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Cabinets of Wonder
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Cabinets of Wonder: Design Manifesto The Full Immersion of Visitors In The Exhibition Environment

One of the most fundamental aspects of a museum experience to me has been the ability to help create that spark of interest, which I believe is within every visitor. A spark, which through the overall environment and atmosphere of an exhibition can become present within the visitors thoughts.

The question then becomes how do you create the overall environment within exhibitions to initiate this spark. This is a very complex subject but I believe there is one way I would help to address this issue. One of the overall goals within my design manifesto is to immerse the visitors within the subject matter of the exhibition with the use of dioramas and other mechanisms of self-directed discovery by the visitor.

I believe that the process of full immersing visitors into the overall experience of the exhibit allows for a deeper sense of connection, a greater sense of awareness and a deeper appreciation by the visitors of the exhibition matter.

One of the best examples of this theory is found within the Pequot village at the Mashantucket Pequot Museum. The Pequot Village uses beautifully crafted dioramas in order to recreate a Pequot village in its entirety. This recreation and immersion of the visitors allows them to now only understand the life and culture of the Pequot Indians lived firsthand but experience at their own pace and with from their own interest points.

The users are allowed to wander freely within the village to any area of their choosing and are given all the necessary information about the particular subject matter they choose through the audio component. The audio component not only explains the subject matter from a researchers background but also allow the visitors the option to listen to a Pequot Indian to tell you themselves about their personal viewpoint on the subject matter as well. So the visitor is given three forms of information through the audio feedback a basic description of the artifact, the significance of the artifact from a neutral researchers perspective and last but not least, a personalized perspective from a person who has a cultural connection with the artifact.

I was completely in awe of the wonderful dioramas as well as the overall environment that was created in the Pequot Village. I believe that in immersing the visitors into the exhibition matter as well as allowing them to choose freely any subject of their own interest can you create a richer and deeper learning experience.

While there are also other important considerations that need to be explored such as the physical layout, lighting, space design, interaction design of the exhibits, the content and its intended target audience, I truly feel that the underlying need for the creation of that spark is the driving force in allowing a visitor to truly understand, appreciate and feel engaged with the exhibition.

I am now considering how this process of immersion can be best used in the creation of any of the following museum exhibition ideas in creating a deeper sense of interaction in any of the following museum proposals.

A: A exhibition dedicated to telling the personal stories of abolitionists throughout American's early history up until the Civil/ Human Rights era in the 1960's and 70's.

B: An exhibition, which explores the diverse neighborhoods of New York City and how they are rapidly changing in face of gentrification.

C: An exhibition, which tells the story of the victims of Hurricane Katrina.

D: An pictorial exhibition in exploring my personal journey to South Korea.