

Accessibility in Museum Exhibition Design

Location: UC Davis

In-Country Partner Organization/Client: UC Davis, Manetti Shrem Museum of Art

Project Background: The Manetti Shrem Museum opened to the public in 2016. With the same passion for experimentation that first brought prominence to the arts at UC Davis, the Manetti Shrem Museum cultivates transformational art experiences to inspire new thinking and the open exchange of ideas. Serving both the public and our university community with a dynamic artistic program, the museum: presents exhibitions and events that advance students' understanding of their place in the world; connects to faculty teaching and research; and creates a lively forum for community engagement and creative practice.

Museum visitors with disabilities are often frustrated by diminished access to art works on display. Exhibition Design considers the intentions of artists, curators, and museum visitors in order to create art environments that provide access, context, and aesthetic experience. Exhibition designers manipulate color, text, form, furniture design, art placement, sound, light, architecture, and space to author encounters of people with art. Exhibition design often makes assumptions based on normative stereotypes of bodies and abilities. Innovations in Exhibition Design have to potential to facilitate a more inclusive art viewing experience.

Project Problem Statement:

The project will involve out-reach to campus groups and individuals that are a part of communities with disabilities. Through intensive research, collaboration, and exercises the student groups will design solutions to museum accessibility problems. The student groups will focus on Exhibition Design and how design can be more responsive to visitors with disabilities in order to enhance their art viewing experiences.

Project Goals and Objectives:

1. Feasibility Study
 - a. Research museum accessibility problems and current practices/regulations
2. Conceptual Design
 - a. Conduct prior art research on current technologies and designs to increase accessibility both in museums and other spaces
 - b. Work with the client to determine design criteria

