

Tiffany Trieu  
Ola Lorens Memorial Travel Scholarship  
April, 2016

### Designing Spaces for Conversations

Similar to my peers, I asked the question during my first years in college, “What impact do I want to have when I leave and enter the professional workforce?” As I narrowed down my answer, I reflected upon my childhood experiences. I retraced where my interests came from. My curiosities for biology grew from playing with ants and “keeping them alive” in a sugar water ant farm. My curiosities in fashion grew from sitting next to my mom sewing everything from pajamas to curtains. My curiosity for entrepreneurship came from my friends who encouraged me to sell hair accessories I made from candy wrappers. Through my own introspection, I realized how important one’s younger years have on our future aspirations. How can we encourage young people to have these conversations early on – individually, as well as with their peers?

Using the lens of museum and exhibition design, I see an opportunity to design environments which encourage our youth to explore their 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> grade school curriculum on a deeper level, as this is a crucial transition. I want to learn how to design museum spaces that invite conversation and reflection amongst younger audiences and help them connect museum content to their curriculum.

The Ola Lorens Memorial Scholarship will allow me to create a travel plan to visit New York museums that vary greatly in design and educational content, but all of which strive to create a supportive space for the later years of elementary school learning. I will interview designers and educators from the Tenement Museum, Brooklyn Children’s Museum, and Cooper Hewitt Design Museum. Following that, the next step is to experience the museums myself and observe how 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> grade audiences interact with the spaces. Shadowing the exhibit designers and museum educators will give me an insight of their design process, as well as, how concepts are applied in real context.

I have contacted the staff at the following museums, and they have kindly invited me on tours and to provide guidance in my research. I plan to visit the Tenement Museum, which deals with the history of immigration and migration. The Tenement Museum is unique because the museum itself is a recreation of historic tenements. Kathryn Lloyd, the education manager, has

told me about how the museum engages with students by telling stories and inviting conversation rather than requiring students to answer questions. At the Brooklyn Children's Museum, I have spoken to Hana Elwell, director of exhibits and interpretation. At the BCM, exhibit design is more driven by physical interactives, and their Block Studio space allows youth to contribute to their community through architecture and art. Not only will I be shadowing exhibit designers and educators, I will be interviewing and interacting with visitors to get firsthand experience.

Museums can offer a bridge to help our youth connect their classroom curriculum to how it relates to the world around them. Design for these engaging spaces helps our youth understand the material they learn in traditional school settings and their interests better. By encouraging this conversation, we can encourage them to find their interests at an early age.

This trip will better inform me how an exhibit designer can understand how to collaborate with educators, and how the design of spaces can effectively create discussions among our youth, individually and between peers. I will not only gain this knowledge for myself, but I also want to be a resource for my colleagues at UC Davis who are interested exhibition design in relation to museum education.

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**Faculty Mentor**

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**Travel Itinerary**

**Day 1, Jun. 13** Arrival, Tenement Museum Interview with Kathryn Lloyd  
**Day 2, Jun. 14** Shadowing Kathryn  
**Day 3, Jun. 15** Brooklyn Children's Museum Interview with Hana Elwell  
**Day 4, Jun. 16** Shadowing Hana  
**Day 5, Jun. 17** Cooper Hewitt Museum Interview with Caroline Baumann  
**Day 6, Jun. 18** Shadowing Caroline  
**Day 7, Jun. 19** Depart

**Detailed Budget**

<b>ITEM</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>COST</b>
Flight	Round trip to New York, NY	\$800
Housing	Staying with a colleague	0
Meals	3 meals a day for 7 days (at \$10/per meal)	210
Admissions	Tenement Museum, Cooper Hewitt, Children's Museum	100
Transportation	7-day Unlimited MetroCard	31
		<b>\$ 1,141.00</b>

**Extra Funding**

<b>FUNDS</b>	<b>AMOUNT</b>
Savings	\$141