

# MUSEUM ETIQUETTE 101

BECAUSE OF THE GREAT INTEREST IN ART TODAY, AMERICANS ARE SHOWING UP AT MUSEUMS WITH PIT-CREW SPEED TO VIEW THE LATEST BLOCKBUSTER EXHIBITIONS.

—RON SHIPMON



Some people approach visiting a museum experience with the same attitude they might have for an "end of season" sale at Barneys. Others see the experience as a "time out" from the stress of everyday life. I see museums as my second home, the one where I keep my sculpture, Fragonards and fine tapestries. A museum visit is always an event worthy of note, so proper attire and proper behavior are the order of the day.

## AVOID ART FATIGUE

Don't try to view the entire museum collection in a single visit. This is not the best recipe for a fulfilling experience. Plan your itinerary prior to each visit, take your time — and focus.

You can also explore the museum with an art expert. Contact the museum's education department to arrange for a docent (trained museum guide). These are often included in the admission price, though reservations are typically required. This is a good way to see the museum's highlights.

## CHILDREN & MUSEUM MELTDOWNS

Parent's need to prepare young children for a museum visit. Read books with your child related to the subject matter of the exhibition to get them engaged. Take advantage of the special programs geared for children and families. Avoid a meltdown by making the museum visit fun for your children.

## PETS & CAMERAS

Pets are not permitted, period, unless you require the assistance of a guide dog. Some museums allow the taking of photographs, though the fragile nature of the objects in collections often means flash devices must not be used.

## LOOK, DON'T TOUCH

Oils and perspiration on a single human finger are highly corrosive and can start a process that would even disfigure metal sculpture in a matter of months. Please, do not touch!

## CELL PHONE ETIQUETTE

If you have to make calls, do it outside the museum. If you must carry a cell phone (and who doesn't these days), turn it off when you go in, or set it on "silent" mode.

## RESPECT THE ENVIRONMENT

Respectful the art and leave the baby strollers, backpacks and umbrellas at the coat check. Conversations about a particular painting is between you and your partner: Keep it low.

As Henry James said, "It is art that makes life . . . I know no substitute for the force and beauty of its process." Above all enjoy your visit. ♦

---

Ron Shipmon is curator for a Fortune 500 company and an art dealer specializing in emerging artists. [www.ronshipmon.com](http://www.ronshipmon.com)