

# Curiosity Cartography: Way Finding System Design

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**Abstract.** This paper analyzes the background concept of Hong Kong M+ Museum, extracts the word "connection" as the main concept of the new way finding system, analyzes the shortcomings of the current way finding system, optimizes and innovates the current way finding system, and adds a Child-friendly design to prevent children from getting lost. Strengthen the location of the service desk and the easy-to-remember areas in the museum to help visitors establish a sense of space.

**Keywords:** Way Finding System; Children; Museum.

## 1. Introduction

M+ Museum stands as a beacon of Hong Kong's cultural fusion, encapsulating the great intersection of East-meets-West narratives within the global visual landscape. Its completion in October 2021 marked a pivotal moment in the city's cultural evolution. With a unique perspective of Asia in the 21st century, M+ boasts a robust artistic identity, regularly playing host to diverse exhibitions sourced globally. Rooted in Foster + Partners' visionary proposal of a "City Park" back in 2010, the museum embodies a grand vision of harmoniously intertwining Kowloon and Victoria Harbor, seamlessly weaving art and culture into the fabric of urban existence. The strategic integration of the West Kowloon Cultural District and the iconic Victoria Harbour underscores the spatial design ethos of M+, positioning it as a nexus bridging individuals and the expansive environment.

However, despite its grandeur and significance, navigating M+ proves to be a challenge owing to its vast expanse and intricate terrain. Notably, observing foreign visitors' experiences, a common challenge emerges, particularly for families with children. Upon reaching the primary exhibition hall on the first floor, many discover the need to purchase tickets, leading to a logistical hurdle. Children, propelled by their boundless energy and curiosity, often dash ahead to subsequent floors, unaware of the necessity to acquire tickets on another level. This lack of clarity not only leads to potential disorientation but also hampers the overall experience for families exploring the museum.

Regrettably, the museum currently lacks an intelligently designed wayfinding system, especially tailored to cater to the needs of young visitors and their families. Consequently, this paper endeavors to propose an innovative, child-friendly intelligent wayfinding system for M+. The primary aim is to empower visitors with a heightened spatial awareness, enabling them to navigate the museum's intricate layout with ease. Such a system not only aims to alleviate confusion but also seeks to enrich visitors' understanding of the space's complexity, thereby fostering a deeper connection between individuals and the rich tapestry of art and culture housed within M+ Museum.

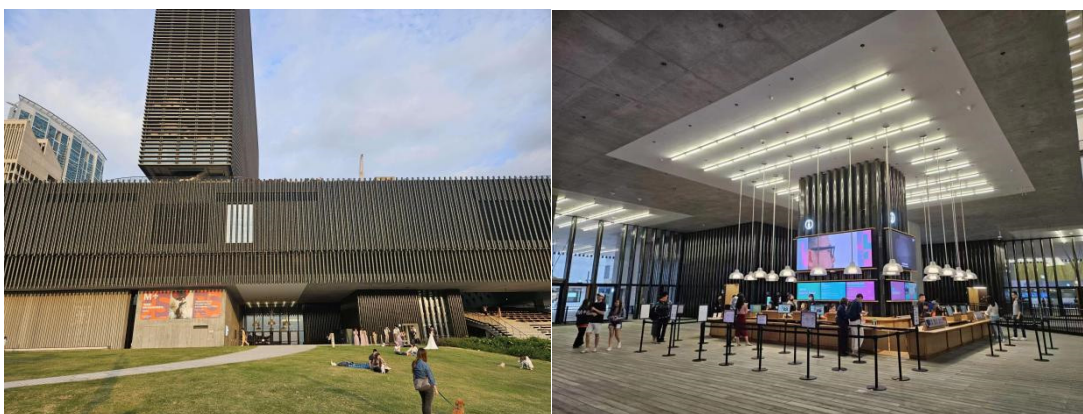
## 2. Current Challenges

The information provided by the information boards inside and outside the museum is not clear (see Figure 1). The bad arrows on the information boards can't help tourists find the right direction, and they can't provide enough information for tourists to find the place they want to go quickly.



