

DOCENT PROGRAM

Southern Utah Museum of Art

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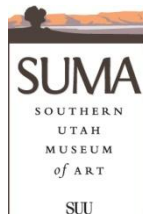
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Job Description

Division/Department	Visitors Services	
Location	SUU Campus, 351 West University Boulevard Cedar City, UT 84720	
Job Title	Docent	
Reports to	Visitors Services Manager	Title

Type of position: Volunteer

Hours _____ / week will vary upon assignment. The schedule will be worked out at the mutual convenience of the Volunteer and the staff.

General Description

Docents are an integral part of the art museum, helping to share information about our facilities and working to create a more vivid experience for visitors. SUMA docents work in a team environment to present tours to visitors and educational programs to school students.

Qualifications

- An interest, awareness or knowledge of art, art forms, teaching, or a specific exhibit
- Excellent oral communication and interpersonal skills
- Good leadership and organization skills
- A desire to facilitate enjoyable learning experiences for young people
- Ability to work in a cooperative team context
- Must have or obtain a current cleared Consent for Disclosure of Criminal Record

Duties

Samples of activities may include:

- Sharing information with visitors about facilities and exhibits
- Implementing curriculum-based programs for school students
- Read notes, attend training, study and practice presentations for the specific program
- Program set up and clean up, monitor and report on program supplies
- Monitor the use of art supplies and exhibits to ensure they are safely moved to and from storage
- Report program feedback to the supervisor and identify potential program improvements
- Update records using PastPerfect software

About the Gallery

The Braithwaite Fine Arts Gallery offers the campus and community an exceptional venue for well known internationally touring exhibitions as well as work by SUU students, faculty, and artists of Utah.

Gallery Hours:

June - August

Monday - Saturday, 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.

September - May

Tuesday - Saturday, noon to 7 p.m.

The gallery is located on the ground floor in the Braithwaite Liberal Arts Center building on the east end of the beautiful SUU campus. Admission is free.

For more information contact the Gallery at (435) 586-5432.

We are very excited to see the Gallery transition over the next few years from the Braithwaite building to the new facility of **SUMA**.

SUMA Overview

Art museums seem to be about objects, but they are really about people. A museum's ability to engage visitors in the exploration of the deeper meanings of its exhibits and collections is the ultimate test of a museum's social value. This 'people' dimension is the foundation of **Southern Utah Museum of Art** (SUMA). SUMA will become a major regional attraction with education central to its mission of exhibiting, collecting, and preserving historic and contemporary works of art significant to the interior American West and hosting art exhibitions that represent the principal artistic styles and periods of world cultures.

SUMA's 'people' component will be evident in the design of a new 34,000 sq. ft. state-of-the-art museum building. The 10,000 sq. ft. of exhibition space composed of several individual galleries will allow SUMA to host traveling exhibits from around the world, be home to a special collection of the work of Southern Utah artist Jimmie Jones and feature rotating exhibits from the permanent collection. The gallery will regularly exhibit work of Southern Utah University Art & Design students and faculty and provide a venue for displaying regional artists and juried shows.

Approximately 6,000 sq. ft of the museum building will be dedicated to collection storage, care and research. Typically less than 10% of an art museum's permanent collection is on public exhibition at any given time. The building design will allow an imaginative response to the natural curiosity of visitors about the other 90% of the collection. Through regularly scheduled "behind the scenes" tours visitors will develop a deeper understanding of how an art museum functions.

Another 2,000 sq. ft. will provide classroom/studio space for hands-on educational activities for k-12 school groups emphasizing the current exhibits. For instance, a traveling exhibition of historic prints would incorporate a hands-on print making activity in this separate education space to demonstrate print making processes and concepts. As a chemistry lab provides for practical application for students studying chemistry, the museum will also serve as a lab for university students preparing for careers in galleries, museums, education, welcome centers and other organizations.

An important component of the museum is the "Visitors Services," which will serve as a welcoming gateway to the museum, campus, community and region. In addition to hosting the SUU Welcome Center and a gift shop, SUMA will include a café designed to provide visitors and students with a unique dining experience.

Through engaging exhibits and ongoing educational programming SUMA will be a significant cultural resource for the people of Utah and the many visitors to our area.

