Chapter 5
Experiencing the Art Museum: Methods for Public Engagement

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Abstract Methods for interactive, socially engaged art museum experiences are explored. They examine the utility of developing larger, institutional philosophies to specific techniques via case studies at the U.C.L.A. Hammer Museum, the Oakland Museum of California, and the Walker Art Center. Employed by a spectrum of practitioners such as artists, designers, and museum professionals, these approaches created new avenues for interaction. Specifically, artists entering into visitor services to drive institutional evolution, techniques for engaging atypical visitors, and approaches for engaging with "the crowd" with ephemeral art movements.

5.1 Introduction

It is well documented that museum attendance has been declining in the United States since the early 1980s. The roots of attrition are complex. They stem from changing demographics to the public's lack of early experiences with museums and art. These feed into a perception that museums are not relevant to them. (Wyrick 2014) According to arts engagement studies, in recent years we have been "…in the midst of a seismic shift in cultural production, moving from a 'sit-back-and-be-told culture' to a 'making-and-doing-culture.' Active or participatory arts practices are emerging from the fringes of the Western cultural tradition to capture the collective imagination (WolfBrown 2011)."

Art museums have explored these two phenomena directly by bringing arts practitioners with experience in participatory design or socially engaged art into the visitor experience. Some of these efforts are directly concerned with how to engage more people given that they are not art lovers and *connoisseurs*. Others are less concerned with questions around arts literacy; they are more interested in participation or perception of institutional sense-making. They address questions such as,

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"What can a museum be (now)?" or "What might happen if we bring different practitioners on board to engage with the life and operations of the museum?"

Institutions have different models of how and why to bring in artists and how to work with them. We will explore these models via three case studies. These are projects I have developed as an individual contributor, and in collaboration with staff, other artists, and participants. The first project, at the UCLA Hammer Museum, brought in artists to address the space of Visitor Services. The second, at the Oakland Museum of California, brought artists into engage with their non-visiting public. Lastly, the Walker Art Center, created a public space outside of the museum for artists and the public to manifest open-ended, socially engaged projects.

Public engagement is by nature, experimental. Whether as an art practice or the desired outcome, it is specific to the community and institution in which it occurs. While is no one approach, there are methodologies that make this work possible.

5.2 Case Study: U.C.L.A. Hammer Museum Artist Residencies in Visitor Services

The U.C.L.A. Hammer Museum (Hammer) is a contemporary art museum in Los Angeles. In 2009, they were awarded an arts innovation grant with the objective to "…create a new kind of interactive museum: an artist-driven visitor engagement and education program that encourages daily contact among visitors, artists, and museum staff (James Irvine Foundation 2009)…"

For the first year of the residency, they invited Machine Project, a Los Angeles based not-for-profit arts organization whose mission is "to produce cultural programming that inspires audiences to become creatively active by imagining, participating and relating in new ways to the arts and sciences—utilizing a range of techniques, such as informality, humour, and surprise…" (Machine Project n.d.). During the course of their residency, Machine Project produced 26 projects in conjunction with 300 artists.

The museum identified "visitor services" as a focus for their residency, and defined the general visiting public as their audience. No distinctions were made with regards to demographics or artistic literacy. They wanted artists to come up with creative solutions or catalysts for things that were traditionally considered infrastructure, not art. These included mundane issues, such as how to find the bathroom, or where to buy tickets. Other examples were how to get people into unused spaces, or simply ways to put unused spaces into play. Oftentimes, these engaging experiences seemed ridiculous on the surface. Yet they were also a critique of how the museum used its spaces and welcomed its visitors.

When Machine Project Director Mark Allen invited me to participate in the residency, it struck me choosing wayfinding as an area of exploration would be challenging to do in an interactive and engaging manner. This is especially true as a "museum sense-making" type of project, i.e., how do we understand the institutions, not simply the contents. Wayfinding is traditionally the domain of architects

and designers. A clear map and wall signs are the standard. It is a problem often solved in an efficient and seamless manner, blending into infrastructure, and regardless of audience literacy.

