Imagine that you are an exhibition critic for the Philadelphia Inquirer with an educated but non-specialist audience. You have been asked to review a museum exhibition in five to six double-spaced pages (using Times New Roman, 12-point font and one-inch margins. Editors are VERY picky about such details!). Your task is to provide some context, and outline what visitors might expect if they came to the site. To achieve this you need both to describe AND critique your chosen exhibition and its rationale. This is not a research paper; you do not need any research beyond what has already been assigned in class and what you experienced during our class field trips, but you can (and should) incorporate materials from exhibition labels, websites, assigned readings, and class discussions.

You can either use one of the exhibitions visited during class or another exhibition of your choosing.

Start by considering the exhibition’s arrangement as representing a design team’s conscious creation. Here are some questions to help you get started:

1. What is the purpose of this exhibition? Is there a central argument or idea? Who is the intended audience (or audiences; to answer this question think about who visits this kind of institution and whether this exhibit appeals to that demographic or was trying to reach out to a “new” constituency)?

2. What seems to be the premise for the exhibit arrangement? What aspects seem to matter most? This is where you need to move from what the exhibition planners intended to what you think actually appears on the ground. Do they accomplish their goals? If so, how (give specific examples of panels, images, or themes that reflect what planners intended)? If not, why not (again, specific examples are needed to illustrate if you think the exhibition comes up short)?

3. What is used to convey the exhibition’s themes (objects, images, text)? Consider why certain objects or panels are grouped together. Does the arrangement make sense to you (does it create a narrative)? Notice things like placement, spacing, and lighting. What differences do these make?
What emotions or ideas are they intended to invoke (remember that everything in an exhibition is a decision….the walls are yellow or gray or orange for a reason, what reason might that be)? Are some ideas privileged over others by their position?

5. Is there one installation that you find particularly interesting? If so, feel free to discuss it in some detail, always bearing in mind how it relates to the exhibition as a whole.

As with the last assignment, please be careful in quoting and paraphrasing statements from the readings. There is a zero-tolerance policy for plagiarism in this course. You are expected to footnote all direct quotations as well as any time you draw on ideas or information from outside your own personal experience (Chicago Manual of Style or MLA, either is fine).

Please proofread all papers before submitting them. Papers are submitted to the course Blackboard Site, and can be uploaded at any time the week before the assignment due date, but should be submitted by 2:00 pm on that day (thereafter they will be marked as late). Grading will be based on (1) effective use of English including spelling, grammar, organization, and clarity of expression, and (2) content, including your choice of topics and use of supporting detail.

Good luck!