Market Analysis for Intuit: The Center for Intuitive and Outsider Art in Chicago, Illinois

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Museum Profile

Founded in 1991, Intuit: The Center for Intuitive and Outsider Art is dedicated to showcasing outsider art, a genre typified by self-taught or under-represented artists often

working in non-traditional mediums. Their mission as stated on their website is to "celebrate the power of outside art," or art that is not influenced by mainstream trends and is instead more reflective of the artist's true nature. This also includes sub-genres such as art brut and non-traditional folk art. Outsider art is defined by Encyclopedia Britannica as "any work of art produced by an untrained



Minnie Evans (American, 1892-1987). *Angels and Demons*, 1975. Oil on canvas board, $17 \times 19 \frac{1}{2}$ in (frame), 11×14 in (sheet). Intuit: The Center for Intuitive and Outsider Art, gift of Susann Craig, 2002.1

idiosyncratic artist who is typically unconnected to the conventional art world—not by choice but by circumstance." Many outsider artists are mentally ill or disabled.

The permanent collection at Intuit was created in 2002 and currently holds 1142 pieces; however the most recent accession number is from 2014, suggesting their collection may actually be larger than is reported if their on-line catalog has not been updated in the past five years. Mediums represented are paintings, works on paper, sculpture, and photography. All items in the permanent collection are examples of work by outsider artists, defined by Intuit as either having no formal training or as working without the influence of mainstream art. Artists represented in the collection are from around the world, as well as throughout the United States. The vast

¹ INTUIT. Intuit: The Center for Intuitive and Outsider Art. Accessed July 10, 2019. https://www.art.org/.

² Rhodes, Colin. "Encyclopædia Britannica." In Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., August 2, 2013. https://www.britannica.com/art/outsider-art.





Interior and Exterior views of Intuit, posted March 2018. Source: Voyage Chicago

majority of the pieces are undated, but those that are dated are almost entirely from the latter half of the 20th century, with just a handful having been produced after the turn of the millennium and just two individual pieces from ca. 1880–90. The museum has also recreated the home and studio of Henry Darger, a well-respected outsider artist, which is on permanent display.

The museum, as it celebrates the outsiders of the art world, is also poised to empower other kinds of outsiders. They have many initiatives in place to facilitate participation by marginalized groups, such as

late operational hours for people who work during the day, discounted admission for beneficiaries of EBT benefits, and extensive programming for teenagers and children. Their regular admission fee of \$5 for adults—children under 18 are free—is also very reasonable, especially compared to the steep prices at other more mainstream art museums.

The museum is located in the River

West neighborhood of Chicago, Illinois, just to
the north of "The Loop" and due west of the

"Magnificent Mile" on the western bank of the
Chicago River's North Branch. It is mere blocks
from I-90's Southbound Exit 50A and



Map view of Chicago, IL., showing location of Intuit. Source: maps.google.com

Northbound Exit 49B. In fiscal year 2016 they reported a total revenue of \$674,965, with a budget surplus of \$183,176.³

Brand Audit

As the name implies, Intuit is a destination for visitors to see artworks from genres not typically embraced in the art world. In keeping with their mission statement, the museum presents the artwork without much imposed narrative, allowing the viewer to draw their own conclusions about the artist and their story.

The focus of the museum on its various on-line presences is its art; the website is entirely black and white except for the artwork, accentuating that the art is all that neds to speak for itself. Even the website's address is minimalist: www.art.org. Such a simple web address suggests two things; one, that the focus of the website, as a tool of the institution, is on art and only art, and two, that the museum was an early adopter of the internet and therefore has a history of embracing innovative ideas and technology. A WHOIS search reveals that Intuit registered their domain nearly seven months before Internet Explorer was even released by Microsoft, which explains how they managed to register such a simple domain name before anyone else.⁴

The website also emphasizes their concern about inclusivity. Under their mission statement is an "Inclusion Statement," which reads in part:

³ Tigas, Mike, Sisi Wei, Ken Schwencke, and Alec Glassford. "Intuit The Center For Intuitive And Outside Art - Nonprofit Explorer." ProPublica, May 9, 2013.

https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/363772452.

