demographic is granted privilege and gets the better service and seating. Guests must enter and comment before they are told who has privilege.

in, Black = Trans Women get VIP, all others get common seating and service.

THE GARDEN OF INTENT VS IMPACT



In this garden you are paired with someone across difference to discuss a scenario having to do with race, class or gender and you discuss the intent vs the impact of actions in that scenario.

THE QUAD OF COUNTERARGUMENTS

This is where you write your opinion on a given topic- post-its. Others come to disagree by writing their opinions and putting their post-it on top.



THE NARROW PASSAGE OF NO

In this transition zone, a loud speaker asks you to do things, like go to work, do your chores, pay your bills. Your job is to keep walking and to say NO all the way down the hallway.



THE RAGE ROOM

Every hour, on the hour the room is flipped, cleaned, and restocked for more things to break. The room is soundproof and protective equipment is provided. Guests enter to scream and break things for 10 minute intervals.



THE DEBATE DEBAUCLE



The debate where no one wins

No preparation, no score keeping, talking over one another is welcome. Get out as many arguments as you can.

In the end, agree to disagree and walk away.

THE ROW OF REPARATIONS

Leave what you also need, and name who it is for.

money
food
goods
services

must be something of value and ready to use



THE PATIO OF PROGRESS



This patio is for side-by-side problem-solving. Sit with a stranger or team to look at the topic at hand and work together to come up with solutions.

You can sign up here to activate those solutions after your visit.

THE IMPACT

The Ohio History Connection, in partnership with five other Columbus museums, received a \$49,340 National Leadership grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services to test and evaluate a community of support program model to encourage museum visits through Museums for All, an initiative through which museums offer free or reduced admission to people receiving food assistance. Further design work to build out that prototype is ongoing.

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