

Viewing as Experience

— Enhancing Information Interactions in Exhibit Spaces

... to innovate the viewing experience to create satisfying interactions and increase knowledge gain...

I am interested in how traditional exhibit spaces could leverage information technologies to enhance the viewing experiences. Visitors wish they could take something away from visiting art museums, which is also the goal for curators. Yet current information artifacts in museums do not fully support this need. On one hand, the pre-canned information is unable to satisfy each visitor, especially advanced ones. On the other hand, interpretive texts are written carefully to engage the

viewers, but the way it is displayed does not effectively reveal the inner structure. This thesis is to innovate the viewing experience to create satisfying interactions and increase knowledge gain within and outside of the exhibit space. Based on the initial research, I have identified four design components, and currently I am developing concrete design solutions.

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August
Territory Research
Problem Framing

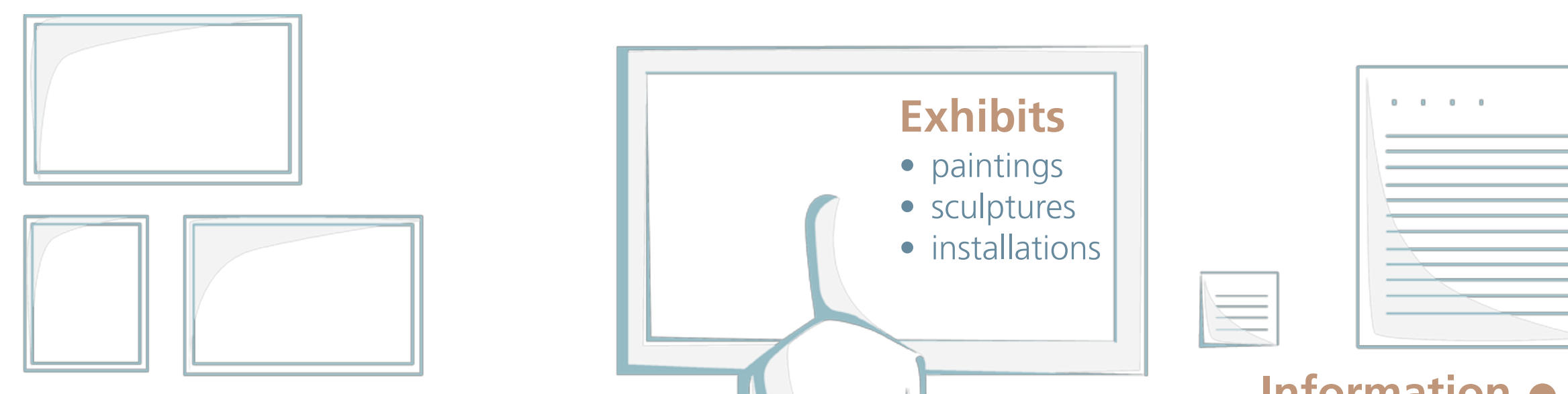
RESEARCH

Visitor Interviews + Think-Aloud

Performed 8 visitor interviews and 2 think-aloud in the space to understand what types of information they would like to read and how they get information from the space.

Literature Review

Read literatures in interpretive label studies, information design in art museums, visitor studies, future viewing technologies and museum case studies to understand the components and interactions in the space.



Context

- related artworks
- information

Visitor

- personal interests
- information needs
- intention and behaviors

Information

- types
- hierarchy
- display

Surrounding Environment

- sound
- other visitors
- interior design

Artists and Curator Interviews

Interviewed 2 artists and 1 curator to understand current curation process – how they select the information and display to present.

Observation

Observed how visitors interact with exhibits and information artifacts in art museums. Focused on the granular interactions, such as the distance, different scales of artifacts, sound in the environment, etc.

September
October
Research and
Synthesis

FINDINGS

1 Two Visitor Types

They are general visitors and advanced visitors in regard to information interaction. They have different information needs and behaviors.

