

# FACILITATING CHILDREN'S ARTISTIC IDENTITY: SERVICE DESIGN FOR CHILDREN'S EXHIBITION PARTICIPATION EXPERIENCES

Hannah KANG<sup>1</sup>, Yong-Ki LEE<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Dongseo University, South Korea

## ABSTRACT

This study examines how service-design-driven facilitation fosters children's artistic identity in an exhibition context. We analyze the "Little Artists' Exhibition" at the 2nd Root Festival in Jincheon, South Korea, where the researcher acted as facilitator–designer to orchestrate the end-to-end process. A hybrid journey–blueprint orchestration (managed in Notion) linked frontstage experience and backstage operations in real time, enabling timely feedback, scheduling, and role coordination. In response to parents' questions about originals, all works were printed and exhibited as A1 digital panels, reducing travel and handling burdens while ensuring consistent visual quality. Symbolic cues (artist name tags, red hats, and personalized memorabilia) made recognition visible and socially legible. Mixed-methods data were collected from seven child–parents pairs through smiley-scale child surveys, parent surveys, online interviews, and field observations. Identity-related items were high (Q5, Q8, Q9:  $M = 4.62 / 5$ ), most items were  $\geq 4.0$ , and qualitative evidence showed embodied recognition (posture shifts, smiles, repeated glances at panels). Variability in self-explanation (Q2) motivated the "Light Docent" model (short, voluntary introductions ( $\approx 1\text{--}3$  minutes) that provide adaptive scaffolding for public authorship). Findings offer two contributions for service design: (1) a practicable method of hybrid process orchestration that translates journey/blueprint logics into real-time facilitation control, and (2) an adaptive facilitation pattern (Light Docent) that respects heterogeneous confidence while nurturing authorship. Limitations include a single-site case and potential facilitator–researcher bias; future work should test comparative settings and modest inferential analyses to examine relationships among symbolic cues, orchestration decisions, and identity outcomes.

*Keywords: Children's Participation, Artistic Identity, Exhibition Experience, Service Design, Facilitation*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Service design provides a systemic, relational frame that aligns frontstage and backstage activities to enable inclusive, co-created experiences [1], [2]. Within this frame, facilitation is a core practice that integrates communication, structure, and symbolic cues to foster participation and emotional connection, particularly in cultural and educational contexts, museum pedagogy highlights how curated experiences can scaffold learning and meaning-making for diverse audiences [3]. Recent scholarship reframes the designer as a facilitator–service designer who orchestrates timing, turn-taking, and meaning-making across stakeholders so that participants feel safe, seen, and empowered to contribute [2]. Yet the specific role of service-design-driven facilitation in children's exhibitions, especially how it supports artistic identity and creative agency, remains underexplored.

Traditional children's exhibitions often emphasize instructional outcomes or discrete activities, positioning children as passive observers or tightly guided participants [4], [5]. Such approaches lack systemic supports for sustained agency (structured opportunities for reflection, dialogue, and authorship) so momentary participation rarely becomes durable identity formation. Prior work in participatory design highlights voice and choice, but it leaves open how intentional facilitation, when grounded in service design, bridges the gap between taking part and becoming an artist. A promising route involves symbolic design elements like artist name tags, red hats, and personalized memorabilia that act as tangible social cues of recognition and belonging; however, symbolism is frequently ad hoc unless

embedded in a coherent service-design structure and aligned with roles, sequences, and backstage supports [6], [7].

Addressing this gap requires clarifying the systemic role of the facilitator–service designer and the tools that make this role actionable. In practice, facilitation aligns stakeholder mapping (relationships/responsibilities), journey mapping (emotional and cognitive transitions), and service blueprinting (synchronizing frontstage interactions with backstage supports). Inclusive process design, digital artwork submissions, iterative feedback cycles, and flexible scheduling, provides operational scaffolding for diverse capacities and contexts, while culturally resonant symbolic artifacts validate children’s identities and foster pride and belonging. Together, these elements balance operational coordination with emotional scaffolding to convert participation into recognition and authorship.