**Figure 1.** Information boards (Photographed by the author)

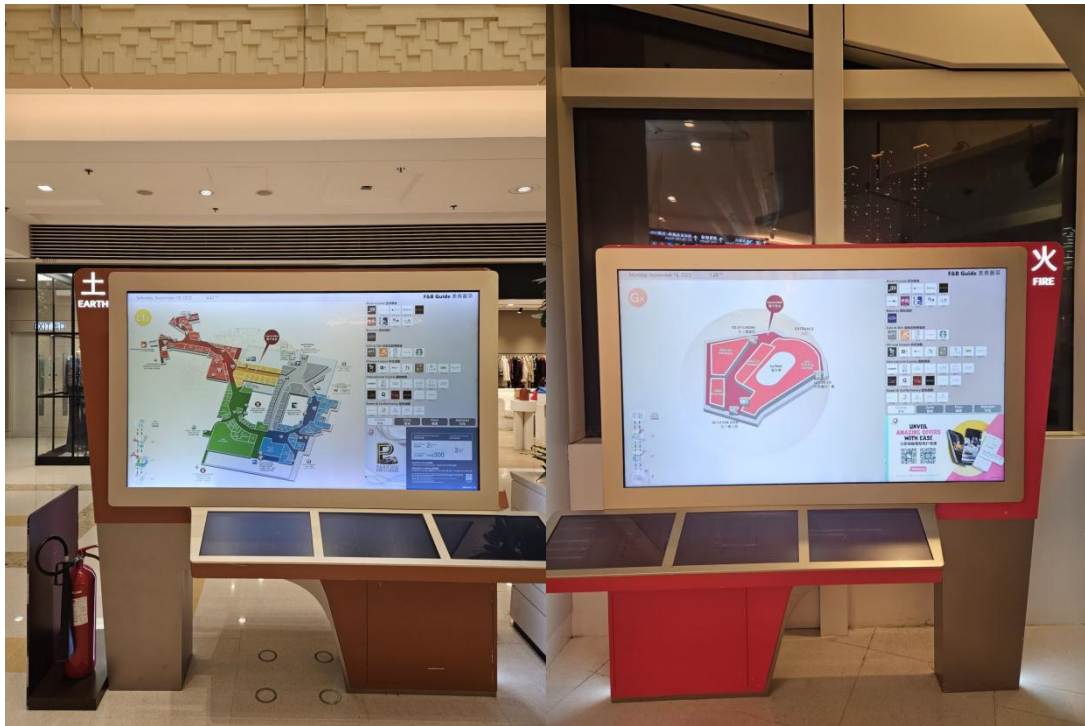
Through observation and personal experience, I found that if tourists don't ask the staff at the information desk, they can't get complete information about the exhibition and tourists can't know where to see exhibition at the first time. And there are several self-service ticket buying machines near the information desk, which can't be found if tourists don't observe carefully. The indoor space of the museum is very large, and there are entrances around the building of the museum. When visitors enter this building space, it is not easy to find the information desk (see Figure 2). When I first came to the M+ Museum for a class, I got lost. The elevator go to the class was outside the building space. Because of the large scale of the indoor space, I couldn't get the efficient and reliable location information completely by asking the staff once. I knew the correct elevator location by asking two staff members standing in different positions in the museum.



