

# Creativity ابداع Kreativitat

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## The Role of Creativity in Museums

### The meaning of Creativity

Creativity is the ability to think of new ideas, concepts, or solutions in original and imaginative ways. It involves using your imagination to come up with unique and innovative approaches to problems or tasks. Creative individuals often think outside the box, make connections between seemingly unrelated things, and bring a fresh perspective to the table. Creativity can manifest in various forms, such as art, music, writing, design, problem-solving, and more. It's about expressing oneself in a way that is inventive, authentic, and inspiring.

### Personal Statement on Creativity in Museums

Working in Bait Al Nabooda museum in Sharjah, I chose to research creativity because I see its power to transform how museums engage and inspire diverse audiences. Creativity shapes how we design exhibits, tell stories, and connect with our community, making cultural heritage more accessible and relevant. By exploring this concept, I aim to help museums become dynamic spaces that honour the past while inspiring future generations.

### Personal reflection of SAWA

Based on my personal experience in SAWA, I think participation in a multicultural training program such as SAWA supports my term “Creativity”. SAWA enhanced my understanding of diverse culture as each member comes from a different background yet still share the same museum goals and passion. In addition, it improved my communication skills and group work, as well as learning how to manage cultural sensitivities and conflicts that may arise in a diverse environment.

A multicultural training program like SAWA promotes a sense of belonging and respect among trainees which leads to improved morale and collaboration. This positive environment enhances creativity and productivity.

SAWA methodology where it offers role-playing, group discussions, and hands-on activities to engage group members actively. This approach supported my idea of creativity in learning, as well as it encouraged participation and allowed us to practice new skills in a safe environment.

Moreover, the program provided a variety of learning materials, including videos, articles, and podcasts as well as visits to different museums and institutions such as the Berlin Humboldt Forum, The Berlin Deutsches Historisches Museum (German Historical Museum) Deutschland museum, The Sharjah Museum of Islamic Civilisation and Sharjah Museums Authority institutions. Taken together, these reflect diverse perspectives and also facilitated different participant learning styles which made the training more engaging and creative.

One influence of being a part of the SAWA program was my understanding of my term “creativity” and how it can be used practically in my career journey. Particularly by understanding the cultural contexts of how to create more

meaningful interaction exhibits in order to engage with visitors and enhance their experience in museums. A methodology used to illustrate inclusion involved a visit to the *Stadtmuseum Berlin*. Here we had an exercise in planning an interactive exhibition using different objects that each participant brought along to represent ourselves. That experience boosted our creative thinking while working on the exercise together as a group.

Furthermore, during my visits to museums in Sharjah and Berlin, I experienced creativity in a whole new way through interactive stations. The Berlin Futurium utilized interactive wristbands that enhanced my engagement with the exhibits. These wristbands allowed me to personalize my experience, track my interactions, and access additional information about the displays. This innovative approach transformed the way I enjoyed the museum, making it feel more like an immersive experience rather than just a passive observation. Similarly, in Sharjah, interactive exhibits encouraged hands-on participation, allowing me to connect with the cultural narratives on a deeper level. Overall, these creative elements in both cities reshaped my perspective on museums, highlighting the importance of interactivity in enhancing visitor experiences.

### Introduction to Creativity in Museums

Museums are increasingly interested in exploring how creativity can be used to enhance the visitor experience. The driving force behind this lies in innovation, in the ways in which museums can ensure their sustainability in the future. Gone are the days when glittering displays of treasure were considered sufficient to satisfy the majority of museum visitors; now there is an almost compulsory expectation that their visit will be enlivened and intelligent; a qualitative construct that demands creativity. People go to museums to look, learn, explore, and do in a creative environment that enhances the use and understanding of collections.

Furthermore, creative solutions possess advantages that go beyond the mainspring of the objects and our relationship with them. Indeed, the one strength of creativity is its capacity to transform museums entirely, to free our minds from traditional views and museum resistances. Our definition of creativity focuses on the visitor-museum relationship where it can engender possible environments and situations where the museum collections could be experienced differently.