This paper examines the Little Artists’ Exhibition at the 2nd Root Festival (Jincheon, South Korea, 2025), independently designed and facilitated by the researcher under the “Future Farming Village” theme. The project implemented a service-design-driven facilitation framework encompassing participant recruitment, phased reviews of work-in-progress, adaptable digital submissions, and symbolic interventions supporting voluntary and authentic self-expression. Children’s artistic identity and engagement were evaluated through qualitative observations, smiley-scale surveys, and parental interviews. Building on these insights, the paper proposes a systemic facilitation framework that integrates symbolic, structural, and emotional dimensions, clarifying how service design and facilitation jointly support identity formation and offers practice-ready strategies for curators, educators, and designers.

## **2 BACKGROUND**

Service design and facilitation together create structured yet flexible conditions for meaningful participation, emphasizing empathy, agency, and co-creation rather than mere efficiency. In child-centered exhibition contexts, recognizing children as artists, through professional curation, public display, and reflective creative experiences, strengthens their artistic identity and creative confidence.

### **2.1 Service Design and Facilitation**

Service design structures interactions, roles, and touchpoints across networks of stakeholders to co-create value and meaningful experiences. It extends design thinking from artifact creation to systemic and relational organization, enabling participation to become a process of collaboration rather than consumption. As service design has evolved, it has increasingly been discussed within the context of social innovation, promoting empathy, dialogue, and sustainable cooperation across institutional boundaries. Scholars emphasize that service design’s true potential lies not only in improving services but in shaping social systems that cultivate inclusivity, care, and collective authorship.

Within this paradigm, facilitation emerges as a design competence that operationalizes these intentions into practice [8], [9]. Facilitation integrates empathy, coordination, and timing, aligning the emotional climate of collaboration with its procedural structure. This process has been described as orchestration, where the facilitator designs not only actions and sequences but also atmospheres of trust, rhythm, and engagement. Facilitation in service design therefore transcends managerial efficiency as it becomes emotional design in motion, shaping how people experience and internalize participation. As both facilitator and designer, the researcher perceives facilitation as translating systemic intentions into lived emotional experiences where participation, recognition, and co-creation coexist as one process.

### **2.2 Children’s Participation and Artistic Identity**

In cultural and educational design research, children’s participation has long been understood as a continuum from passive involvement to active authorship. Meaningful participation requires voice, agency, and shared decision-making [10], [11]. Yet, in many cultural programs and exhibitions, children remain positioned as learners or assistants (participants rather than creators) [12]. This limited framing overlooks the deeper psychological and social processes through which identity and authorship develop. Artistic identity in childhood is not merely the product of creative activity but of recognition and reflection within a social context. It is shaped through cycles of creation, feedback, and affirmation [13], [14]. Where children’s sense of self as artists becomes legitimized by the reactions of peers, caregivers, and audiences. Identity formation in art education occurs through dialogue and acknowledgment, transforming art-making into self-narration. In this sense, facilitation serves as a mediating mechanism that connects symbolic expression with emotional validation. When facilitation incorporates symbolic

design elements such as artist name tag, distinctive attire, or personalized memorabilia, it offers children tangible evidence of authorship. These symbolic cues act as emotional triggers that affirm belonging, bridging the social environment with children's creative confidence.

From a service design perspective, such interventions are not peripheral embellishments but part of the designed service experience. They materialize recognition, turning abstract concepts like agency or pride into embodied experiences. In practice, the facilitator's role involves designing both the emotional atmosphere and the symbolic markers that sustain engagement, transforming the exhibition from a display of outcomes into a participatory system of meaning-making.

### **2.3 Research Gap and Conceptual Framing**

Existing museum-program literature [8], [9] often treats participation as a pedagogical or behavioral outcome, commonly operationalized through engagement, enjoyment, or learning performance. Meanwhile, studies in service design often conceptualize facilitation as operational coordination, focusing on processes rather than the emotional or symbolic dimensions that contribute to identity formation. As a result, few empirical works have integrated these perspectives to explain how facilitation, grounded in service design principles, can transform participation into authorship through structural and symbolic coherence.