**Figure 2.** Information desks (Photographed by the author)

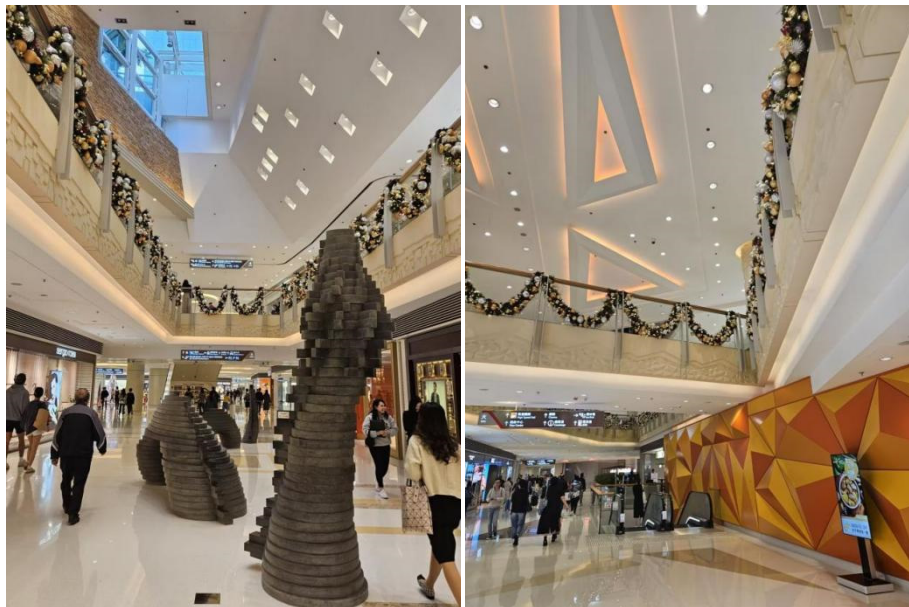
### 3. Case Study

There is a shopping center called "Elements" near the M+ Museum, where the way finding system will have many different sensory interactions with tourists. For example (see Figure 3), this information board replaces different shopping areas with five elements of gold, wood, water, fire and earth, and each area is replaced with different colors to provide tourists with efficient visual memory information.



**Figure 3.** Color zoned information boards (Photographed by the author)

At the same time, there will be representative things in different areas where each element is located to strengthen the spatial memory of tourists. For example (see Figure 4), there will be sculptures of related materials in the earth element area, red lights and red sculpture walls in the fire element area. Similarly, the areas represented by other elements also have related designs to deepen the spatial perception and memory of tourists.



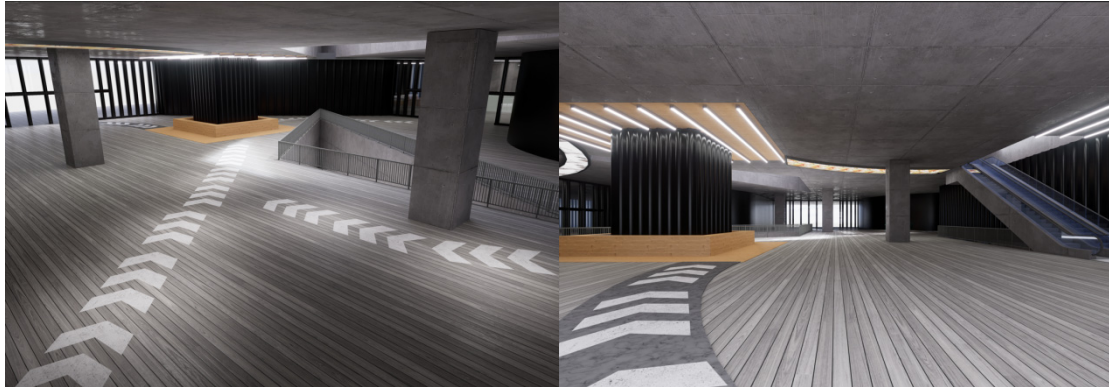
**Figure 4.** Representative elements (Photographed by the author)

This shopping mall uses different element designs to distinguish different indoor space areas, and each area has a symbolic design of different elements, which strengthens people's spatial perception and memory, and also facilitates people to quickly find the areas they want to go to. In the same way,

there are different characteristic spaces in the M+ Museum, just like different element areas in this shopping mall. I want to strengthen the location of different famous areas in the museum, help people quickly form a sense of space, and thus find the exhibition space that people want to go.

#### 4. Details of the New Way Finding System

Through the previous analysis, I think that it is the first priority for tourists to quickly find the information desk of the M+ Museum. By adding ground guidance arrows to the main entrances of the museum building (see Figure 5), tourists who need to obtain exhibition-related information can first quickly reach the information desk. Put the location of the information desk in the tourist's mind before moving on to the next step.