### Historical Perspective on Creativity in Museums

Creativity once was not an important part of the museum. If it was even present at all, the creativity of the museum worker was not extended into the realm in which the objects are displayed. From their inception as collections of curiosities in the Renaissance, public spaces displaying natural and cultural oddities in the 18th and 19th centuries, the private cabinets of aristocrats and scholars, to the prestigious institutions, creativity and museums were not often thought of as coinciding. In part, the changing of creativity in museums is a result of, or is associated with, shifting goals and methods within a changing society. With openness and participation at its core, creativity in museums has rapidly become a significant ingredient for contributing to the cultural knowledge and development of those who visit. Institutions now move from merely displaying objects to encouraging interaction with them. The transformation in museums and the creativity of their workers and volunteers takes us one step closer to a truly educational place where experiences can be assembled.

Creativity in museums is born of change. Early changes can be seen around the turn of the century, as the recreation of real environments became a feature through landscape representation. As a century of great social strife, avant-garde movements began to advocate and develop creative educational practices in

museums that promoted the ideas of social inclusiveness as well as personal expression of its diverse visitors. Learning in the fine arts is fundamentally linked to doing, performing, or creating, so that the imaginative process is significant and insightful in the understanding of art. Museums continue to take on these ideologies in the early 21st century, being an active and important part of educating the youth and adults, being present in government education policies, and in seeing more people in one year than the whole of matches in a season. Museums are an important institution, centrally located and ready to celebrate the practice of creativity in contemporary society.

### Types of Creative Initiatives in Museums

As a result of the pandemic, museums have moved on to innovative digital platforms and have been developing various creative initiatives that not only draw more public attention to their programming but also enrich visitors' educational experiences. This is often mostly visible in the design of exhibitions and displays, in the educational programs developed for museum-goers ranging from early childhood to older age, and in digital installations enabling visitors to establish various interdisciplinary connections with the content. Creative initiatives are divided into two main groups: visual creativity in presenting an exhibition and creativity in museum educational programming.

Within the first category, we can find several fully or partially in-depth, themed or topic-based discussions on exhibitions and displays discussed in the context of their design aspects. The major emphasis of such extensive analysis is on how museum collections are displayed, rather than the characteristics and historical significance of the objects on display. This is where the difference between exhibitions and displays lies; the innovations that the former presents mean that existing collections, as well as entirely different collections, are often rearranged, even created again. Therefore, these visual creative exhibitions reach beyond the

audiences who are already interested in the subjects as a result of their educational significance.

### Exhibitions and Displays

Exhibitions and displays are the most visible creative initiatives undertaken in museums. Perhaps more than any other initiatives, exhibitions can contribute to the construction of an engaging visitor experience; indeed, they can establish a relationship between museums and their audiences in both cognitively and emotionally satisfying ways. Well-designed exhibitions possess the capacity to treat the museum building as an installation, equating its buildings with the other displays and reflecting the theme of the display in its own galleries and spaces. The gallery becomes a creative space, with the exhibition creating an 'experience.' Through constraining viewpoints, curatorial process, and through exhibition design, visitors are provided with a thematic, sensory, audio-visual journey from the very first step into the building.

Exhibitions also now feature super-screens, touch screen kiosks, interactive technologies, replica environments, multisensory rooms, and all manner of environments that are full of opportunities to interact with the museum, its stories, and its staff. Super-screens and interactive exhibits are designed to attract attention and also help to create engaging and immersive spaces.

Museums that create a storyline in which objects help to unfold a narrative assist visitor in constructing their ideas about objects in the display and enable them to use their experiences to read those stories. Much successful practice is regularly built on changing exhibitions or the re-use of temporary space with rotating thematic displays to tell new stories in exciting ways, each attracting new and diverse audiences and extending the range of interpretation of collections without the need for additional capital funding. Temporary exhibitions can be supported

by a range of amenities. Museums can collaborate with local hotels, shops, restaurants, and other attractions to develop complete visitor experiences in this way.