⁴ ICANN WHOIS. Accessed July 10, 2019. https://whois.icann.org/en. Search for art.org, aljira.org, et al.

[W]e invite everyone through our doors to enjoy artwork whose creation embodies our collective search for what it means to be human, overcoming boundaries based on religion, race, ethnic origin, gender, socioeconomic status, orientation, and physical or mental ability.⁵

Under "Directions & Hours," the museum not only lists hours they are open but specifies when they are busiest or quietest, catering not only to families with children but also to individuals with sensory processing disorders, such as those on the autism spectrum. Directions are given from public transportation or driving, facilitating visitation by people who do not own their own vehicles. When posting visitor photos on social media platforms, the museum seems to consciously choose images depicting people of color and females, accentuating their goal of inclusivity. It is worth noting, however, that images of people are few and far between; the majority of their social media content is images of artwork on display or in the collection, affirming their brand of being art-focused and mirroring the layout of their website.

The physical museum space is designed to act like a typical art museum, even though Intuit is embracing outsider art and positioning itself as an institution outside of the mainstream. Pieces are displayed on walls and pedestals in a fashion similar to that seen in museums exhibiting traditional art. This is likely an attempt by Intuit to increase the perceived value of outsider art by treating it the way other museums would treat masterpieces by Picasso or Monet. By purposefully designing the gallery to look and feel like any other, they are putting the works of outsider artists on the same level as those of established artists.

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⁵ INTUIT. "History and Mission" Intuit: The Center for Intuitive and Outsider Art. Accessed July 10, 2019. https://www.art.org/history-and-mission.

Visitors overall seem to have a positive reaction when visiting the museum; One visitor posting on Facebook described it as "art from the bare bone... not from academia but from the heart and the soul." Another said, "the staff is very friendly and it's an inviting atmosphere," agreeing with numerous other people who mentioned the friendliness and approachability of the staff. One person was even able to visit the museum when it was closed after running into a staff member outside, supposedly. Many visitors who comment remark on the art specifically and how it made them feel. No negative comments were available on Facebook, only a handful of 3-star reviews with no attached comments. The museum, then, is doing a good job at ensuring visitors feel welcome, and at allowing the art to illicit emotion on its own. They are striving to be a non-mainstream and non-academic space, which visitors to the physical museum seem to pick up on as well.

The City of Chicago: Profile

The city of Chicago was first settled in 1779, though was not officially incorporated until 1837. It holds a strategic location where the Chicago River meets

Lake Michigan, and thus is an important port. The Chicago River system allows Lake Michigan and the other Great Lakes to connect to the Mississippi River, allowing



Map of Chicago with city limits. Source: PolicyMap

commercial shipping to occur across the continental U.S. between the Great Lakes and the Gulf

of Mexico. Its location is therefore highly strategic, as it is at the exact crossroads of shipping waterways from the Atlantic to the Mississippi River, and land routes, including railways, to the Pacific coast. The surrounding area is also a hub of production and agriculture, providing a steady flow of products to be transported via these various routes.

The ethnic makeup of Chicago is diverse, 49%—less than half—of the city's residents identifying as white. Geographically, the neighborhoods with the highest percentage of white residents are at the very edges of the city, near the northeastern corner along the shore of Lake Michigan. There is a strong concentration of Hispanic people between I-90 and I-290, as well as surrounding I-55. The southern portion of the city has a significant percentage—more than 30%—of residents identifying as black. The surrounding areas outside the city are predominantly white.

The largest category of employment is the Health Care and Social Assistance Industry, at 13% of people employed, followed by the Educational Service Industry with 9%. Less than 1% of people work in the Management of Businesses or in Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, or Hunting. The largest employer in Chicago is the U.S. government, followed by Chicago Public Schools and the City of Chicago. The largest NGO employer is Northwestern Memorial Healthcare. Other notable companies are the University of Chicago, the seventh largest employer; United Continental Holdings, the ninth largest; and Amazon.com Inc., the tenth.