The Hammer Museum site is complex. It is situated on the same site as the Occidental Petroleum Corporation Headquarters. They share entrances, parking facilities, atrium, and café. Depending on what entrance you use, it can be confusing to identify where the museum entrance is, and to understand where one is in the space.

The organized and logical thinking that is essential to create a good map was not necessarily a constraint for the artists looking at this problem. The fact that wayfinding was a problem for the museum was not our primary concern. What mattered to us was to find a way that would engagingly get visitors around the site, and help them participate (however opaquely) in the conversation the artists were having with the museum *and* the public through the residency.

I explored ways to navigate visitors around the site. These approaches ranged from variations on the familiar "breadcrumb trail" (a progression of signs that point the way) to more iconoclastic concepts bordering on the absurd. Mark and I had identified the atrium entrance as the main area for orientation. It is a large space with many entries and exits. It provided an ideal opportunity to orient the visitor in the building.

After dozens of iterations, we came up with the idea of using a mechatronic hand mounted on top of a model of the building to point the visitor in the direction they wanted to go (Mortati 2014b). We started out quite small, playing with the notion of creating an architect's model of the museum inside a vitrine. It would house a large rotating hand inside so visitors could look down into it and have an overview of where to go, However, in order for our project to make itself understood as a way experience, (and not as an object in a vitrine), it became clear that the interactive experience needed to dominate the visual field enough to make an impact for visitors.

Working with local fabricator Matt Jones and programming by artist Ben Dean, the interactive evolved into a structure seven feet wide by eight and a half feet high. It became a 3D animatronic sculpture mounted atop a large "model" of the museum. The sculpture pointed people toward different parts of the Museum or to themselves; depending on the button they pushed (Figs. 5.1 and 5.2).

We borrowed from the vernacular of science museum interactives in using Happ buttons that lit up when a location was pressed. Driven by an Arduino, the motor would whir and the hand would slowly point in the chosen direction: tickets, galleries, theater, café, you.

The anecdotal evidence showed that it (or "the big hand") was surprisingly effective at getting people around. It was an object made for the visitor, and called attention to their concerns, not the concerns of the museum or the (other) artwork in its location, its orientation, and its language.

For the museum, however, there was a lot of internal controversy during the residency with this particular project. It created discussion and tension about signage, the role of the artist, the ability of the museum to allow confusion around authority, artwork, and the building envelope itself. Much of this discussion happened among the staff, between the artists and the staff, and anecdotally, among the