Art and design in display methods are important, working in a multi-sensory way to appeal to all the senses of visitors, engaging them, asking for their opinions, and working on this feedback to change the display. The gallery becomes a learning environment where swapping and changing the contents of a display leave visitors in a fertile field of activity, with each learning experience adding a bit more to the range of concepts explored. Invigoration, creativity, and the telling of compelling stories are all at the heart of this work.

### Educational Programs

As part of their effort to attract new audiences and adapt to new paradigm shifts, some museums have created educational programs that entail creativity in an attempt to provide visitors with a space for thinking and exercising curiosity and critical spirit directed towards the objects of study present in the museum. Different workshops have been launched, from introductory art workshops aiming at a detailed study of one of the pieces in the collection, to a series of guided contemporary art workshop tours. The aim is to create proposals incorporating innovative instructive perspectives in the teaching of the history of art and the different artistic expressions, replace museum visits with more participatory interventions, and ensure that museum teaching is not detached from the scenario in which it should take place.

Museums at the university stand out for the creation of educational programs tailored to the needs of the students. The educational programs can take different formats: workshops, special guided tours, courses, or educational projects aimed at students and the broad public, either as part of social intervention projects or

as a free choice of different people. In this sense, special workshops are held for students at different levels, whether in primary or secondary education, or university students, who are interested in working on a specific aspect or subject of the museum. Other formats, such as guided tours that promote discussion and debate around the museum collection, also incorporate this approach.

In addition, the contents usually include methodologies and resources aimed at promoting the participation and involvement of the public in the visits, mainly focusing on the proposals for different development activities grounded in participation and experience of art first-hand in the museum. What can be called 'interconnecting' strategies among people, art, and the history of art itself. Based on creativity, these proposals are aimed at promoting experience as a learning space, reaffirming the trends in education and moralistic research in recent years. In this section, we present the contribution of creative museum educators to the design of educational programs for the newly created sections of contemporary art in museums, making a critical and interdisciplinary adaptation of current trends to the objectives of each centre.

Creative educational claims of the participation programs fall transversely in the proposal for the development of methodologies and resources for learning activities in the museum and are based on promoting the development of personal expression of the student/visitor and responding to new concepts and models in the instructive treatment of the museum's cultural heritage, not as an autonomous and differentiated space in which to acquire knowledge, but as a possibility of continuing the educational system. The way for these types of actions ranges from guided visits in the classroom, different itineraries and tours, teaching units, and workshops.

In favor of art as a means of personal expression, they seek to turn the museum into a space for learning, enjoyment, education, and a place to share with all

visitors, pupils with their own creativity. The establishment of this type of exchange between the sociocultural space of the school or the immediate environment and those of the art gallery or museum implies the need for educational institutional agreements among the different institutions that manage educational museums and municipal education and culture or training and employment, in continuous communication with users. For this, one of the aims of the program is to create new synergies and educational integration by inviting the schools of each district to make an annual visit to the museum.

### Interactive Experiences

One of the transformative forces in museums and heritage right now is interactive experiences. When we were in Berlin and Sharjah, we experienced various ways that people are interacting with collections through technological and non-technological means. We saw touch screens, gestural interfaces, augmented reality, and participatory installations throughout different museums we've been to such as, Deutschland museum which offers an immersive experience full of interactive installations showcasing the history and development of Berlin throughout the years. There is no question that these interactive experiences are increasing the number of people who engage with a museum and its collections. It's clear that people do things in this gallery they wouldn't in other galleries because they photograph their interactions.