Reece Summers and Bill Byrnes

May 20, 2009

Mission & Vision:

***The mission of SUMA** is to exhibit, collect and preserve historic and contemporary works of art significant to the interior American West. In addition, the museum hosts art exhibitions that represent the principal artistic styles and periods of world cultures.*

***The vision of SUMA** is to become a principle art institution with education at the center of its mission serving a larger regional audience through a commitment to public accountability and transparency in its mission and operations; a clear understanding of its mission, why it exists and who benefits from its efforts; a commitment that all aspects of its operations integrate and focus on meeting the mission; and that the governing authority and staff think and act strategically to acquire, develop and allocate resources to advance the museum's mission.*

A Brief Training

Welcome

The museum would like to welcome you into its docent program and thank you for your participation. Without docents, SUMA would not be able to reach the public or community it was built to serve. As a docent, your interaction with museum patrons will make exhibitions exciting and help them better understand how art can shape and improve their lives.

As you follow the suggestions outlined in this packet, the visitors experience will be enhanced, and you will find this work more fulfilling.

Foundations of a Great Tour

"Good interaction with the group is the first priority of touring."

–*The Good Guide*, 82

The "ART" of tours:

A=Audiences–*Who are they and how do they learn?*

Remember, visitors to exhibitions are looking to learn something and to have fun. Don't assume that your visitors are "blank slates." Even a group of kindergartners bring experiences and knowledge with them. You must remember that each individual is different, and each group is different. This is one of the most difficult aspects of preparing tours. You never know exactly what to expect from the group. The key is to be flexible in your presentation and take time to give an orientation in which you ask basic questions to learn from the group what their expectations are and what they are bringing with them in terms of previous experiences, ideas, knowledge and perceptions. But don't forget the fact that people want to have a good time during their visit. Creating a fun experience for visitors will ensure an appreciation for the values and issues presented by an exhibition.

R=Resources–*What personal and non-personal sources of information are available to create and support interpretation?*

- ❖ Introduce books
- ❖ Have an educational closet
- ❖ Use tour totes

T=Techniques–*How will you engage your audience?*

– *The Interpreter's Training Manual for Museums*, 65

Tour Preparation:

- Check in at the front desk. Please arrive early so you will be able to prepare adequately.
- Review the exhibition(s) you will present to your group and retrieve any materials you wish to use in your tour (such as visual aids, etc.)
- Know your group. Who are the teachers? How many people are in the group? What age are they? What does the group want to see? How long do they have to spend in the museum? Does the group have any special needs?
- Be informed on all the current exhibitions and customize your tour according to the age of your group.
- Assemble a museum materials packet if you'd like to give one to each group leader after tours.
- Please call ahead if you are going to be late.

Activity Suggestion: Visitor Observation

Before you get started planning your tour, it is a good idea to begin to understand who visits the site and who potentially will visit the exhibition.

Spend some time watching visitors go through an exhibition. Watch visitors move through the exhibition. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Who is visiting?
Are they children, families, senior citizens, school groups?
- What are their reactions?
- Are they having conversations with each other?
- What aspects seem to be most popular?
- Why are they visiting?
- Are people visiting alone or in a group?
- Are different sections of the exhibition more popular for a youth audience?
- Are some areas more popular for an adult audience?

As your group arrives, welcome them to the museum and introduce yourself. Part of the introduction should briefly touch on museum rules. **A good strategy is to focus on the "dos" rather than the "don'ts"**. Consider your group, and use only rules that will apply to them.

Basic Museum Rules

- Refrain from touching the artwork
- No food, drink or gum in the galleries
- Book bags can be checked in at the front desk
- Stay with your group
- Turn off your cell phone
- Enjoy the artwork quietly so others in the museum can enjoy it as well

Acquaint yourself with your visitors to help provide a more positive experience. If group members know you hold an interest in them, students and adults will be more inclined to respectfully listen to your presentation and share ideas and thoughts during the Gallery visit. Begin your tour with a three-minute introduction, a sentence or two each time you move to a new location, and end with a brief conclusion.

Some questions for your group might include:

- Where is the group from?
- Have they been to a museum before?
- What are the purposes of museums?
- Can they name some of the different types of art they might see?
- How many of them are artists? What kind of art do they create?

Visitors need to know:

- What the exhibit is about
- What the exhibit has to do with the visitor
- How the exhibit is organized
- What the visitor is expected to learn from the exhibit

Theme

Before entering the gallery, introduce the theme of the exhibition to the group. Each exhibit will have a theme. By explaining the established theme, you can link together seemingly unrelated objects through a cohesive explanation. This will help in transitions from gallery to gallery and will help you smoothly summarize and end the tour. When explaining a theme for your tour, try to be specific. Ask yourself these questions:

- What is the official theme of the tour?
- What did the curator wish to accomplish through the exhibition?
- What artistic period or style is represented by the objects in the exhibition?
- What culture produced the objects on display, and how do the exhibition's objects document the culture's change?
- What historic events are illustrated through the artifacts on display?