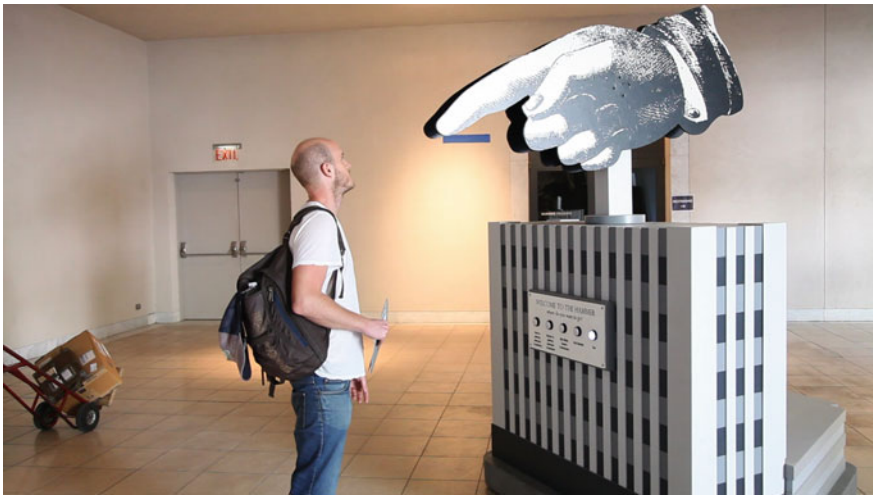

Fig. 5.1 Interacting with the giant hand. Source: Machine Project

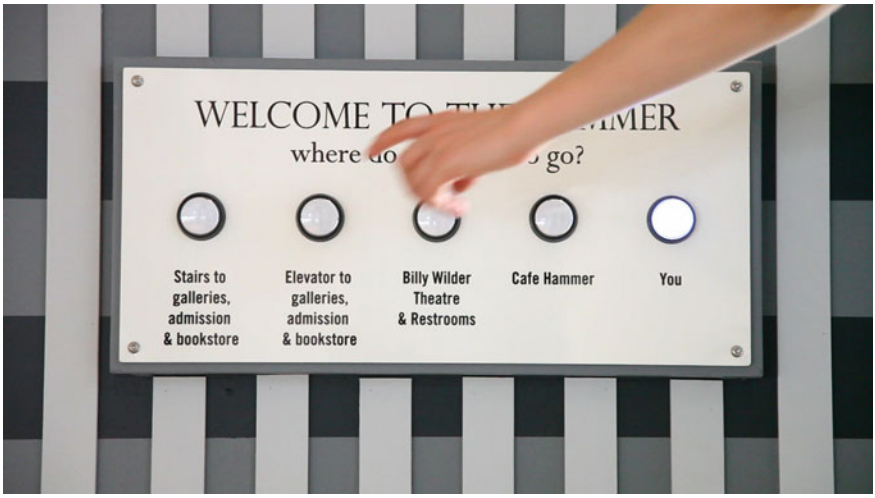

Fig. 5.2 Button interface. Source: Machine Project

public. While there was the talk of keeping it up for a year or perhaps even accessioning it, as a solution to the tension, the museum and Machine chose to leave it up for only a month.

Was it artwork? Perhaps, but it was not a traditionally accessioned object. Was it design? Perhaps, but it took over the space, creating another problem while theoretically solving the first one. The museum was ultimately concerned that in calling

so much attention to their wayfinding problem we would limit the functionality of our approach as a navigational tool and overemphasize the difficulty of their layout.

With the public as its primary concern, this initiative provided the opportunity for the multiple constituents to participate in the question of the artist as a problem solver, the functions of design, and the needs of operationalizing experimentation.

"Machine's wayfinding proposals… made the Hammer's infrastructural concerns part of the art that it displayed. The value of this, from a public engagement perspective, is that the museum becomes a more dynamic and approachable entity —and one that includes the public in discussions about the nature and function of the museum. The invitation to think critically about the museum itself is a gambit that implicitly extends to the art: it sends visitors a clear message that the museum is a space in which art serves as the basis for a conversation about values in which they are welcomed to participate (Allen and Agsten 2012)."

By borrowing the interaction language more familiar in science museums of button-pushing and whirring motors created a familiarity for the visitor. Having the freedom (however fleeting) to make the experience adequately dominate the field of view created a piece that was effective in function and in critique. The artist as a problem solver is a tricky assignment. The artist as a catalyst to explore and discuss is more in line with how they work.

In the end, the project resulted in the following outcomes:

- Engaged dozens of artists and staff with the questions of museum as a self-aware entity into which the public is invited
- Evolved the institution's socially engaged curatorial practice
- Documentation and sharing through conferences, video, and the widely disseminated "Machine Project Hammer Museum Public Engagement Artist in Residence Report (Ibid)."

5.3 Case Study: Appropriating the Collection at the Oakland Museum of California

In 2014, the Oakland Museum of California (OMCA) began an institution-wide initiative to address the discrepancy that their immediate neighbors fell well outside of their typical visiting public (James Irvine Foundation Arts Innovation Grant 2009). The OMCA has long been a progressive institution. In 2011, they did extensive work on exhibitions and programming and reframed themselves as a "visitor centric institution." (Henry and Mclean 2011) With this new initiative, they intended to build up attendance and engagement with these non-visiting neighbors. Much of this nearby, potential audience consisted of the visitors who do not tend to frequent museums, and in terms of art, come armed with little prior knowledge.

The city of Oakland is extraordinarily diverse in terms of ethnic makeup: White (34.5%), Black or African American (28%), Asian (16.8%), and Latino (25.4%)

(United States Census Bureau 2010) Most of the non-white communities lived in high concentrations adjacent to the museum.

"Becoming familiar with your neighbors is the first step. Research that focused on learning about them should be undertaken with the same enthusiasm that has already gone into learning about your [museum] and the artifacts it houses. What you need to know has nothing to do with [art] history or your particular [museum's] narrative. It has to do with everything surrounding it (Vagnone et al. 2016)."