This research addresses that gap by framing facilitation as an integrative design mechanism that combines structural, emotional, and symbolic dimensions. Structurally, facilitation employs design tools that align systems and human experience. The Hybrid Journey Blueprint is used to visualize temporal sequences and backstage coordination, ensuring that logistical design and emotional flow progress together. Emotionally, facilitation functions as affective orchestration, managing tone, empathy, and recognition to sustain trust and inclusion. Symbolically, it manifests recognition through designed cues, translating participation into lived expressions of authorship.

Furthermore, this framework situates the facilitator–designer as a reflective practitioner who continuously negotiates their position between organization and empathy. The facilitator's awareness of timing, tone, and power balance becomes central to sustaining equitable participation. The study thus views facilitation not as a neutral function but as an intentional design of relationships, emotions, and meaning. By merging service design's structural tools with facilitation's emotional sensitivity, this research proposes an actionable model for cultivating children's artistic identity and agency in exhibition contexts.

## **3 METHODOLOGY**

The Little Artists' Exhibition was organized as one of the official exhibition programs within the 2nd Root Festival, held in Jincheon, South Korea (September 27–28, 2025), alongside other local events such as performances and a community flea market. The festival organizers predetermined the theme “My Imagination of the Future Farming Village” and provided the venue and schedule, while the researcher, acting as facilitator–service designer, was granted full autonomy over planning, participant experience, and operational management. This autonomy transformed the project from a conventional art display into a practice-based exploration of how service design can structure participation and inclusivity in real cultural settings.

The exhibition was held in the Book Lounge at Root Square, an open community space that encouraged spontaneous interaction between children's artworks and visitors. It adopted a hybrid structure combining static exhibition and participatory activity, allowing children to explain their works and creative ideas autonomously to family members or visitors. Visitors were guided to perceive the exhibition as a site of cultural collaboration rather than an educational program. At the end of the exhibition, they were invited to draw or write their impressions of the “future farming village” on postcards and attach them to a collective wall display, transforming the space into an expanding participatory installation. All participating children were accompanied by their parents, and written consent for participation and data collection was obtained from parents prior to the exhibition.

A formal docent program was alternately operated by the facilitator (researcher) and two part-time assistants on-site. A post-event survey also explored children's willingness to act as docents in future exhibitions, revealing diverse preferences that are discussed in Section 5.

The facilitation aimed not only to manage logistics but to intentionally create a social environment in which children could be recognized as artists and exercise creative agency within a public cultural context. Participants were divided into two main groups—artists (children and parents) and visitors

(festival attendees and guests). Spatial and experiential design emphasized children's authorship, allowing them to be perceived as creators rather than students, reframing the exhibition as a shared cultural experience grounded in authorship, belonging, and collaborative creativity.

### **3.1 Hybrid Process Orchestration**

This study operated a text-first, Notion-based hybrid process orchestration that explicitly integrates journey mapping (temporal flow) and service blueprinting (front/backstage roles and resources) into a single, real-time operational frame. Facilitation was designed to be both structured and adaptive in line with service design principles and was continuously governed within the shared workspace. The end-to-end process followed a nine-phase iterative structure: (1) host coordination, (2) program planning, (3) recruitment, (4) orientation, (5) creation, (6) two rounds of formative feedback, (7) final submission, (8) installation and operation, and (9) post-event reflection. Except for the installation and operation days, all communication and feedback were conducted online to secure cross-regional accessibility and sustain participation.

Within this orchestration, the journey's temporal logic and the blueprint's system coordination were used jointly to time and tune interactions. The facilitator monitored participants' behavioral cues and affective states in real time and adjusted feedback timing, communication modes, and engagement levers accordingly. By linking frontstage activities (visitor experience, exhibition layout, spatial flow) with backstage activities (digital submission, scheduling, production tracking), the framework preserved coherence between operational precision and empathetic tone. Symbolic interventions such as artist name tags, red hats, and personalized memorabilia, were mapped to an affect curve so that a sense of achievement accumulated across the trajectory rather than peaking only at the event.