Not only are these people remembering more of the content because they are actively involved, but there is a level of personal understanding that happens when they also take their photo with the interactive. In practice, I have always endeavored to give visitors a balance between interactive display and dialogue with us. Some people like to work it out for themselves; others want the answer. Neither is good nor bad; they are just different learning styles. Over the years, I have found that the best learning experiences happen when we operate on both

levels of our brains. That is to say, when a visitor is compelled to work it out for themselves, this is partially motivated by the idea of gaining a sense of achievement through moving from unconscious to conscious competency and being able to demonstrate their worth to their friends and colleagues.

### Benefits and Impact of Creativity in Museums

Creativity in a variety of forms has a significant impact on the operations and offerings of museums. Not only do creative initiatives build stronger ties to their communities, they also offer greater educational benefits to their people, making them cultural hubs for visitors from around the world. Creativity in museums benefits visitors of all ages, abilities, interests, and experiences and welcomes diverse perspectives and ideas. By creating an emotional connection to subjects, the unique and creative initiatives of a museum engage an audience in a memorable way and inspire a curiosity to learn and know more. Because every person is unique, they will gain important and interesting connections to the museum and the community served simply by encountering for the first time the creative ways institutions expand their service scopes. Museums collaborate with a diverse and broad range of local organizations, continuing to find and create new partnerships to expand and enhance the level of service provided. These programs inspire audience members to develop the same level of curiosity and passion, whether or not they are in a museum or cultural setting. Participation often leads to communication about the creative initiative employed.

Museums participate in local, regional, and international meetings, webinars, and conferences that invite presentations and discussions about programs, exhibitions, and activities that reflect creative formats. Museums support reports, evaluations, and studies undertaken by other cultural institutions, research institutions, universities, and other potential partners that investigate the impacts

of creative initiatives. Through research, museum programs demonstrate the benefits of creativity in the museum setting, especially when they are educational, innovative, and meaningful. These outcomes help museum communities and local leaders understand the potential impacts of participating in particular programs or events.

### 5.1 Visitor Engagement and Experience

In the wider field of visitor engagement – standing at the heart of contemporary museum practice – creativity is seen as evidence of a personal interpretation of received information. Creativity in museums is defined as ‘both the museum offering and how the visitor interacts with the offering, specifically signalling the role of the audience in cultural production, viewer as creator of meaning’. This concept strongly links creativity with learning, memory, and the emotional resonance of exhibits. The argument for the use of creativity in museums is best made through the argument for using it for a purpose to engage visitors and make their museum experience more vivid, personal, relevant, and long-lasting. To cope with information overload, we must be engaged, and interactivity is enhanced by creative elements within exhibitions and programs.

Directing our efforts to viewers and consumers, we find that creativity enhances the interpretability of an image, along with the compatibility of the information it carries with their existing knowledge structures; the creativity of the interpretation processes can foster recall and thereby form distinctive high-impact memories. ‘The simple truth is that when something moves us emotionally, it is remembered longer and empathically’. Research has shown that museum audiences wish for labels and stories spoken or unspoken from the art, labels that in the end enable their museum-going experiences by providing a place of interpretation. Further, it has been demonstrated that creative language laid creative dimensions in the research methodologies as well, and evoked stories and stronger interpretation

through facilitated enablement of the voice of the participant. It would follow that a story that is created about a work of art, and incorporates the aesthetics, can enhance memory capabilities. Art museum audiences as well as travellers are currently being recognized for their ability to create, and use this ability to share and interpret the creation of others, to tell a creative story about their favorite work of art. Much in the same way, the stories in the recreated battlefields serve as interpretation aids. As emotional relatability and experience engagement are increasingly recognized, indeed both experience and learning researchers advocate for the need to measure emotional engagement and visitor reactions; in creativity, the museum has a multi-measuring feedback mechanism to adapt the smaller parts to the greater whole, across demographic and cultural differences.

### Community Outreach and Inclusivity

Community outreach programs and partnerships form an integral part of collaborating with the creative community. Provision needs to be made for diversity across the board in engaging with creative communities. Programs should encourage participation in and access to art, culture, and skill-building for both disaffected, under-resourced artists and communities. The success of museums in this crucial activity is demonstrated by a number of museums that have flagged this inclusion initiative in their activities. Outreach programs can connect not only children and families but can be used effectively with adults.