2 Information of Interest

Types of information people want to learn more

- a) the meaning of the artwork,
- b) intention behind the piece,
- c) artist's stories or anecdotes,
- d) the historical context

3 Gaps in Experience

Good experience comes from personal connection with components in exhibit space, but there are some gaps in current experience:

- a) information artifacts are distracting to some extent,
- b) information artifacts could not reveal the information hierarchy,
- c) interpretive texts (narratives) are too general.



VIEWING JOURNEY

What attracts the visitors is mainly based on personal interests, previous experience and knowledge.

General Visitor

- What is it?
- Who made it?
- What does it mean?
- Why made it?

Mainly read labels to get information. Might start discussion with friends.

Look at the artwork again to confirm the information. Look for the information mentioned in the label.

Navigate by eyes to look for next piece.

Advanced Visitor

- Questions relate to their previous knowledge and experience
- make comparisons
- related to art history

Use different information artifacts and interact with docents or staff for specific information. Make notes to do research.

Look at the artwork again from different perspectives. Might have more questions if they stay longer.

Might already know what to look at next and follow the map.

November
Brainstorm and
Ideation

DESIGN

OPPORTUNITIES

1 How to respond to different information needs from each visitor?

Responsive exhibit space

Design the environment to respond to the visitors in a way that could enhance the viewing of artworks and information.

2 How to sustain the interests of these two visitor types?

Visualization of contextual information

Reveal the inner structure of the curation narrative to facilitate understanding of individual artwork and the whole space.

3 How to support further information inquiry?

System for in-depth information inquiry

Informational artifacts should be able to support general browsing and further information inquiry.

4 How to provide visual cues for navigation?

A coherent visit journey

Design the overall journey to incorporate different types of information and interaction.

NEXT STEP

In the following months, I will start making different levels of prototypes to test my ideas among visitors.