In response to parents' questions about handling original artworks, the process was reconfigured so that all pieces were printed and exhibited as A1 digital panels rather than transported as physical originals. This change reduced travel and handling burdens for participants outside Jincheon while ensuring consistent visual quality across the show. The shared Notion workspace enabled real-time co-editing with the host team, accelerated decisions through comment threads and tagging, and supported the rapid production of supplementary promotional materials based on up-to-date progress.

In effect, hybrid process orchestration functioned as an adaptive facilitation interface that translated the systematic principles of service design into actionable practice. It provided a concrete execution structure that balanced planning precision, human empathy, and inclusive participation across the entire exhibition journey.

### **3.2 Participants and Recruitment**

A total of seven child-parent pairs participated. Children were 7–13 years old and enrolled in Korean primary schools. Recruitment took place August 18–29, 2025, through local community outreach and social media. Applicants submitted photographs of prior artworks and were selected via purposive sampling, emphasizing voluntary participation and accessibility rather than competition. Facilitation activities spanned August 13–September 30, 2025, covering planning, recruitment, creative work, exhibition, and post-event reflection.

The participant group included four girls and three boys—six lower-grade students (grades 1–3) and one upper-grade student (grade 5). All children completed their artworks; however, one child could not attend the exhibition due to illness. This participant completed a modified survey focused on expectation rather than satisfaction, which was analyzed separately. Ethical participation followed a two-step consent process: initial consent embedded in voluntary registration, and post-event written confirmation via text message for academic data use. Participants and parents were informed that they could withdraw at any time, ensuring autonomy and transparency. The facilitator maintained minimal intervention to protect creative autonomy, while balancing highly expressive and more reserved participants through reflective facilitation.

### **3.3 Data Collection**

Data were collected within three days after the exhibition through a mixed-format survey, semi-structured online text interviews, and field observations conducted during installation and throughout the exhibition. Children completed nine items using a five-point smiley Likert scale (1 = very unhappy, 2 = somewhat unhappy, 3 = neutral/unsure, 4 = somewhat happy, 5 = very happy) administered by their parents. The items assessed exhibition happiness, willingness to self-explain, interest in the docent's

explanation, curiosity about peers' works, perceived artistic identity, topic curiosity, intention to participate again, and the effects of symbolic cues (artist name tags and red hats) and souvenirs (e.g., keyring, postcard, or sticker).

Parents completed seventeen items in total, comprising fourteen five-point Likert items and three open-ended questions. The Likert items covered four domains: (D) observed child behaviors during the exhibition (6 items: pride, intent to self-explain, engagement with the docent's explanation, interest/learning from peers' works, felt recognition as an artist, curiosity about the "Future Farming Village" theme); (E) parent experience (3 items: clarity of guidance, procedures, and flow; perceived stability and trust in facilitation; appropriateness of wait/participation time); (F) component evaluation (2 items: contribution of artist name tags and red hats to immersion; effect of souvenirs on pride and intention to re-participate); and (G) overall satisfaction and intentions (3 items: overall satisfaction, willingness to participate again, recommendation to others). Section (H) included three open-ended prompts (most effective element, one improvement, best moment) plus an optional free-comment field. Sections (A) and (B) collected privacy and consent information for academic use and were not analyzed.

### 3.4 Data Overview and Analysis

Data analysis integrated descriptive, thematic, and observational perspectives to capture both the measurable outcomes and the lived emotional dynamics of the exhibition. Survey data summarized overall satisfaction, engagement, and symbolic recognition trends, while qualitative interviews and field observations illuminated the subtler processes of recognition and identity formation.

