Project 5 Written Respond

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Personal reflection

In this project, our group focused on "Joyful Experiences" and explored how exhibition spaces can be made more accessible to people with disabilities. Our research showed that even venues like the Welcome Collection, which aim for inclusive design, mainly address basic needs such as tactile paving, sign language videos, wheelchair access, and extra seating. While these help people with visual, hearing, and mobility impairments, the needs of those with mental health issues or neurodivergent individuals are often overlooked.

During the design process, we created an interactive guidebook to help ADHD visitors focus. However, we realized that while our solution improved the experience for ADHD individuals, we didn't fully consider other groups, such as those with anxiety or autism, who also face challenges in exhibitions.

This reflection has helped me understand that accessibility is not a fixed concept but one that requires continuous development. As designers, we must go beyond meeting basic accessibility standards and focus on inclusivity, ensuring that people with diverse needs can truly enjoy the experience.

Reading List 1

"An Opening: Graphic Design's Discursive Spaces" by Andrew Blauvelt

In *"An Opening: Graphic Design's Discursive Spaces"*, Andrew Blauvelt discusses how graphic design is not just a tool for communication but also a practice with critical and social influence. He argues that graphic design should be seen as a "discursive space," meaning it not only reflects the social and cultural context but also shapes and challenges existing social structures

(Blauvelt, 2003).

This idea connects closely with our group's project. The exhibition guide we designed for ADHD visitors aims to create a more inclusive way of experiencing exhibitions by redefining how communication happens in the space. Blauvelt's concept of design as a "discursive space" helped us understand that exhibitions are not just collections of artworks but also layers of information shaped by design, where some groups' experiences are prioritized, and others may be left out.

We realized that the way an exhibition is experienced is itself a design decision, not neutral. Our project builds on his "discursive space" concept but applies it from the perspective of disability justice, exploring how an interactive exhibition guide can give ADHD visitors more control. This is not only a challenge to the way exhibitions are presented but also a broader discussion on design inclusivity and fairness.

Reading List 2

"Adversarial Design as Inquiry and Practice" by Carl Disalvo

In Adversarial Design, Carl DiSalvo introduces the idea of "adversarial design," which shows that design can be more than just functional—it can challenge social structures, power, and norms. He argues that design can help users rethink their everyday experiences, rather than just accept what exists (DiSalvo, 2012).

In our guide, we wanted to give them control over their visit, allowing them to manage their energy and choose their path, instead of simply following the usual exhibition flow. In many museums, the design assumes a "standard" way of viewing, like fixed pathways or text-heavy displays, which can create "invisible barriers" for ADHD visitors. DiSalvo's concept inspired us to ask if our guidebook could challenge these traditional standards.

However, DiSalvo's work mainly focuses on technology and social critique, with less attention on accessibility or disability justice (DiSalvo, 2012). Therefore,

we hope to bring this concept into our project designed for people with disabilities. We used DiSalvo's idea of "adversarial design" but also made sure our guidebook gave ADHD visitors the freedom to explore and manage their visit in a way that works for them. This approach challenged traditional exhibition designs and focused on making the experience more inclusive for everyone.

Outside The Reading List 1

"Designing Disability: Symbols, Space and Society" by Victor Papanek

In Designing Disability: Symbols, Space and Society, Victor Papanek discusses the deep impact of design on disabled communities. He argues that design should go beyond aesthetics and focus on real needs and social functions. Papanek criticizes modern design for often ignoring disabled people, stating that social stereotypes and exclusion create bias and inequality in design (Papanek, 1980).

This book made me rethink the role of inclusive design—not just about accessibility but also about challenging social values and cultural symbols. As a designer, I realized that my work should not only be visually appealing but also create a positive impact and help build a more inclusive society. Papanek's idea that "design is a social responsibility" (Papanek, 1980) strongly influenced my thinking. It encouraged me to consider disabled communities in my future projects and adopt more inclusive design approaches.

Outside The Reading List 2

"Crip Theory: Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability" by Robert McRuer

In Crip Theory: Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability, Robert McRuer combines disability studies with queer theory to question how society constructs "normalcy." He argues that disability is not just a physical or mental condition but also a challenge to social norms. By linking the experiences of

disabled people with queer theory, McRuer shows that disability is not only about bodily differences but also about resisting societal structures (McRuer, 2006).

This book deeply influenced my understanding of disability justice and accessibility, especially in relation to design. McRuer challenges designers to consider how their work can respond to and disrupt the social idea of "normal." He highlights the importance of focusing on marginalized groups often overlooked in mainstream design. His ideas made me realize that design is not just about aesthetics or functionality—it should also spark discussions about identity, power, and social structures.

Design Project 1

“Design and the Mind” by The Museum of Modern Art

The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) held an exhibition called *Design and the Mind*, which explored how design influences cognition and perception, including its impact on individuals with ADHD. The exhibition focused not only on aesthetics but also on using visual elements to help viewers concentrate in complex environments.

MoMA incorporated interactive design to guide attention. Some elements changed color or shape dynamically, making key information easier to find. Sensory stimulation was also used to enhance engagement. Similarly, in our project, we used tactile maps and color to reduce distractions and help ADHD visitors focus, aligning with MoMA’s design approach.

However, while MoMA’s interactive elements were engaging, they could also be overstimulating for some visitors, especially those with ADHD. If visual changes happen too frequently, they might distract rather than assist, leading to anxiety or confusion. This highlights the need for balance—ensuring interactivity enhances focus without overwhelming users.

MoMA’s *Design and the Mind* exhibition inspired my approach to interaction and sensory experience. However, it also made me aware of potential

overstimulation. Moving forward, we will refine our exhibition guide to ensure that design elements are both engaging and supportive, without causing unnecessary distraction.

Design Project 2

"Design for Attention" by the Design Council

Design Council's *Design for Attention* project focuses on using design elements to help individuals with ADHD and other cognitive conditions improve concentration. The core idea is to adjust spatial and visual elements to reduce distractions and enhance focus. This initiative explores how design can support ADHD audiences in maintaining attention and engagement in specific environments. It emphasizes the use of appropriate colors, layouts, and shapes to guide users' focus.

The project highlights strategies such as minimizing decorative elements, using balanced color schemes, and providing clear visual cues to reduce distractions. These strategies have directly influenced the tactile map in our exhibition guide. By incorporating touch-based navigation, our design helps ADHD visitors avoid being overwhelmed by complex text descriptions and excessive visual information. This aligns with the project's principle of "reducing visual noise," ensuring that users can focus on key exhibition content.

However, while *Design for Attention* advocates for simplification to enhance focus, this approach may overlook the needs of audiences who thrive on complexity and variety. Over-simplified design might cause some ADHD users to lose interest, as they often seek engaging and stimulating interactions. We have addressed this concern in our guide by incorporating interactive elements, such as inserts, to increase engagement. Nonetheless, we need to further explore how to maintain this balance—offering clarity without making the design feel monotonous.

The *Design for Attention* project provides valuable theoretical support for our work, particularly in understanding how visual and spatial design can assist

ADHD users in maintaining focus. While its minimalist approach is effective in many cases, I must critically evaluate the risk of oversimplification. Moving forward, I aim to strike a balance between simplicity and sensory engagement, ensuring that my design remains accessible while catering to diverse user needs.

Reference

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