Chicago struggles with violence and financial deficits. The 2016 rate of violent crime was 1,109 per 100,000 people, compared to only 398 for the entire United States and 554 in the city of Los Angeles. The city is also running a massive budgetary deficit. The estimated taxpayer burden for residents of Chicago is \$36,000 each, a number that climbs to \$68,310 when county

and individual city government units are included, such as the Chicago Transit Authority and Metro Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago.⁶



View of Chicago skyline from Lake Michigan. Source: Chicago Big Bus Tours

The City of Chicago: Brand Audit

William Shatner's distinctive voice describes Chicago as the place for "dreamers and doers" in the city's failed bid to become the new home of Amazon's HQ2. The YouTube video shared by the mayor's office, and presumably sent to Amazon officials, describes a city that is all about reinvention, at the forefront of new technology with an indomitable spirit that can't be brought down, using the story of the Great Chicago Fire to illustrate the city's resilience. The choice to use William Shatner in marketing materials is an interesting one; his voice is iconic, powerful, and associated with innovation—going where no man has gone before—but, he is not from Chicago, or even the United States. If the goal was to convince Amazon that everything

⁶ Truth in Accounting. "Taxpayers on the Hook." Truth in Accounting, Chicago, May 2019. https://www.truthinaccounting.org/library/doclib/City-Combined-Taxpayer-Burden-Report.pdf. PDF

about Chicago is great, it may have made more sense to use a person who was actually from or connected to the city. Plenty of Chicagoans—including Tina Fey, Steve Carrell, or Harrison Ford—have their own distinctive and highly recognizable voice.

The Great Chicago Fire, for as catastrophic an event as it was, does not show up in marketing materials as often as would be expected. It is possibly referenced in the city's nickname, The Second City, perhaps because it was rebuilt, but other than that and an Amazon pitch it is not heavily referenced. Chicago is hardly the only American city to have burned down, and seeing as how it occurred over 100 years ago, it makes sense that they don't accentuate this part of their history too much. The city still maintains its image of resilience, though, and of hard work through adversity; another of its nicknames is "The City that Works."

Another trend seen in marketing materials is the depiction of Chicago as a "home." The official tourism site, choosechicago.com, uses the slogan "Welcome Home" to encourage visitors, and elsewhere on the site describes Chicago as feeling like home because it has a little bit of everything for everyone. It also suggests an attempt to woo visitors from surrounding areas more so than further away; it stands to reason that someone will feel at home in a place similar to their actual home. Chicago can be described as far more similar culturally to surrounding Midwest communities than Rome or New England. This focus on home also accentuates the positive aspects of Chicago's image, counteracting some of the negative associations people may have with the city.

Chicago definitely struggles with perception of safety, no surprise given its sky-high rates of violent crime. The city's official website, intended for residents more than visitors, has

multiple references to safety
and guides to avoid trouble,
but the official tourism site
does not address the matter. It
makes sense that the city
would not want to accentuate
such a problem in front of
visitors who are less familiar



Promotional image for television show "Chicago PD." Source: NBC Chicago

with daily life in Chicago, but where it is enough of a concern that *U.S.A. Today*⁷ and TripAdvisor⁸ are discussing it, it may be in Chicago's best interest to take control of the conversation. Chicago's "earned" media often depicts a dangerous city to visit, through media reports on crime rates, dramatic television programs glorifying the daily struggle law enforcement and firefighters wage in the city, and politicized issues debated on public stage. To counteract the earned media, Chicago ought to be putting forth more of its "owned" media that addresses the problem but offers reassurance that many areas of the city are in fact safe, as well as demonstrate what measures are being taken to realistically improve safety in the city for visitors and residents alike. Like the tagline in the image above, solving the city's crime problem is only half the battle. The other half is solving the problem of outsider perception.

⁷ Tingley, Judith. "What Are the Safe Areas to Stay in Chicago?" *USA Today*. May 7, 2018. https://traveltips.usatoday.com/safe-areas-stay-chicago-36189.html.