A group of museums across the world has addressed the need for stories from older people to reflect their collections, leading to a short story competition. Museums and galleries need to constantly connect to their communities. Creative initiatives need to be accessible to everyone, regardless of ability, to become a community initiative. In such authoritative institutions as art and history museums, galleries, and collections, they must reflect their society. Museums and galleries today no longer collect past aspects of life; they address living

experiences and contemporary needs. A creative initiative adds relevance to a good idea, and the local collaboration underpins a wider audience experience. In addition, to point out an interesting example of outreach programs initiative is Sharjah museums Authority “Museums Express” initiative under the statement of “We care “in order to reach out students and families who lives in the coastal areas far away from the museums located in the city of Sharjah. The initiative displays a replica of collections from different museums in a bus which is a creative way to demonstrate museums collections by thinking outside of the box, as well as some of the collections are interactive that supports engaging with it and feeling your senses through entering the bus tour.

### Challenges and Considerations in Implementing Creative Strategies in Museums

According to the literature, creative initiatives in a museum context mainly refer to creative strands such as arts and crafts, temporary and permanent exhibitions, innovative programs and cross-promotion strategies, educational and outreach programs, communication campaigns, and digital content creation. Although more user-oriented research is needed on the topic to develop suitable museum program evaluation, subjectivities and museum visitors’ feelings are also hard to assess and standardize. Challenges and Considerations: Nowadays, “creative” strategies stand at the centre of our consideration.

In museums, one of the most striking issues museum directors and cultural institutions must deal with is transforming their institutions’ traits from those based on mere preservation, safety, pure cultural heritage processing and display, or “mere objects in glass cases” into ones that are visitor-cantered and offer a profound, resonant, and engaging “personal” contact. The application of creative strategies for museums could look intriguing, but there are a few issues to overcome. First and foremost, one of the greatest limitations that may hinder

such programs or initiatives is definitely the budget consideration. The selected or to-be-applied institution is also a huge challenge; it could be a small museum with limited resources, a big museum with a great permanent collection merely focusing on contemporary art, collectors-oriented, or war memorial museums.

Nonetheless, what emerges to be the most considerable challenge is to measure the ROI of a “creative” program. Creativity, in fact, results from new products, new services, and new organizational forms. Thus, the application of such “creative strategies” at our museums should rest on solid strategic planning and governance that are able to tackle such difficulties and losses by paving the way of the museum towards a strategic plan and governance structured and based on the institution’s DNA, thus being “creative” from the roots. The need, therefore, is to form a new creative museum in which the creative process, or the artist inside us, nurtures and fuels museum strategies, governance, and policymaking with local deviations and visions over their mission, penetration, and engagement in local contexts. The need to have compelling and not merely obligatory and somatic training about quality right from the start and only fostering our Multi-Stakeholder Local and Super local Governance is a paramount need today; creativity is, in fact, seasoned with long-lasting learning, flexibility, cultural alchemy, ethnography, and a mission to preserve, entertain, inform, penetrate, amaze, and provoke, which in my opinion is the motive force of museums.

## Summary

Maintaining creativity in museums involves engaging visitors in innovative ways to enhance their experience. One approach is through interactive exhibits that encourage participation and exploration. Museums can also incorporate technology like augmented reality to bring exhibits to life. Additionally, hosting workshops, talks, and events can spark creativity by providing opportunities for visitors to express themselves and interact with the exhibits in a different context.

Collaborating with artists or inviting guest curators can bring fresh perspectives and ideas to the museum. By continuously refreshing exhibits, introducing new themes, and involving the community, museums can stay dynamic and inspire creativity in their visitors. In summary, creativity is integral to museum work as it enhances exhibition design, educational programming, community engagement, and problem-solving. Museums thrive on creativity to fulfill their mission of preserving culture, educating the public, and inspiring future generations.

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