

# The Playful Museum



## Your thoughts and ideas, Museum Association conference, 2012

“What play happens at your museum?”

“What one thing could you do to make your museum or gallery more playful?”

And other thoughts and observations.....

### Your playful ideas and prompts.....

Pose the question What if...? to everything!  
Repurposing things- making up your own instructions.

Pushing train. Running around the large space  
Pretending you are being run over. Sitting in railway carriage. Romans charging teachers.  
Colour+Scent=Attractive

Visitors are invited to vote on animals that they would like to eat (!). Children like to use the voting chips over and over, putting more and more in the box- loud noises and bright colours much appreciated. (This does make sense in context of current exhibition, I promise!)

Why are those carpets on the wall?

Use our 'press button' door as being magic.

Children encouraged to draw on the patio with chalks

Use outdoor spaces to play soldiers with their own walkie talkies they bring.

What is nonsense? Flatland 4+dimensions. How a mirror works. Roll back. What do you think?

More activities that are free form- give people intriguing stuff and see what games they design?

How do adults play? (with/out children present?)  
Do they want to?

Make some of our family drop=in session less about crafts and more about play.

Build in opportunities for play into every new exhibition and encourages visitors (and staff!) to participate whichever way they choose.

Make space more fun

Bubble wrap.

Do 1-2-3 game at staff meetings

What if...everyone has to wear a wig in a museum?

Music in the gallery

What if...there was a living lion walking about instead of a stuffed one?

What if... everyone who came in was given a kazoo with their entry ticket?

Play dough around the office

Make your own label

Ask children to create a tour for an animal given to them

Guerilla campaign- posters of oddities on the wall.

Curiosity. See if others add theirs?

Having open space

Climbing up to touch and 'feed' the animals

Jumping from light to light on the floor

Hopscotch

Hide and seek

Put out cardboard and sticky tape

Climb on things not meant to

Running in a round space

Would like kids to be able to stick stars and spots everywhere

I work at the Rochdale Pioneers museum so I am going to set up 'Pioneer Play Days' in the school hols.

Time machine

Make bows and arrows

Trail. Interactive. Animation.

The Happy Museum signs (posters)

More children's activities in our galleries.

More interactive activities in Cregneash

Stop taking museums seriously

## Playful things that already happen...

Children play in the reconstructed street and shops in Riverside Museum- make believe play.  
We've got a long corridor- good for skidding  
Children hide in amongst the displays.  
They play with the ropes and posts.  
Build your own city interactive- instead of laying out their own city they just wanted to play jenga with the blocks.  
Children (esp pre 5s) dance, spin and run about in the central Hall open space.  
Kaleidoscopes  
Art Cart. Backpacks.  
Explorer prints with dedicated children's activities.  
C18<sup>th</sup> toys- ball and cup

Playing peek-a-boo around pillars.  
Jump off stairs  
Run across galleries  
Formal gallery trails  
Interactives  
Role play at special events  
Colouring in/drawing pictures  
During wedding exhibition, children were asked to design a wedding dress- there was a dress in the museum they could draw all over.  
Puppets at Hereford and Merc in Reading.  
Pulling faces in mirror  
Playing with childhood games.  
Playing on the stairs.  
Playing Roman game (magnetic)  
Dressing up as a Roman.  
Toys- baskets of jigsaws, games, pictures, fake food.  
Sit on floor, reading soft seated area.  
Weaving  
Puppet theatre  
Chalk  
Jenga set

## Other ambitions and constraints to work around....

Still not enough places to take children to play.  
Children sad when they couldn't play with objects in cases they'd seen versions of in a handling session.

Communicate the message that play is good  
What if I could have a designated space with no collections at risk of being damaged through play.

## And a lovely comment.....

This has been by far the best session today

Thank you for your fantastic contributions and for your participation in the workshop. It looks like lots of you have gone away inspired and enthused to make your museums even more playful.

We hope that sharing your ideas has been useful and are interested in establishing a playful museum network in the future. This would aim to keep inspiring us all with playful ideas, and to help and support museum people to be more confident about being playful within their organisations. If you have any thoughts or ideas to share about this, please drop us an email. Otherwise we will be in contact again soon!

Many thanks,  
From Ailsa, Charlotte, Vicky, Stuart and Mandy  
And the Manchester Museum and the Happy Museum staff teams.