- Prototype methods
- speed dating
 - video sketch
 - experiential prototypes

December
January
1st round prototype
and user testing

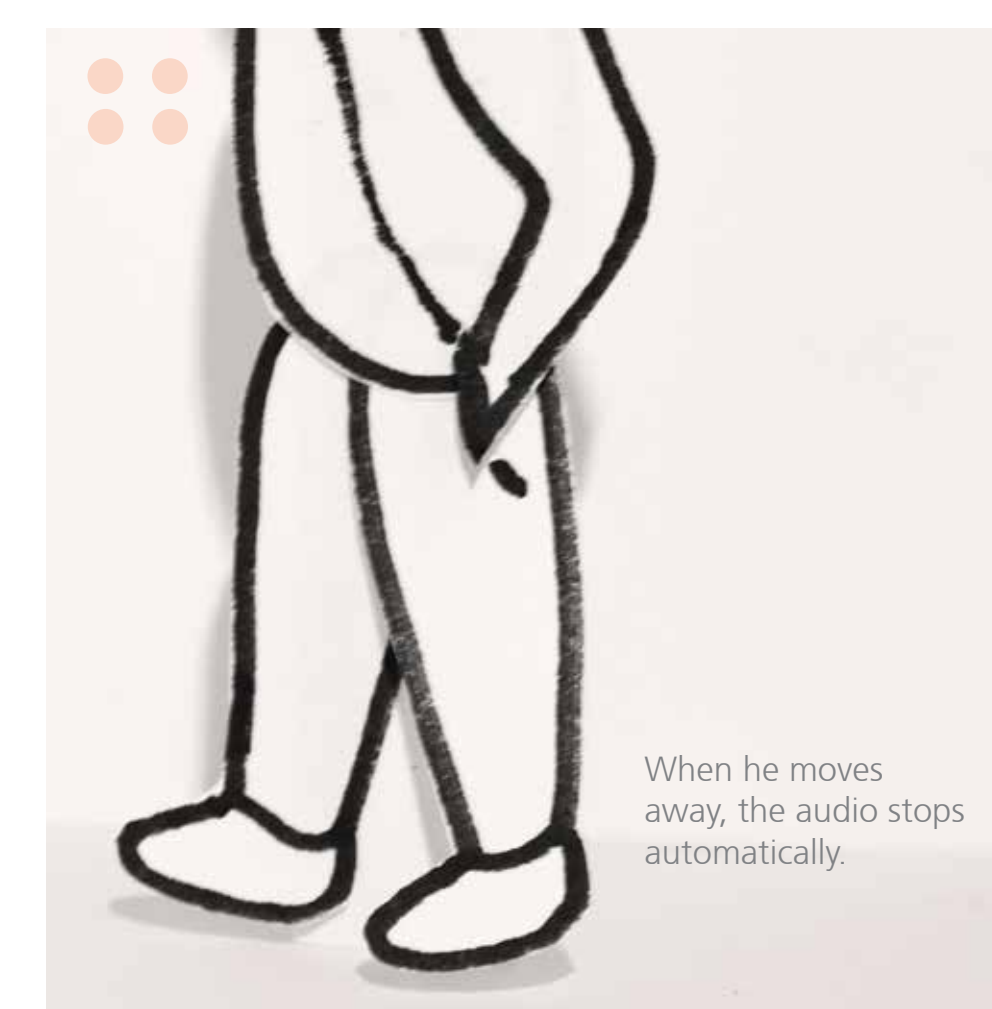
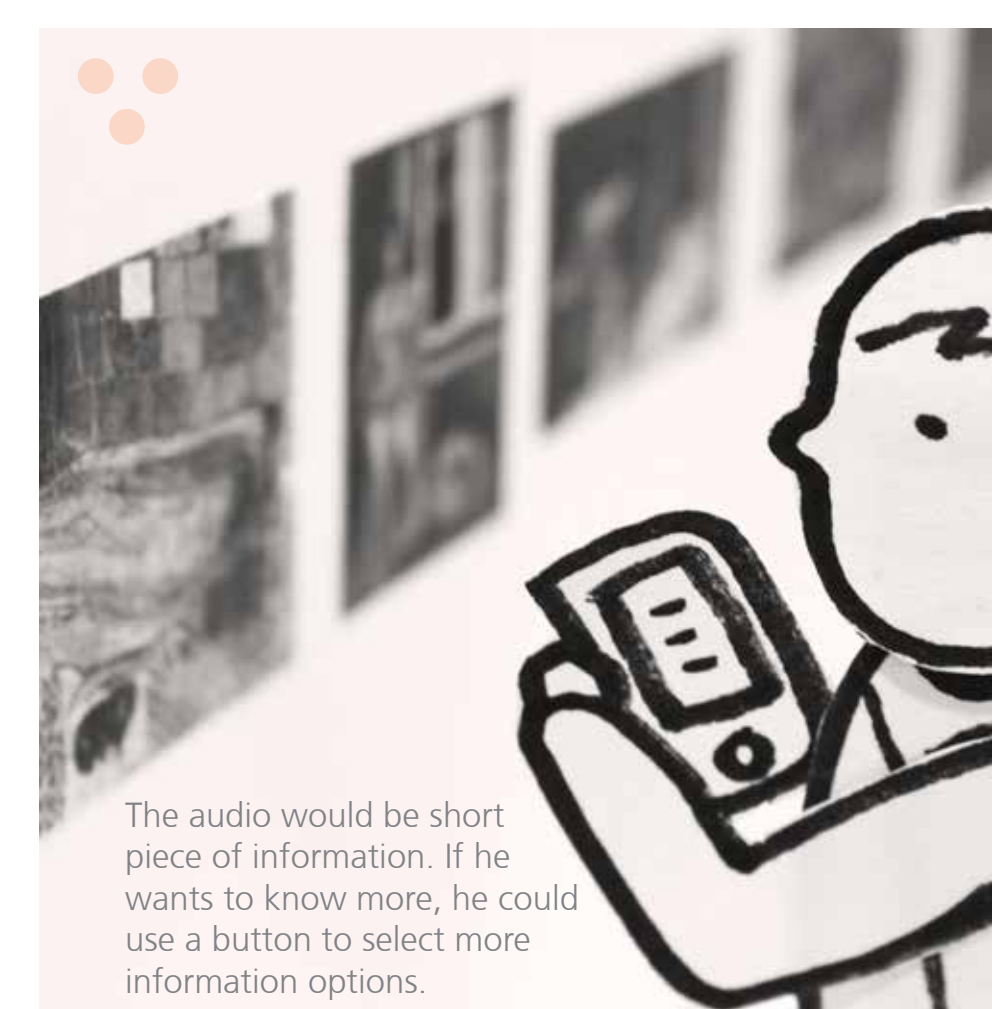