Through this initiative, the museum invited me to do a project of my own choosing and agreed to pair me with a single local family. Given that I had little experience with their neighbors, and that my more traditional museum work tended toward larger constituencies, I felt that working on a more intimate scale would prove more fruitful in building relationships, both for the museum and for me. Thus, this project fell under the second type I mentioned at the outset of this chapter: engaging audiences beyond the usual art lovers and connoisseurs.

The museum connected me to a Latino family with three children: two young boys and a middle school aged girl who spoke a mixture of English and Spanish. Mother and daughter had been to the museum via school trip, while the rest of the family had never visited.

The OMCA is a comprehensive institution and I chose to work with their art collection (vs. their history or science collections). At the time, the art galleries seemed as if they stood the most to gain from a socially engaged project. And art seemed a subject that has more universal subject rather than the specificity of history or science. The project culminated into a series of interpretive pedestals throughout the art galleries with a video installation at the start. These were supported by a series of public events, led by the family, hosted by the museum, and facilitated by myself.

When looking for explanations for why certain communities do not visit museums, a common response is that these communities do not see themselves reflected there (James Irvine Foundation Arts Innovation Grant 2009). Playing on the idea of reflections, I titled my project *Tell Me Where the Mirrors Go*.

My original proposal was structured around connecting the internal lives of the family at home with the art collection in the museum. I wanted to suggest that these works in the museum are not the domain of the few. Instead, they are the ideas of the many, and for many. The concept was that over a period of visits, the family would identify works of art they resonated with and that they wanted to have represented in their home. The museum was going to de-install their chosen artworks, and we would install full-scale recreations in the family's home. The in-gallery artworks would be replaced with large-scale photographs of the family at home with "their" artworks.

However, at the beginning of the project, this family did not have a permanent home. They had a series of temporary living arrangements and were living in a motel. This changed the focus away from visually representing ownership of ideas and more toward letting the project evolve in an improvisational way. The museum was supportive of this shift.

I wanted to find out if the question of not seeing themselves reflected was true for this family. We began working together through a series of in-person meetings at the site and in their motel. I listened to what they had to say about their experiences or impressions of the museum, their impressions with art, and their desires for a role the museum could play in their lives.

It took a few visits to the museum (Fig. 5.3) and at their temporary home before we achieved a level of comfort with one another. In all cases, the family was incredibly generous with their time and attention. They were honest and candid, despite the fact that they were often being recorded.

They talked about what they thought of the collection, the museum itself, and its value. The father said that he thought the museum was a bit "boring", but he also said that he hoped his kids would want to visit; he wanted them to have the opportunity for informal education encounters. This softens the art museum myth: that the collections themselves are somehow continuously inaccessible to certain publics (Weil 2002).

"A lot of people don't like to come to museums. I don't know why… Maybe they don't… sometimes we have a lot of problems before [we] think about go(ing) to museums. When you think about rent, first, I'm sure you could walk around in my area, and you could interview people who never go to the museum."—Margaro, father (2015).

My objective for the project was still to insert their presence into the art viewing moment (for all visitors). To again, let them choose where they saw themselves reflected, and to make that visible to the museum staff and the public.

Instead of photos of them inside at home with works of art (again, not possible), I integrated their first-person perspectives adjacent to individual works of art that had resonated with them.

Fig. 5.3 Author (left) and family (right) at the museum. Source: Alex Rapine

The project resulted in three primary in-gallery components that spanned media, interpretive layer, and events, with everything bilingual, prioritizing Spanish. The in-gallery experience began with a mini-documentary near the entrance of the gallery. Following were eight pedestals (Fig. 5.4) directly adjacent to works of art that each family member resonated with. On each pedestal were images of the individual family member, and their commentary engraved in two languages. It was created to have the feel of a semi-permanent object. I chose this route versus a comment card or flat graphic format to underline the importance of their place in this "museum of California." No one could ignore or overlook these objects. The series of public events were bilingual tours of these chosen artworks, with the mother of the family performing the role of translator.

