

## Experience #1: A Visit With Mrs. Havemeyer & Mr. Tiffany

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| <p><b>Setup</b></p> | <p><b>Introductions:</b> Hi everyone. My name is Marlene and my cohort in crime in Susan. We both have professional human service backgrounds and are very comfortable, professionally and personally, working with older folks.</p> <p>We are going to <b>demonstrate</b> for you one of our favorite “object stops” on a Meet Me at UMMA tour -- a tour for a group of persons in the early stages of Alzheimer’s Disease who attend a day program under the auspices of the UofM.</p> <p>But first, <b>how we begin our time</b> with our guests on the day of a tour. In a word - <b>*a warm, welcoming greeting with careful attention to logistics</b> is critical to a successful tour. What we describe here applies also to the approach of all the Meet Me at UMMA docents.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <b>We greet:</b> If possible, three or four docents go outside and meet the folks at their van, or we greet them just inside the entry. We usually have 6-8 in a group, accompanied by staff from the agency. Many of our guests have been coming for a while and are known to us, but they all have nice big name tags - as do we. If we have a new guest, we get a bit of background on that person ahead of time - their name, occupation, family, interests, etc.</li><li>- <b>We make it warm, welcoming &amp; personal:</b> We like to have personal interactions with each of our guests (e.g. “cool hat you are wearing today! You look great in hats - wish I did, but I don’t.”...) Our greeting time is an opportunity to express the warmth and enthusiasm we honestly feel, reflecting how rewarding it is to spend an hour in the museum with these friends. We often walk arm in arm or with us pushing a wheelchair and chatting about whatever, both as we walk into the museum and between “stops”.</li><li>- <b>Setting up the experience:</b> Typically we have a theme for our tours, which include 3 or 4 art objects that we will experience over the course of the hour. We communicate the theme to the partner organization ahead of time. This “preps” the audience, builds enthusiasm and gives a connecting anchor point to the experience. We encourage “theme” music on the bus trip to/ from the Museum.</li></ul> <p>If I am doing the introduction, I often mention how much fun we have thinking of a tour theme -- and we do. Recently we had a visiting work, dramatically in blue so we chose to have the theme “Go Blue” (which is the UofM fight song/expression known to all). I then read a wonderful poem about the color blue and off we went to visit objects with the color blue. Perhaps we played Gershwin’s Rhapsody in Blue as we were settling in front of the object.</p> <p><b>Our goal?</b> To engage - with a capital E. And have fun! In the vignette you will see, we ask our guests to use their imagination and come with us on a visit to a different time and place. So let’s have some fun, shall we?</p> | <p>New slide - Susan and Marlene in costume under the chandelier</p> <p>A series of 2 exterior shots with guests arriving</p> <p>Sophie in the gallery filler slide - keep on while Marlene goes through this verbiage</p> <p>Maybe another filler slide halfway through?</p> |
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| <b>Experience</b> | <p><b>Let's set the scene.</b> Our visitors have been warmly greeted downstairs. They enter through the original Tiffany doors and I am there -- dressed elaborately welcoming them.</p> <p>“Why, good afternoon ladies and gentlemen. I am delighted that you could join me today. My quite annoying servant, Marlene, will take your things. However, do make sure she leaves you with your imagination.</p> <p>The year is 1911 (more than 100 years ago). My name is Louise Havemeyer and I welcome you to my not-so-humble abode. I don't like to brag, but I will anyway. The house you're entering was built just for me and my art. I love, love, love art. And, I am very rich. I have over 2,000 pieces of art in this home. The location of this mansion is at 66th Street and Fifth Avenue in NYC and it couldn't be more hoity-toity. (Marlene says -- “and neither could she”.) My husband, Henry, may he rest in peace, had more money than God. Why, he owned the sugar industry from the east coast to the Mississippi. I am -- I mean -- it is rather gorgeous, don't you think?</p> <p>Now, I had to decorate it didn't I? The most popular man about town, the superstar of NYC is Louis Comfort Tiffany. Of course I hired him to decorate this mansion in 1889. He did a fabulous job. Don't you all agree?</p> <p>*Look at this chandelier -- just a gem -- it hangs in the library, which we also call the Rembrandt room because of our 7 paintings by Rembrandt. I love to look at the glass with all the designs. You just know he got the idea for this from his travels around the world.</p> <p>Marlene interrupts -- with a loud aside -- “you try cleaning &amp; dusting all these pieces of glass. And, even worse than this” she goes to the fireplace screen and does her bit about dusting, etc. and then goes to the balustrade. I interrupt and say - “Always thinking of herself”. Marlene will talk about balustrade.</p> <p>I go back to the *Peacock -- “ahh, the real jewel in my home. Can you guess what this is made of? This is the type of glass that made Mr. Tiffany famous - he managed to get the iridescent color INSIDE the glass instead of painting on the outside. Can you recognize anything in this picture made of glass? I think Mr. Tiffany is simply a magician.</p> <p>Marlene -- “Some magician. I have a girlfriend in Queens who says that the brains behind the whole Tiffany outfit is a lady named Clara and the women who work for her.</p> | <p>Tiffany doors closed then Tiffany doors open with Susan and guest</p> <p>Tiffany gallery shot</p> <p>Chandelier</p> <p>Firescreen then Balustrade</p> <p>Peacock mosaic</p> |
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| <b>Re-cap</b> | <p>We hope this demonstration has given you a first “taste” of what a Meet Me @ UMMA tour involves. Firmly baked into the experience are some critical elements we have learned (through experience) that contribute to success. Specifically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- we set the stage with a warm, welcoming greeting and careful attention to physical limitations and logistics. We do whatever we can to make a personal connection with our visitors and to make the time in the museum feel safe and fun.</li><li>- we ramp it up with story-telling and a bit a theater. Doing so allows the imagination to take over, even when other mental functions dim in the path of dementia. Careful research on art objects is important and it informs our work, but you will notice we did not concentrate on sharing facts and dates. We leave the didactic behind and focus instead on creating an enjoyable experience for our guests.</li><li>- we use humor and have fun. Humor is contagious and a way to connect to others. Often, the day of a person with memory loss is spent feeling alone and lost. Perhaps the things we talked about triggered memories or feelings of an earlier time - when there was a fireplace or a peacock parading or... whatever.</li><li>- we stay flexible and attuned to the group as a whole as well as each individual. We wait longer for responses than we would for a general audience, knowing that the extra time for mental processing is helpful.</li></ul> <p>Speaking for both of us, we are often exhausted. The work is labor intensive. We pull out all the stops and what we get in return is such a gift. To know that we have made a difference in their lives if only for 10 minutes could not be more rewarding.</p> <p>We always remember this wisdom from Richard Taylor, a psychologist with dementia who spoke at our workshop. He said, “If you engage me I’m alive, and if you look away I disappear.”</p> <p>He also was very influential in helping us understand the importance of learning to intuit the differences in our guests and interacting appropriately as a result. A favorite “mantra” for us is, as Mr. Taylor said, “When you meet one person with Alzheimer’s disease, you have met ONE person with Alzheimer’s disease”.</p> <p><b>Transition</b> to the next experience...</p> | <p>Peacock mosaic through to the end</p> |
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