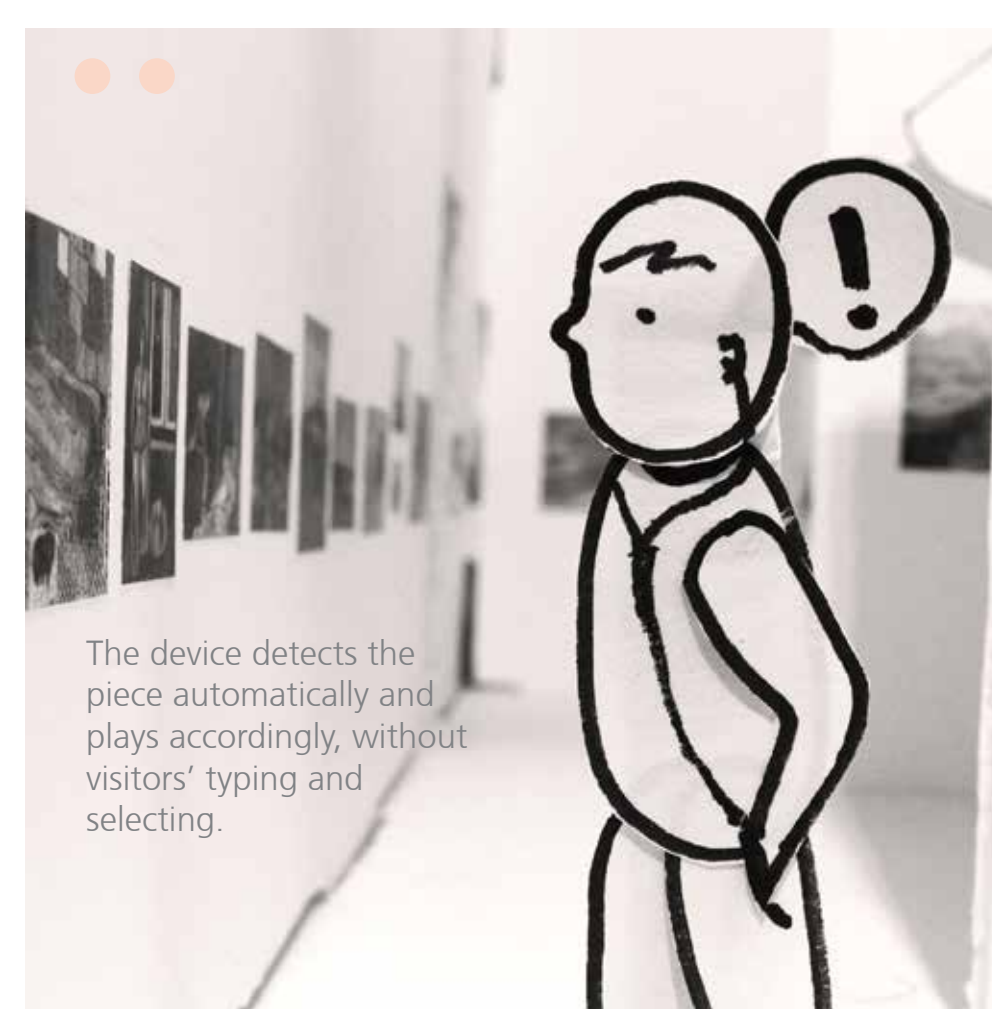
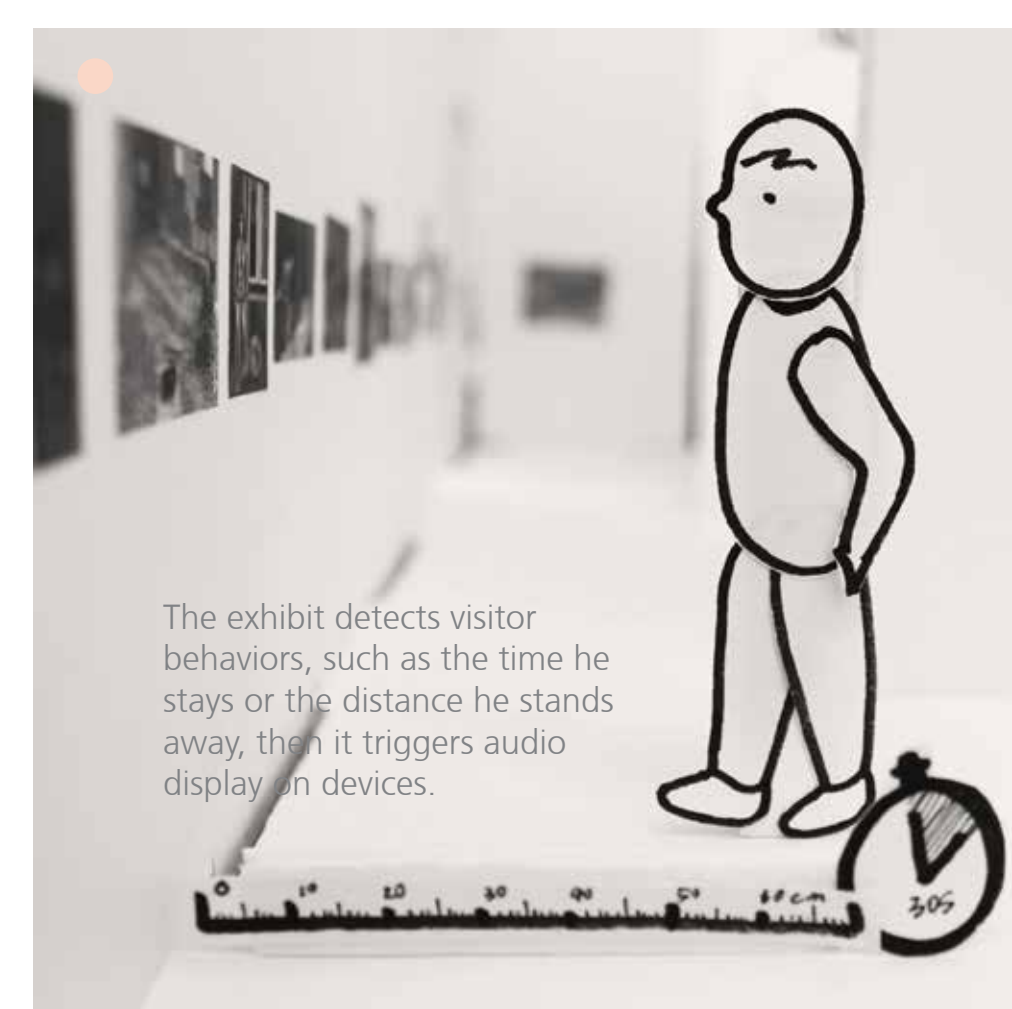
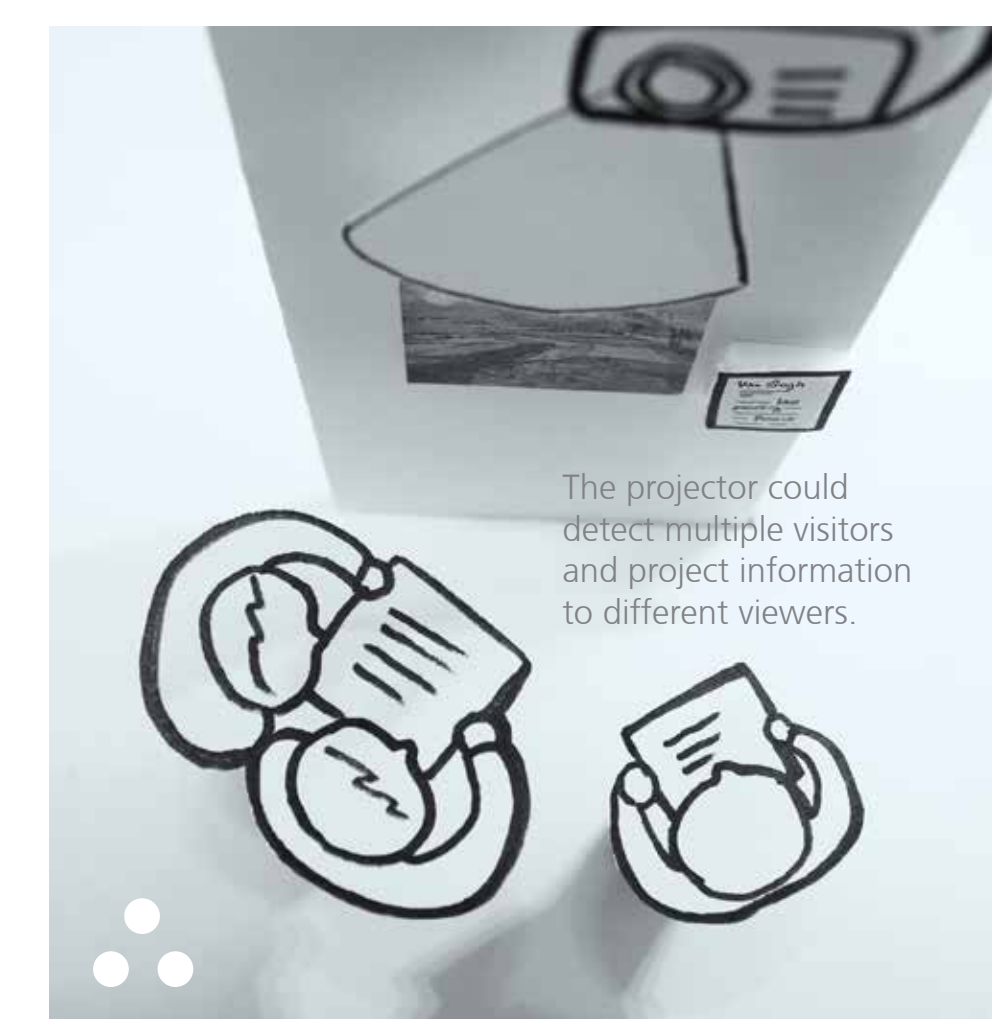
February
2nd round prototype
and user testing

March
Design Implementation and
Evaluation Testing

April
May
Documentation and
Final Deliverables

SCENARIO 1 User Triggered Information Projection

By touching the sensors embedded in labels, visitors could trigger information projection that is based on their own interest.



SCENARIO 2 Responsive Exhibit Space

The exhibit space could detect the behaviors of the visitors, such as time and distance. When visitor's behavior fulfills some conditions, it triggers information display on visitor's device.