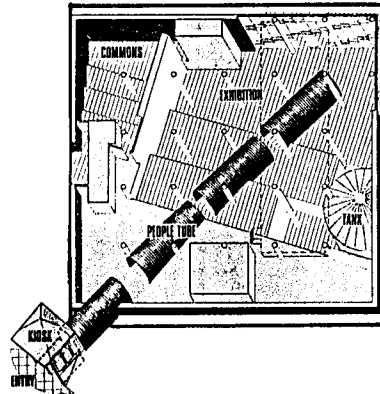
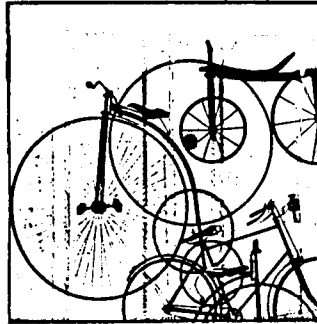


# MUSEUMS AND CHILDREN



A DESIGN GUIDE

URIEL COHEN AND RUTH MCMURTRY

**The School of  
Architecture  
& Urban  
Planning** The  
University of  
Wisconsin  
Milwaukee

# MUSEUMS AND CHILDREN

## A DESIGN GUIDE



URIEL COHEN AND RUTH McMURTRY

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## MUSEUMS AND CHILDREN: A DESIGN GUIDE

Uriel Cohen and Ruth M. McMurtry

### Abstract

The goals of this applied research project were to identify important issues and related design implications through the study of children's museums. Research methods included case studies, literature review and interviews with national experts. The analysis generated design principles generalizable to many museum types and related environments such as zoos, aquaria, and visitor's centers. This project was sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts.

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# MUSEUMS AND CHILDREN

## A DESIGN GUIDE

### SYNOPSIS

MUSEUMS AND CHILDREN is an applied research, translation and programming project conducted for the Design Arts Program, National Endowment for the Arts, Washington, D.C.

#### Context and Scope

Children's museums are a relatively new and popular phenomenon. Their spirit and programs of experiential opportunities for learning, coupled with magic and fascination are enjoyed by adults and adopted by other types of museums. Therefore, the ideas and principles of this book apply to hundreds of museums -- children's museums, specialized museums, and "ordinary" community museums.

#### The Problems:

The main problems encountered in pursuing this project were the lack of empirically-tested information on users of children's museums in relation to physical design, and the lack of design guidance and programs for settings which can serve as models for solutions.

#### Objectives:

The main objective of the project was to generate user-oriented and process-based design guidance applicable to a wide range of museum contexts.

#### Procedure:

The conceptual approach to the project was derived from an integrative model of research and design being developed by the project directors. The project team employed information collection, programming, and translation methods including: systematic reviews of museum research and design literatures, field observations, focused interviews with clients and users, review of similar building types, and experts' reviews.

The guide was structured to respond to major user and process issues. First, issues were explored, then information was analyzed, and relations between issues and design responses were established. Finally, key design principles were generated which synthesized all the information into generic -- and graphic -- design directives.

#### Significance:

This approach to applied research and translation is a further step in the continuing effort to bridge the information and communication gap between the behavioral sciences and architectural design. The main points of significance are:

- \* Use and presentation of a wide range of information normally untapped by designers -- behavioral information, facility goals, and behaviorally-based design principles.
- \* Program information which can be used at various levels and in various ways, approaching the problem either from the issue side, or the solution side.
- \* A systematic and innovative format making the guide useful and accessible to designers, museum workers, administrators, community groups, researchers, and others crossing traditional disciplinary lines.
- \* The use of evocative design principles and graphic communication to provide specific direction and information suggestive of a range of design solutions, thus stimulating the designer's imagination and intuition, while avoiding overly doctrinaire and absolute prescriptions that might inhibit design innovation.

# Invisible, but Real

I can feel air.  
Air takes up space around me.  
I can push things with air.  
I need air.  
Air is inside me.  
I can use air to make water disappear.  
I get smells from air.  
Some things that I drop can float in air.

Musement Park in the Wizard Wing  
Concepts for four to seven year olds

The Musement Park Development Team, 10 September 1984  
Jerry Johnson, Marion Metzow, Kate Tornehl, Lu Anne Thompson & Debra Haines

MUSEUMS AND CHILDREN  
A Design Guide

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Milwaukee  
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