A popular refrain I heard from artists, designers, and curators were 'why will they care about art?' inferring that because they were struggling economically and/or ethnically, the idea for them to engage with the museum was ridiculous. On the contrary, during both in-gallery and post-project interviews, the mother said that she welcomed the opportunity to see another "plane" above the fray of daily life.

In follow-up interviews and meetings after the project, the family reported that they visited more often and that they felt a sense of ownership of the museum. For the museum, the details of the project, including the video, were shared with staff. A number of them expressed the impact it had on how they prioritize their work going forward. The specificity of a single family was successful towards fostering a sense of connectedness between staff and their community.

Fig. 5.4 Pedestal with daughter's commentary. Source: Odell Hussey

During the course of the grant, projects by other regional artists explored the vein of demographics and the museum. For example, one was a large, community-driven exhibition developed by local artist Chris Treggiari and OMCA Curator of Social Practice Evelyn Orantes called "Oakland I Want You to Know…" It was a participatory installation about the impacts of gentrification on West Oakland, driven by economic forces in the greater San Francisco Bay Area (Abbey-Lambertz 2016).

Director of the OMCA Lab, Kelly McKinley provided high-level findings on the impact of the grant initiatives:

"We know that over the duration of the project we attracted over 80,000 new visitors to the Museum. We also increased the diversity of our audience with now over 50% of visitors being people of color. We have surveyed staff each year to see how their perception of the museum's and their own commitment/understanding of community engagement has shifted (McKinley 2017)."

In my work with museums, I engage with large groups or constituencies to find commonalities, or to distil ideas into a format that will resonate or make sense to them. Working in such an intimate way underscored how much more impact one-on-one interaction can have on those involved in the project, as well as those who view it.

In the end, the project resulted in the following outcomes:

- Provided the museum with a better understanding of their public
- Gave the museum tools for engaging their neighborhood through first-person engagement
- Created a sense of ownership of the museum for this formerly non-visiting group
- Enabled artists and staff to produce work that actively engaged with the subject of demographics and institutional relationships
- Documentation and sharing through conferences, talks, and video.

5.4 Case Study: Public Engagement at the Walker Art Center's Open Field

In 2009, the Walker Art Center, a contemporary art museum, noticed that the field adjacent to their building was being used in an ad hoc fashion, and began to formulate a question:

"What form of public park could emerge from the context of a contemporary arts center?" (Peters and Schultz 2012)

The general public was making it their own: dropping by and having picnics, playing games, and hanging out, but they were not necessarily coming into the museum. In 2009, the Education and Community Programs department began to develop a 4-acre green space on the campus as "a shared space for creative

gatherings, unexpected interactions, and idea exchange (Ibid).” It was transformed into an area for programing with an outdoor café, a tool shed to hold games and art-making supplies, and of course, a large, grassy field (Fig. 5.5). They named it Open Field, and established it using the framework of the commons (Fig. 5.5).

In brief, “commons” is a general term for shared resources used in political economic theory (Hess 2006). Commons are defined by these shared resources and are managed by guidelines and theories that help groups to share them. In the context of Open Field, the Walker extrapolated the concept to explore creating a sense of shared ownership between the public and the museum, in an area, the public was already using.

Embracing an inclusive sensibility and aesthetic, Open Field went on to initiate and support dozens of art, design, research residencies, projects of the public’s own creation, and large-scale popular events. It was an experiment in participation and public space, which over the course of 3 years engaged approximately 92,000 people (Mortati 2014a). In this sense, the larger project was both a “museum sense-making” project as well as an effort to expand the audience beyond the norm.

From a purely logistical perspective, this scale of participation requires extensive support. The Open Field team created accessible guidelines for participation which were posted on their website. They made it clear how to propose projects, what kind

Fig. 5.5 Walker Art Center's Open Field amenities included a tool shed (filled with art activities and games), cafe, worktables and the field itself. Source: Author

of support to expect, and how to use a public calendar, all of which came together as an "etiquette" guide for the field.

I was invited by the Walker to create two Open Field projects. The first was an interactive video project and the second focused on an experimental art movement from the mid-twentieth century.