⁸ User: E1821EZvanessag. "Is Downtown Chicago Safe? - Chicago Forum." TripAdvisor, February 9, 2016. https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowTopic-g35805-i32-k9250734-ls_Downtown_Chicago_safe-Chicago_Illinois.html.

Target Audience: Locals aged 50-65

Approximately 19% of people living in America are between the ages of 50–64, which is comparable to the percentage of people between those ages living in Chicago—16%. Within the immediate locality of the museum, 11% of the population falls within this range, significantly lower than the either the national or city densities. Across the United States, approximately 81% of people between the ages of 45–64 are white, with 12% being African American and 5% being Asian. In Chicago, the distribution is much more diverse, with 35% white, 35% black or African American, and 6% Asian. Geographically, there are strong concentrations of people in this age

Maps showing the population density of people aged 45–54 and 54–65, respectively, in the Greater Chicago area. Source: SimplyAnalytics

range in the extreme northern and southern portions of the city. The suburbs to the west also show significantly higher percentages of residents in this age range, as well as to the north and east along the shores of Lake Michigan, suggesting a desire to live away from the hustle of the city.

There is also a significant wealth divide among those aged 44–65 in Chicago.

Along the southern and western portions of the city, significant percentages of householders earned less than \$25,000 per

⁹ Race and Ethnicity in Chicago, Illinois (City)." The Demographic Statistical Atlas of the United States. Statistical Atlas. Accessed July 31, 2019. https://statisticalatlas.com/place/Illinois/Chicago/Race-and-Ethnicity#figure/relative-ethno-racial-composition-by-age.

year, while a comparable percentage of householders of the same age in the northeast, near the museum, earned more than \$100,000.

People in this age demographic tend to be childless or empty-nesters, giving them more free time to engage in activities for their own benefit and possibly leaving them yearning for additional social contact or a new sense of self after such a drastic life change. They may be approaching



Individuals in this age bracket are seeking social fulfillment and ways to give back to their communities by donating time or resources.

Source: Giving in Retirement: America's Longevity Bonus

retirement, if they haven't retired already, and are thinking about what they are going to do next. For the wealthy sub-section of this market, this may mean looking for charitable pursuits. Those who are less well-off are not as likely to be looking for ways to donate, but they may be looking for inexpensive leisure that still provides them with social fulfillment. Women in this age range are particularly interested in giving, both their money and their time. Studies have shown that the average number of people who donate to charity increases drastically between the ages of 55–64, while the average amount they donate increases between the ages of 45–54. The average hours of volunteer time given by the those aged 55–64 is nearly double that of the 35–44 age bracket. 11

¹⁰ Morgan, Nigel, Annette Pritchard, and Diane Sedgley. "Social Tourism and Well-Being in Later Life." Annals of Tourism Research 52 (May 2015): 1–15. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2015.02.015.

¹¹ "Giving in Retirement: America's Longevity Bonus," 2015. Merrill Lynch. http://agewave.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/2015-ML-AW-Giving-in-Retirement_Americas-Longevity-Bonus.pdf, accessed July 31, 2019.

Recommendations: Locals aged 50–65

The founders of Intuit, in 1991, would have fit perfectly into the demographic of near-retirees with disposable income. This submarket continues to be an excellent source for the museum to seek out support, whether in the form of large donations and financial support or by participation in management of the museum on various boards or committees. This segment wants to support their community as well as be socially engaged. Intuit could host fundraising events such as socials or galas in order to invite these people into the space and then encourage them to share their resources.

For those living on a limited income, it may be wise to offer financial assistance to encourage their visitation to the museum; this need not only be free or reduced admission, but may include help with transportation, events held closer to their neighborhoods, or organized excursions to the museum in cooperation with other organizations offering aid to those communities. The opportunity to volunteer may also be one for this submarket to pursue, as it would give them an inexpensive way to feel they are contributing to the community, giving them purpose while also benefitting the museum. Poor people in this age range may find themselves particularly marginalized from the rest of society, so Intuit's mission to elevate the outsiders and be as inclusive as possible could be incredibly appealing and empowering for this demographic.