Dos and Don'ts

Do:

Activity Suggestion: Object Exploration

To begin to explore the power of objects, design an "object-based exploration" for yourself.

Choose an object in the exhibition and take yourself through the following activities and questions:

Visual Examination

Look closely at the object and describe it:

What color is it? What material is it? Does it look old or new? Does it look heavy or light?

If there is writing or images, describe them.

Cognitive Memory Questions: What Do You Already Know About the Object?

Do you recognize the object? What is it, and what is its function? Has its function changed over time?

Is there anything significant about the wording and images on the object?

What time period do you think it is from? Why do you think it is shaped or designed the way it is?

Critical Examination and Conclusions

What do you think the designer of this object was thinking? What do you think their objective was?

What does the object tell us about American culture (or the culture from which it originates)?

If you could redesign the object, would you make changes? Why or why not?

Why is this object in the exhibition?

- Introduce yourself and describe what you do as a docent
- Set expectations
- Be excited about the tour and museum
- Provide background information
- Ask open-ended questions
- Follow-up on correct answers
- Follow-up on incorrect answers to encourage thought
- Encourage visitors to make comments and discuss with each other
- Have a clear purpose
- Divide a very big group into smaller groups. Stagger starting points throughout the museum

Don't:

- Speak too quickly
- Speak too quietly
- Use jargon
- Use leading questions that answer the question
- Ask for one-word answers

Concluding Your Tour

There are a few steps you can use to summarize the exhibition and bring your tour to a successful close. These include:

- Restating the theme of the tour
- Inviting the patrons to make comments or ask any unanswered questions
- Encouraging your group to return, suggesting they visit the museum store, and showing them literature regarding present or future museum exhibitions or events
- Thanking the patrons for coming to the museum

Presenting to Children

Interpretation for children is **not** a dilution of adult information; it is a fundamentally different approach. Interpretation is an art (or combination of arts) such as storytelling, music, theater, drawing or dance.

-Arguing Their Way Around the World, 24

Some Pointers:

- Emphasize doing
- Relate things to their lives
- Involve all of the senses
- Have stations, and move through them quickly
- Focus on stories

- Ask simple questions, focusing on physical aspect

Children love riddles and problem solving. A favorite activity for this age group at the Philadelphia Museum of Art is to ask them to go into a room full of armor and find a suit that would fit a child, a suit that would not fit a human (horse armor), and something that flies in the air (a stuffed falcon that served as the crest on a helmet). We can hardly contain their enthusiasm as we remind them not to touch or run while playing the game. Conversations center on the pieces they found and what can be learned from them.

We provide scavenger hunts for school groups. This gives them an opportunity to move around a bit more and to focus on the artwork they're looking at.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Do you have a website?
Our website is www.suu.edu/pva/artgallery.
2. Can I donate a work of art to the Gallery or museum?
Yes. Call the Gallery or stop by to discuss your donation and pick up a donation card.
3. How long has the gallery been around?
The Braithwaite Fine Arts Gallery was opened in January 1976 and named in honor of Dr. Royden C. Braithwaite, who served as president of the University from 1955 to 1978.
4. Do you have educational programs?
Yes we do. We host hundreds of school groups throughout the year. We have posted curriculum on our website you can review or customize with our Director of Education, Karen Gale. Contact her at the Gallery or email: karengale@suumail.net.
5. Can I submit my artwork for an exhibit?
Yes. Every year we have an art invitational exhibition that highlights local artists and we have a high school competition students can apply for. An artist may enter an annual juried exhibition, and their art work may be juried in or out of the show.
6. When will SUMA open?
The groundbreaking for SUMA is scheduled for summer 2010.
7. How many exhibits do you feature per year?
The number of exhibits varies from year to year and averages about ten to twelve per year.
8. Is photography permitted?
Yes, but please don't use flash photography.
9. Is there a membership organization?
The Friends of the Braithwaite Fine Arts Gallery is a non-profit group established in 1977. For over thirty years, the Friends of the Gallery have helped to enrich lives by sponsoring outstanding educational programming, art excursions, fundraising and world-class exhibits. The Friends of the Braithwaite are seeking new members for 2009-2010. Why not expand your enjoyment of all of our fine exhibits by joining the Friends? Visit the website for more information and a link to the membership form. www.suu.edu/pva/artgallery/friends.html.
10. What are admission prices?
Admission is free.
11. Where is the Gallery located, and what are the hours?

The gallery is located on the ground floor in the Braithwaite Liberal Arts Center building on the east end of the beautiful SUU campus.

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