5.4.1 *People Imitating Cats: Interactive Video Project*

It is impossible to write about Open Field without mentioning the unexpected success of their 2012 spontaneous project, the Internet Cat Video Festival. In brief, CatVidFest (as it became known) was the first-ever, crowd-sourced video festival that celebrated the phenomenon of people watching cat videos. The Walker Open Field team developed an online jury of artists, enthusiasts, and friends to review an estimated 4,000 submissions that were winnowed down into a final reel. Screened outdoors one evening on the field, the Walker did not know whether to expect a few hundred or a thousand people. In the end, 10,000 people showed up.

"We assumed when we were assembling the clips that people would be eager to see new videos, but in actuality, the greater joy was sharing the experience of watching very familiar videos with each other (Walker Art Center 2014)."

My first project was for the 2013 CatVidFest. I developed and deployed a public interactive titled *People Imitating Cat*s (Fig. 5.6). It was a mobile recording cart, shaped like a cat's head, and it roamed the Minnesota State Fair, the site of that years' festival. It was a relatively simple interactive that recorded videos of the attendees imitating cats. The recordings were played back to an audience of 11,000 during the event, amplifying the absurdity, and joy of people gathering en masse to watch cat videos.

Fig. 5.6 People imitating cats interactive. Source: Author

5.4.2 *FluxField Projects—Engaging the Ephemeral*

In 2014, Open Field invited a number of artists and practitioners to explore the art movement Fluxus. This was in parallel to the Center's exhibition *Art Expanded, 1958–1978,* a large show of art and media from their collection of the "expanded arts scene," (Walker Art Center 2014) a large part of which included Fluxus. Their invitation to me was to do research in the archives and create public engagement projects on the field in relation to the movement.

Fluxus took shape in the mid-twentieth century, and is a loosely defined, international collection of artists, designers, poets, and performers. Their work spearheaded a moment in time where artists began to upend traditional art forms though informal and distributed collaborations.

"I think of Fluxus first and foremost as the loose network of artists in the late 1950s into'60s who first carried the name—who understood art as inseparable from everyday life, and vice versa, and performed lots of public experiments accordingly. And who also constantly disagreed with each other about what "Fluxus" was about. I think of names like John Cage, George Maciunas, Alison Knowles, George Brecht, Nam June Paik. So in that sense, I think Fluxus is people."—Rachel Jendrzejewski (Holloway 2014)

With few prerequisites for prior-knowledge and a performative and playful sensibility, Fluxus is fertile territory for interpretation and engagement. Its lingua franca was instructions in the form of written or visualized "scores." Fluxus artists wrote, shared, and performed these simple written instructions (Fig. 5.7). One artist

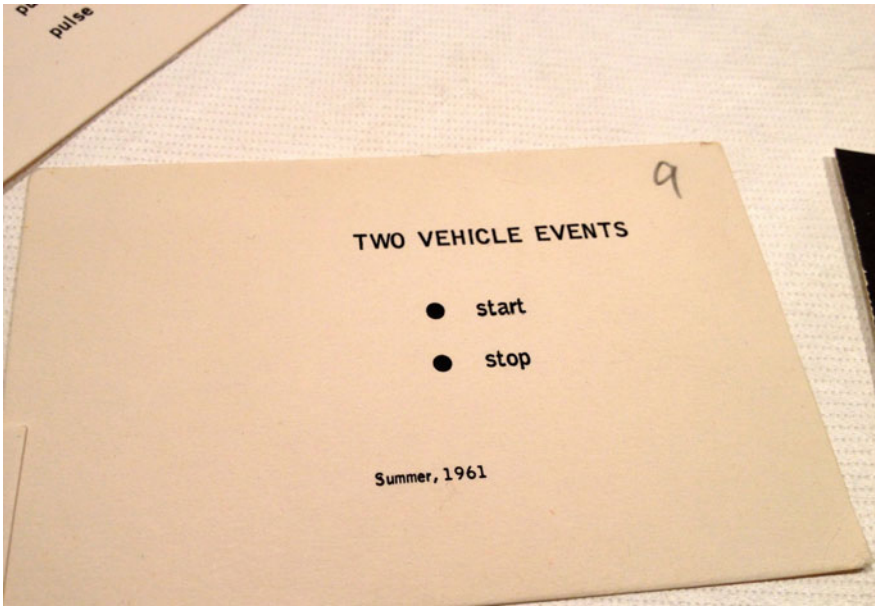

Fig. 5.7 Fluxus score, walker archives. Source: Author

Fig. 5.8 Fluxus scores for drawing club. Source: Author

could craft a score; pass it on to another to "perform" in their manner, their place, maybe even at the same time.