Target Audience: Tourists aged 25-40

The age group of people between 24-39 make up 20% of the population of the United States and are particularly concentrated in the southern and western parts of the country, as well as a small pocket near the Great Lakes. They are very engaged with technology; museums have

had success in implementing programs that encourage the use of smartphones and other devices to enhance the experience. One segment, identified by PRIZM as "Up-and-Comers," are known to visit Chicago. They are highly



Well-educated individuals in this age group may seek out intellectually invigorating experiences when travelling. Source: Pixabay

educated, but also mobile, usually renting instead of owning a home. This allows them to move freely about to follow opportunities. Another segment PRIZM identifies as being apt to visit Chicago is the group known as "Striving Selfies," who are not as affluent as the Up-And-Comers but similarly have embraced new technology and pursued higher education. These two groups likely view Chicago as a place to experience something new while still within the relative safety of familiar technology. They may also be seeking out a place to visit that challenges them intellectually: 38% of Chicagoans have at least a Bachelor's degree or higher level of education, compared to only 31% for the United States as a whole, 24% in Milwaukee and South Bend, 14% in Detroit, and 16% in Cleveland. Among Midwestern cities, and especially those bordering the Great Lakes, Chicago is the most academic, and therefore more likely to be intellectually stimulating to visitors with higher degrees of education.

¹² Hughes, Karen, and Gianna Moscardo. "Connecting with New Audiences: Exploring the Impact of Mobile Communication Devices on the Experiences of Young Adults in Museums." Visitor Studies 20, no. 1 (2017): 33–55. https://doi.org/10.1080/10645578.2017.1297128.

Recommendations for Tourists aged 25-40

The Intuit Center for Intuitive and Outsider Art can capitalize on Chicago's image and feel of a home away from home to encourage tourists to expand their horizons by viewing non-mainstream art. The perceived similarities in life experiences combined with Chicago's location in the friendly Midwest make the city a destination that is familiar enough to be comfortable, maybe even feeling like home, while still offering a different enough experience to be exciting. Amid this familiarity, visitors may be more willing to seek out "outsider" experiences. Instead of having to grapple with adjusting to unfamiliar culture the entire duration of their stay, they may feel more emboldened to seek out experiences within the city to challenge their comfort zone.

Additionally, the museum can provide programming focused on education and higher-level learning. Gallery talks with artists, curators, or guest-lecturers would be appreciated by this demographic. They should be given the opportunity to discuss the artwork in-depth, and to engage with it in an academic manner that challenges them intellectually.

This age group is also highly connected on-line; this can be leveraged in order to grow the same audience further. If visitors in this age range are encouraged to share their experience at Intuit on-line, it can encourage their peers to make the trip as well. ¹³ Providing structured ways for them to use their mobile devices or social media accounts can encourage this behavior. Not only will this feed into future audiences, but it has the potential to improve the immediate visit by supporting a more immersive experience supplemented by additional knowledge and information available through mobile devices. The deep connections these visitors can make

¹³ Kotler, Philip et al. "The Paradoxes of Marketing to Connected Customers." Chapter 2 in Marketing 4.0: Moving from Traditional to Digital, 17-28. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons, 2017. https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/gwu/detail.action?docID=4785177.

between themselves, the art, and their on-line peers can be powerful tools to expand audience and further Intuit's mission.

Conclusions

Intuit is unique among museums in Chicago, and even among museums throughout the United States. While this can be leveraged to encourage certain kinds of visitors, the museum can also benefit from the feeling of familiarity exuded by the City of Chicago. The two target audiences of *Locals aged 50–65* and *Tourists aged 25–40* are well-suited for the museum to pursue not only for visitorship, but for donations, revenue, and volunteer hours owing to the former's desire to be active participants in the community and the latter's interest in intellectual pursuits. Overall, the museum has a consistent brand and shows real commitment to their mission to be an inclusive institution.

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