

Overall Design Intentions

Working with a design firm from 2018 to 2020, Grey Roots developed a concept design to update its central, long-term exhibit (the Grey County Gallery). The first section completed is the new Voices exhibit that showcases the history of Grey County through personal stories, unveiled in 2020. In 2021, staff are working with a new design consultant, Origin Studios to produce a design and map out content for three new sections.

This presentation outlines the design intentions developed by Origin Studios to create a long-term gallery design that encourages repeat visitation and future engagements with the community.

The new gallery will share the stories of Grey County through objects, archival images, and first-person stories while offering engaging discovery-based learning for individuals and groups alike. The casework has been designed to maximize the use of objects for display while maintaining design synergy with the Voices of Grey installation in the entrance of the gallery space. These intentions were discussed at the outset of the project. Grey Roots staff stressed the importance of an inclusive and accessible gallery experience.

Origin has taken their approach from the Smithsonian Guidelines for Accessible Design, the Accessibility Standards for Exhibitions from Ingenium, and the Canadian Museum for Human Rights Inclusive Design and Accessibility Guidelines. They have broken out each gallery component below and itemized the accessible and inclusive practices included in the design.

Visitor Flow & Floor Plan

- The gallery offers a straightforward, clear path with opportunities for visitors to find “predictable surprises”. The layout avoids bottlenecks and dead-ends and is open-concept overall with maneuverability for one and two-way traffic throughout the gallery set to a minimum of 48”.
- The gallery experience features a calming colour scheme with an overall grey palette, offset by organic wood tones.
- Floors are the current grey colour which will stand out from casework with the high-contrast colour palette of dark grey for all junctures.
- Emergency egress is unchanged from the Museum’s base-build.

Exhibit Walls

- Exhibit walls feature the agreed-upon colours (dark grey and warm, honey-toned wood) that offer high contrast across the spectrum and surfaces will minimize reflection and glare.
- Walls have a consistent design language which flows logically and rhythmically throughout the gallery offering no hazards or encumbrances to visitor movement.

Objects in Casework

- Objects have been displayed according to the Smithsonian Guidelines for height of installation and are optimized for viewing by seated and standing visitors.
- Small objects will be displayed near case surfaces.

- All objects are displayed without complex visual backgrounds or complex layered graphics.
- Objects will be lit by strips of hidden LED lighting.
- The casework has been designed to go straight to the floor thereby minimizing unpredictability or impediments for visitors with low vision.
- Closed and open-display objects and images are at suitable heights for their proportions and scale which allows standing visitors and visitors in wheelchairs get close to artworks and labels.

Text Panels and Object Labels

- Wall text panels have been designed to be installed at consistent heights, using the Smithsonian Guidelines for height of installation. It follows predictable patterns with suitable font sizes and accessible fonts.
- All text is installed at heights or on surfaces that meet the needs of visitors who are standing, seated or who require assistive devices.
- Object labels are offered on handheld documents so that visitors can engage with each section from various locations in proximity to the casework. By offering the object labels on portable handouts, they can be easily reproduced in multiple languages, large font, and braille
- Font size, colour and variable background colours have a high contrast that fits well within accessibility ranges.
- Content hierarchies and font size standards have been established and are maintained throughout the gallery.
- Line lengths of 50 characters per line and sufficient leading is the templated structure to facilitate long-form reading.
- The chosen font is a sans-serif font that meets the Smithsonian and Canadian Museum for Human Rights accessibility guidelines
- Surfaces other than covered display cases have been specified to be matte or semi-gloss to manage glare from lighting.

Digital Experiences

- Touchscreens are to be mounted into the casework and are proximal to sub-theme groupings for ease of comprehension and are set to a height that meets the needs of visitors who are standing, seated, or who require assistive devices.
- Font size, colour and variable background colours will be specified to follow gallery design which has a high contrast that fits well within accessibility ranges.
- Content hierarchies and font size standards have been established and are maintained throughout the gallery.
- Where there is an audio component there will be a hand-held mono speaker. Subtitles, or transcriptions are recommended.

Hands-on Activities

- Guided or un-guided, hands-on learning is set into the casework where suitable and rolling bins are in the bottom panels. All hands-on offerings are set to a height that meets the needs of visitors who are standing, seated, or who require assistive devices.

- Discovery-based learning activities have been suggested to engage visitors of all learning levels and are placed strategically throughout exhibit.
- Activities will have clear instructions using simple language and are designed to be customizable by the visitor based on age, ability, and skill.
- Hand's On rolling bins have been developed for long-term programming flexibility which can be explored and stored in the wall or positioned throughout the gallery as required.

Fabrication and installation of the Abundance (previously Agriculture) section will begin in 2022 in addition to the final design work. 2023 - 2025 will see the fabrication and installation of the remaining sections. The new design will allow our exhibit to be easily changed to display new stories, objects, and images so that we can adapt to public interest or community input and visitors are always discovering something new.