My residency culminated in a participatory event called Fluxus Drawing Club, and an installation of Fluxus scores called FluxField Interpretive Trail on the adjacent field for the public to wander through.

Fluxus Drawing Club was a collaboration between myself and Minneapolis artist Margaret Pezalla-Granlund. Drawing Club, a collaborative and participatory drawing event, was already a weekly Open Field program, which we used as our platform. Together we designed scores, creating a series of Flux Kits with light (do you mean fun? Or what could another word be) instructions printed inside (Fig. 5.8). The public sat out at the picnic tables and "drew" scores (Fig. 5.9). For background at the event, I asked Margaret and her family to record their reading of an essay by Fluxus founding father, Dick Higgins: "A Child's History of Fluxus" (1979). Visitors spent the evening engaged with the scores, drawing, sharing, and posting them on a purpose-built mobile display board.

Because they already had an established program, I could easily propose a project without the pressure of attracting participants. The museum was also able to quickly connect me with local collaborators, allowing me to spend most of my time on developing ideas and producing the work, making it possible to easily produce a second and complimentary project.

For FluxField Interpretive Trail, the second project of the event, I generated a series of interpretive panels that made connections between the (rambunctious) spirit of Fluxus with the playful, experimental spirit of Open Field (Fig. 5.10). The Fluxus philosophy that (their) art was "neither an exhibition of objects or a performance, but somewhere in between." (George Brecht, Wikipedia). These scores included commentaries on Fluxus ("The most ambiguous club in the art world"),

Fig. 5.9 Fluxus drawing club event. Source: Author

quotes from founding Fluxus artists, and observations of the actual field ("Need Sod"). Hashtags became an organizing principle of the trail which I used as labels to suggest whether a score was foundational, descriptive, or invitational. The field served my project well by allowing people to participate in an experiential yet low-stakes manner.

In art education or interactive contexts, we often talk about learning goals and visitor outcomes because of an intervention. What do learning goals look like in a relatively free-choice public space such as the contemporary art center when we explore these questions in tandem with practitioners and the public? How do we, as a field, work iteratively to uncover those questions?

"The learning goals in contemporary art museums seem to be particularly difficult to define. Are we hoping that visitors walk away with a greater knowledge of the art world, studio practices, issues in contemporary society or all of these things (Di Salvo 2012)?"