**Figure 5.** Ground guidance arrows (Produced by the author)

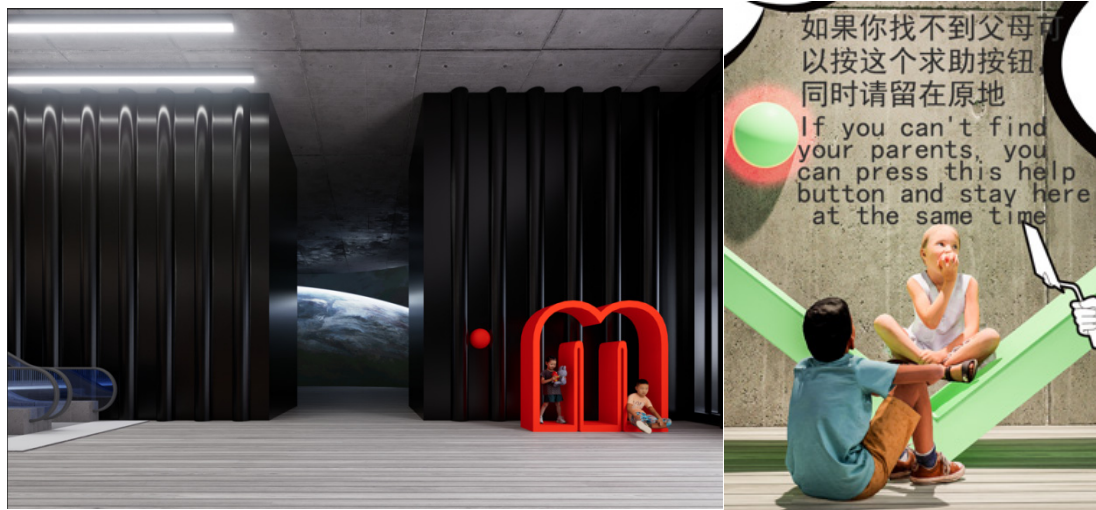
At the top of each floor of the museum, several electronic screens extended by the information desk have been added (see Figure 6). The ends of these electronic screens are at the stairs or elevator doors to the next floor. These electronic screens at the top can play promotional videos or posters related to the exhibition. After the exhibition in the museum is changed, the information on the top electronic screen will also be changed. The purpose of this is to emphasize the entrance and exit direction of a certain plane of the building, and then explain which floor of the building tourists should go to, and simplify and split the relative position of the exhibition space and the information desk in the museum, so that tourists can find their own places more easily.



**Figure 6.** Electronic screens (Produced by the author)

Child-friendly design has been incorporated into the new way finding system. I have placed an "M" sculpture at the entrance of the famous space on each floor of the building (see Figure 7) to attract children running around to play, so that parents can tell their children where to wait. At the same time, there will be staff patrolling near each "M" sculpture. If staff find that child is not accompanied by

parents, they can press the help button next to the "M" sculpture to tell the information desk that there is a lost child here, and the lost child can also press the help button himself. The information service center searched for people by broadcasting for the first time. Through my observation, there are usually many staff members standing in different places in the M+ Museum. With this sculpture, children can be prevented from getting lost more efficiently. The most important thing is that these "M" sculptures in important architectural spaces can also help tourists to establish spatial cognition. Through the electronic screen at the top of each building space and the "M" sculpture in different positions, visitors can remember the location of every important space in the museum.



**Figure 7.** "M" sculpture (Produced by the author)

## 5. Conclusion

The comprehensive examination comparing M+ Museum's current wayfinding system with a similar case study in a shopping mall underscores the imperative need to streamline information delivery for visitors. The essence lies not only in simplifying the process but also ensuring its effectiveness to aid tourists in quickly memorizing routes. Effective wayfinding begins with a focus on clearly defining spatial locations within the architectural layout, subsequently guiding individuals to specific floors. Highlighting key areas within the museum, such as the information desk, plays a pivotal role in helping tourists orient themselves within the expansive premises. Moreover, there is a crucial need to amplify the influence of design elements on visitors' inherent instincts, resulting behaviors, and subsequent cognitive processes. Integrating design strategies that align with human psychology and behavior has the potential to significantly enhance tourists' cognitive mapping, thereby enabling a more intuitive and seamless navigation experience within the museum's intricate environment.

## References

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