*Table 1. Individual Responses of Seven Children (5-Point Smiley Likert Scale)*

| Question  | A | B | C | D | E | F | G | Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|------|
| I felt happy to see my artwork displayed.                       | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5.00 |
| I wanted to explain my artwork myself.                          | 5 | 5 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 3.14 |
| The docent's explanation was interesting.                       | 5 | 3 | 5 | 2 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 4.14 |
| Other children's artworks were interesting.                     | 5 | 5 | 5 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4.14 |
| I felt like a real artist today.                                | 5 | 5 | 5 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 4.71 |
| I became more curious about the "Future Farming Village" theme. | 4 | 5 | 4 | 1 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 4.00 |
| I would like to participate again.                              | 5 | 5 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 4.00 |
| The artist name tag and hat made me happy.                      | 5 | 5 | 5 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 4.71 |
| I liked the souvenirs (keyring / postcard / sticker).           | 5 | 5 | 5 | 2 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 4.43 |

Note: Responses = 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Mean artistic-identity items (Q5, Q8, Q9) = 4.62 / 5. A–F attended; G† completed only the preparatory process (non-attending participant). Interview and field observation data were analyzed using Thematic Analysis, identifying recurring emotional and behavioral patterns. Four central themes emerged, supplemented by on-site observations that validated children's non-verbal expressions of pride and confidence. The four themes from the Thematic Analysis are summarized in Table 2.

*Table 2. Thematic Analysis: Core Themes, Observations/Quotes, and Interpretations*

| No. | Theme                    | Observation / Quote  | Interpretation  |
|-----|--------------------------|--|---|
| 1   | Pride and Recognition    | A child adjusted her red hat before standing in front of her panel; several smiled when being addressed as "artist." | Symbolic cues visibly triggered recognition and pride.                        |
| 2   | Confidence and Belonging | Children waited for their turn to show their work to family members, often guiding them around their panels.         | Exhibition space facilitated authorship and familial recognition.             |
| 3   | Engagement and Enjoyment | Some children repeatedly visited the display area, pointing to their names and showing excitement.                   | Physical visibility (A1 digital panels) enhanced engagement.                  |
| 4   | Reflective Willingness   | Reserved children hesitated to talk about their art, quietly observing peers who explained theirs.                   | Variation in expressive confidence suggested staged readiness for authorship. |

Quantitatively, identity-related items were high ( $M \approx 4.62$ ) and most items were  $\geq 4.0$ , indicating positive experiences overall. Qualitatively, micro-interactions (posture shifts, smiles, repeated glances at personal panels) captured moments of embodied recognition. Together, these data suggest that facilitation fostered emotional resonance and social validation through symbolic design and environmental structure. At the same time, differences in self-expression call for future, adaptive facilitation that provides gradual scaffolding for public authorship and docent-style participation. All data were anonymized prior to analysis, and the researcher maintained reflexive awareness to minimize interpretive bias.

## 4 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

As discussed in Section 3, identity-related items (Q5, Q8, Q9) remained high ( $M = 4.62/5$ ) despite variability in self-explanation (Q2). As shown in Figure 1, a brief facilitation step encouraged children to introduce their artworks, enabling recognition as artists and the sharing of creative intentions with visitors.



Figure 1. A child artist explaining their artwork to family members during the exhibition.

### 4.1 Symbolic Recognition

Symbolic elements, name tags, artist hats, and being addressed as “artist,” served as social cues reframing children’s self-perception. These tangible signals enhanced pride and prolonged emotional engagement, as evidenced when children wore the artist hat to school or shared their artwork keyrings with teachers.

Parents also mentioned that such visible markers helped others (teachers, relatives, and peers) acknowledge the children’s efforts, further reinforcing the value of recognition in shaping identity. Symbolic facilitation extended the exhibition’s emotional impact beyond the event itself. Sustained engagement can also be explained by interactive and sensory-rich design approaches, where tangible and playful elements enhance emotional connection and learning [10], [11], [12]. Open and participatory exhibition formats have been shown to deepen children’s involvement and create memorable experiences that continue beyond the event. This observation highlights the role of symbolic cues in sustaining recognition and emotional continuity throughout and beyond the exhibition. Symbolic items such as name tags, artist hats, and souvenirs functioned as emotional mediators that reinforced recognition and pride among participants and parents.

### 4.2 Facilitation as Structural and Emotional Support

Pre-event meetings, clear task division, and rotation ensured a balance between stability and openness. Parents perceived the facilitator as reliable and considerate, indicating that structured communication and emotional scaffolding supported a sense of safety and recognition [8], [9], [13], [14]. The facilitator’s presence also provided reassurance during transitions helping children move smoothly between preparation, presentation, and reflection.