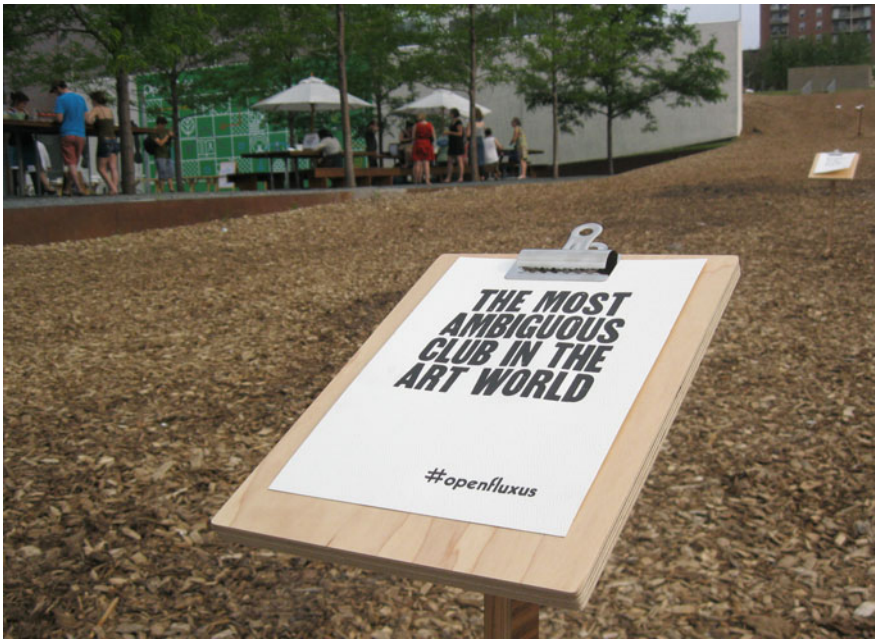

Fig. 5.10 Scores on the field. Source: Author

The Open Field construct gave both the public and practitioners of many disciplines, a framework in which they could produce social projects of their own creation. For artists and practitioners, it fostered new, more social art forms, by giving them space, access to intellectual resources and operational support.

Another important result of the Open Field project is what it did for the staff and artists who worked in and on it. The impact of the project is still being felt as their work continues to evolve in more social ways. Having the space and support to do these types of projects builds internal capacities and skills in practitioners inside and outside the museum, all toward future engagement.

The projects were not intended to be permanent. Open Field was "…an experiment in participation. It was less about audience attendance and more about shifting audience perception of the Center. We wanted to expand the idea of what a museum could be by intentionally inviting and mixing up different kinds of people and experiences (Schultz 2017)."

In the end, the project resulted in the following outcomes:

- Expanded and better understood their public
- Moved a number of the audience from "public" to "participant"
- Engaged dozens of museum practitioners, artists and lay people in a new form of interaction
- Helped develop a new curatorial practice across the art museum and art education field

- Expanded and enriched the rigor of the Walker's Education and Community Programs Department
- Created new persistent relationships with other groups and individuals in Minneapolis and nationally
- Disseminated the work in print, video, and through conferences to foster other projects and artists in this space

In the context of the 4 years of Open Field, my projects were simply two of several hundred projects. What's interesting is how they demonstrate the flexibility (and durability) of this construct. By providing the public and artists an open space to participate and foment, it fostered a new wave in art and social practices with the intellectual rigor of contemporary art, and the inclusivity of the public sphere.

5.5 Conclusion

The projects described in this chapter share a common desire to reach outside the traditional boundaries of the museum in an attempt to build a closer bond with their institution and their public (however directly or indirectly). The varied approaches to this goal can be a useful reminder that there is no universal solution.

In many of these projects, the museums become a little more pliant by not taking themselves too seriously. Social positioning and tonality are useful tools to employ when your public might be unfamiliar or uncomfortable with what seems to be a formal, authoritarian place.

"The presence of curious giggling children at the Hammer can certainly help to relax a museum's stereotypical stuffy atmosphere (Bastien 2010)."

While it might seem ridiculous to build a large, mechatronic hand for wayfinding at the Hammer, it ultimately created understanding about how artists best work: less as problem solvers and more as catalysts for exploration.

It is also important to understand the community that each museum serves. The OMCA created space to explore myths and realities of their neighboring public through a multiyear grant initiative. The project I cited, an intimate and open-ended engagement with a local family, not only changed the way the family viewed the museum, but it also had a profound effect on the way the museum staff viewed their roles and responsibilities.

With the Open Field project, the Walker used an outdoor space to reach beyond the museum walls and bring the museum to the public. CatVidFest used the cultural sense-making apparatus of the Walker to share a social phenomenon. FluxField was an example both of making space for new practices, and of highlighting an aspect of art history that does not take itself too seriously. By breaking down multiple barriers between the public, who might be intimidated by or indifferent to art, and the museum, which might be unsure how to reach new audiences, unexpected connections could occur. Playfulness and humility can be powerful tools for engagement.

While for the sake of your project you may need to differentiate, in the end, there is no clear-cut distinction among visitors, staff, and artists. "Visitor Centric" describes museums where the visitor is the primary concern. This is a very important step, however, it puts all the focus on the visitor. Artists and systems that bring in other players into the museum (and sometimes they are the visitors) take the museum beyond a simple transactional or binary relationship. These projects engaged public, staff, and artists, frequently blurring the lines among all of those groups.

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