



# bell museum

St. Paul campus. July 2018.



# Hands-on, Minds-on: The Touch and See Lab Experience

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The basic concepts of the Touch and See Room started in the diorama halls, with a helpful person and a blanket covered with bones and furs.



## *Birth of an Icon*

In 1968 an addition was added onto the the 1939 Bell Museum and head of education Richard Barthelemy, education psychologist Roger Johnson, artist Margaret Barthelemy, and designer Dick Abell set about creating the Touch and See Room.



# *Children have a need to function and interact with their environment to exercise their minds.*

*Concepts championed by Piaget, Bruner, Socrates, and Dr. Spock formed the basis of Touch and See's Theory.*



Interpretive staff were an important part of the room from the beginning.



The elephant skull begins its long career as an education ambassador.

*“If you want people not to think about something anymore, you give them an answer.” Roger Johnson*

*Inquiry became the driving force behind Touch and See, give people plenty of objects to interact with so that they can generate many questions.*



Kid friendly furniture heights allowed kids to take charge of the interactions.



With a diversity of objects multiple generations could engage.

*“The room is almost is almost devoid of color, the psychology being that 30 to 60 schoolchildren entering a dull room bring in enough color in their clothing to raise the emotional level to an adequate point. If the new room were exciting empty, it would be over-exciting when filled with children.” Richard Barthelemy*



The black box theater style came into being in 1975.

# *5 Important Original Concepts*

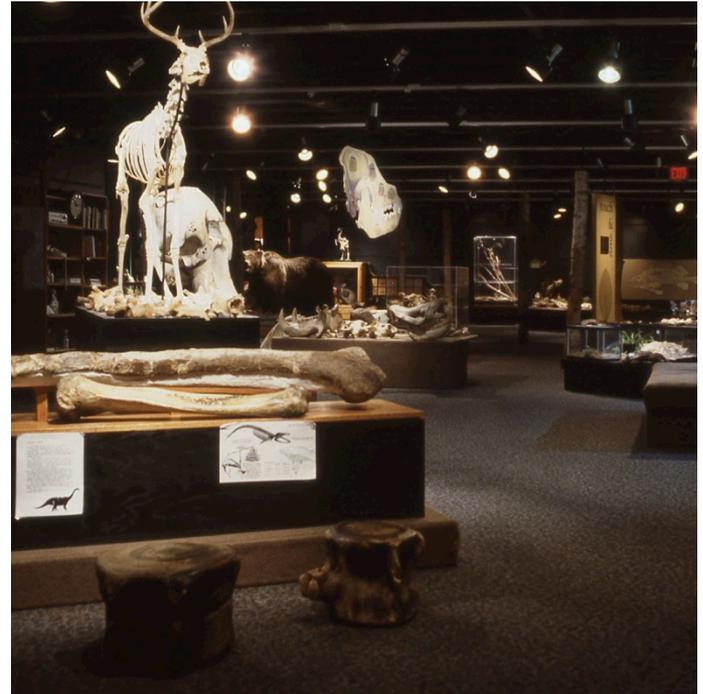
Give people a wide variety of objects and experiences to engage in.

No labels, labels stop people from asking more questions.

Place objects at different heights. This allows for multiple generations to engage and for children to lead.

Don't be afraid to use real things. Yes, they get loved to pieces.

Interpretive staff are vital.





## *Moving Touch and See*

The classic Touch and See Room getting ready for the first day of packing.

What comes with and what new things do we develop?

*When planning for the new Touch and See Lab we looked at other discovery rooms across the country for ideas and styles. Choosing the things we thought best fit our personality and style.*



L.A. County 2010



L.A. County 2015



North Carolina  
Naturalist Center



Our favorite  
discovery: the  
MicroEye



## *Building the Future*

Building a physical model allowed us to adjust the room before the designs were finished.

Hundreds of hours of meetings went into planning the new Touch and See Lab, and yet we came back to many of original concepts.

# TOUCH & SEE LAB

Welcome to our new home!



AUTOMATIC  
CAUTION  
DOOR

ACTIVATE  
SWITCH TO  
OPERATE

160

Please no  
food or drinks  
in the Touch  
& See Lab

The main goal was to design a space that was adaptable.  
*“The room should be child friendly, not adult excluding.” Jennifer Menken*



Activity Pods and Demonstration Counter



Live Animals and Discovery Wall

# Collections Cove

*This new space houses a large portion of our education collections and reflects our scientific collections. Opening up areas of the museum that are rarely seen by the public.*



A rotating selection of specimens is on display.



Interpretive staff will be able to open cabinets for the public.



*What have we learned  
in our first two months!*



*Or what we've learned  
when 40,000+ friends  
come to visit.*

The living, breathing heart of the Touch and See Lab is our staff. Their ability to adapt to the interests of the visitors make the room a dynamic changing experience.

We might need to add a few more labels, but choosing what they say and how they say it will be very important.

Yup, things break.

And most importantly, 50 years in we have a good thing going. We don't intend to stop learning and growing with our visitors.

# *Thank You*

The University of Minnesota

The College of Food, Agriculture and Natural  
Resource Sciences

To Touch and See's original creators, for getting  
it right the first time.

The student staff who bring joy and life to the  
room.

And the people of Minnesota for supporting us.





UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA  
**Driven to Discover<sup>SM</sup>**

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