Emotional and relational aspects of facilitation also played an essential role, as the process required balancing structural guidance with empathy and adaptability to maintain engagement and trust among participants.

#### 4.3 Diversity of Expression: The “Light Docent” Model

Children’s comfort in public expression varied. The proposed “Light Docent” model allows short, voluntary introductions (1–3 minutes) guided by facilitator prompts, supporting diverse confidence levels while preserving authenticity of artistic expression. The format emphasized voluntary participation rather than performance, allowing children to articulate their ideas at their own rhythm.

#### 4.4 Expanded Artistic Engagement Beyond Attendance

The non-attending child reported high anticipation ( $M = 5.00$ ) and creative satisfaction from the preparatory phase. Parents noted that their child continued to discuss the theme and imagined how others might respond to her artwork even after the event. This finding implies that artistic identity can develop through imagination and anticipation, not solely through exhibition participation, pointing to potential for hybrid or remote models. Inclusive facilitation approaches further suggest that belonging and engagement can extend beyond physical attendance [15], as preparation and anticipation also provide meaningful opportunities for participation.

#### 4.5 Summary

Facilitation and symbolic design together nurtured artistic identity and emotional engagement. Rather than teaching creativity, the process enabled children to become artists through recognition and reflection.

### 5 PRACTICAL GUIDELINES

Designing dialogic and collaborative spaces allows facilitators to balance structure and openness, supporting children in co-creating meaning and developing a sense of authorship within the exhibition context [16], [17]. These guidelines demonstrate how facilitation can bridge symbolic, structural, and emotional layers of participation, turning exhibitions into holistic learning and identity-building experiences. As such, the exhibition further demonstrated how facilitation and symbolic design nurtured artistic identity and emotional engagement. During the curation process, child artists also observed and discussed each other’s works, engaging in spontaneous dialogues that fostered reflection and peer learning. This inter-artist communication revealed how facilitation can evolve into a shared learning and communication space, extending beyond guided interaction. These exchanges often occurred during docent-assisted interactions with visitors, illustrating multilayered engagement within the exhibition space.

Together, these observations and reflections informed the development of the practical guidelines summarized in Table 3.

*Table 3. Guidelines for Artist-Centered Exhibition Design*

| Area | Design / Facilitation Practice                             | Expected Outcome                                |
|------|--|---|
| 1    | Provide artist name tags, hats, and personalized souvenirs | Enhances pride and sustained artistic identity  |
| 2    | Offer optional “Light Docent” sessions                     | Encourages expression without pressure          |
| 3    | Conduct pre-event meetings and rotate facilitators         | Builds operational stability and trust          |
| 4    | Use 1:1 pre-event communication with parents               | Improves accessibility and emotional continuity |
| 5    | Include absent artists through digital sharing             | Extends belonging beyond physical attendance    |

Facilitation here extends beyond logistics—designing recognition, trust, and identity.

Service design principles such as empathy, iteration, and co-creation can thus enhance children’s emotional engagement and artistic growth.

## 6. CONCLUSION

This study examined how facilitation-based service design enables children to perceive and experience themselves as artists, highlighting the link between participation, recognition, and emotional engagement. Through the Little Artists Exhibition at the 2nd Root Festival in Jincheon, South Korea (2025), both facilitation structure and symbolic elements strengthened pride, engagement, and trust. Flexible participation formats like the “Light Docent” supported diverse forms of artistic expression, and even non-attending children experienced artistic identity through anticipation.

These insights provide a facilitation-based framework that integrates symbolism and participation to strengthen children’s artistic identity and emotional engagement in exhibition contexts. Future research could extend this study by including interviews and observations from organizers, curators, and visitors, uncovering additional perspectives beyond the child–parent experience and deepening understanding of facilitation across multiple stakeholder levels. Ultimately, this study reaffirms that positioning children as artists within well-facilitated, symbolically rich environments nurtures both their creative agency and their sense of artistic identity.

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