

## 'Infinity Mirrors' at SAM: Take the Kids?

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## 'Infinity Mirrors' at SAM: Take the Kids?

Lines and all, the payoff for Seattle Art Museum's mesmerizing new exhibit is big

BY GEMMA ALEXANDER

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**PHOTO:** Infinity Mirrored Room—All the Eternal Love I Have for the Pumpkins, (exterior view) 2016, Yayoi Kusama, Japanese, b. 1929, wood, mirror, plastic, black glass, LED, Collection of the artist, Courtesy of Ota Fine Arts, Tokyo/Singapore and Victoria Miro, London. © YAYOI KUSAMA

## Bottom line

Seattle Art Museum's super-hot new exhibit, [Infinity Mirrors](#), is challenging for families, but the payoff is worth the e

## Highlights

My definition of family-friendly is fairly loose: music festivals, trendy restaurants, the ballet, long plane rides – every But restrictive viewing requirements and the promise of long lines made me nervous about bringing my two daughte anticipated exhibit that opened at Seattle Art Museum on June 30. So I was relieved and surprised when the exhibi engaging, stimulating and rewarding arts experiences we've attempted so far. My 8-year-old daughter described *In* awesome!"

The exhibit spans the 65-year career of legendary Japanese artist Yayoi Kusama, from her early abstract watercol Japan, through recent works never before seen on the West Coast. The heart of the exhibit is her iconic, immersive Rooms.

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The exhibit proved to be one of the most engaging, stimulating and experiences my family has attempted

The exhibit is laid out like a normal exhibit, with drawings and videos on the walls and sculptures in the middle of th are the Infinity Mirror Rooms. Four of the five Infinity Mirror Rooms are big enough to enter (rather than view throug [https://www.evernote.com/Home.action?\\_sourcePage=rXNAdaeTdQ7iMUD9T65RG\\_YvRLZ-1eYO3fqfRu0fynRL\\_1nukNa4gH1t86pc1SP&\\_\\_fp=vq8ik...](https://www.evernote.com/Home.action?_sourcePage=rXNAdaeTdQ7iMUD9T65RG_YvRLZ-1eYO3fqfRu0fynRL_1nukNa4gH1t86pc1SP&__fp=vq8ik...) 1/6

inside is very small, so you don't so much "walk through" as "walk into." You have to wait in a different line to see each room. You can't touch anything (with one exception).

*Infinity Mirrored Room—All the Eternal Love I Have for the Pumpkins, (exterior view) 2016, Yayoi Kusama, Japanese, b. 1929, wood, mirror, the artist, Courtesy of Ota Fine Arts, Tokyo/Singapore and Victoria Miro, London, © YAYOI KUSAMA*

This will be too much for many kids. But for those who can handle those restrictions, the rewards of these mesmerizing rooms are infinite.

Seussian soft sculptures, friendly polka dots and pumpkins create a playful atmosphere that young children will love. The rooms are constructed like a big box, you walk to a small viewing platform on level with and surrounded by tuberos (somehow). The interior walls and ceiling are mirrored, so that you and the sculptural objects are reflected into infinity. *Aftermath of Love* is the same as *Phalli's Field*, except the "objects" are LED lights suspended from the ceiling.

The newest Infinity Room, *All the Eternal Love I Have for the Pumpkins* (2016), features an infinite field of Kusama's pumpkins inside.

*Dots Obsession—Love Transformed into Dots, 2007, at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Yayoi Kusama, Japanese, b. 1929, mirror, the artist, Courtesy of Ota Fine Arts, Tokyo/Singapore; Victoria Miro, London; David Zwirner, New York, © YAYOI KUSAMA, Photo: Cathy Carver*

We met a family at the exhibit whose 19-month-old (in a carrier) was captivated by the blinking lights and bright colors. The child enjoyed their visceral sensations inside the Escher-like installations – experiencing minor vertigo and claustrophobia (but don't forget to look up.)

Older teens will appreciate Kusama's subtle subversion. Beside her bipolar fascination with infinity and obliteration, she is expert in directing users' intuitive responses to the space. But she misdirects. In *Dots Obsession*, for example, a polka dot sculpture asks you to rest your hand to peek inside a sphere, and giant balloons block movement in a mirror room where you're not supposed to touch anything. (Remember: You can't touch. Anything.)

The final installation, *The Obliteration Room*, is the payoff for restraint. Rooted in the happenings of 1960s, communal art, visitors are invited to obliterate its pristine white, IKEA-like space by placing colorful dot stickers on any surface in the room.

## Notes for parents

The exhibition contains mature content. Besides the sort-of phallic sculptures, photographs (toward the back of the exhibition) include some nudity. But the real challenge comes from the rigorous demands placed on the viewer by the *Infinity Room* is staffed, and the attendant will give precise instructions specific to the room. In general: Leave bags behind when time is up.

Visitors only get 20-30 seconds per room. Kusama means for viewers to focus on their intense first impressions. Evernote URL: [https://www.evernote.com/Home.action?\\_sourcePage=rXNAdaeTdQ7iMUD9T65RG\\_YvRLZ-1eYO3fqfRu0fynRL\\_1nukNa4gH1t86pc1SP&\\_\\_fp=vq8ik...](https://www.evernote.com/Home.action?_sourcePage=rXNAdaeTdQ7iMUD9T65RG_YvRLZ-1eYO3fqfRu0fynRL_1nukNa4gH1t86pc1SP&__fp=vq8ik...) 2/6

again for their favorites, just as they might for a roller-coaster. My kids happily waited over 10 minutes in line to repeat which made one of them feel like she was floating in outer space, and made the other feel like Rapunzel watching *Tangled*.

More tips for parents:

To avoid touching the artwork, it helped my kids to think of entering the Infinity Rooms as **playing an art game** v

While kids tend to move through museums more quickly than adults, **plan some extra time for standing in line** in the Infinity Rooms (lines may reach up to 20 minutes when the exhibit is at capacity).

**No food is allowed in the galleries.** Be sure to give young children a snack before entering.

**Space is tight inside the Infinity Rooms.** Strollers and wheelchairs have to back out – there is not enough room for people wearing babies and toddlers.

Kusama's playful art **lends itself to fun merchandising.** Even if you normally rush past the gift shop at the end of the exhibit, take time for this one.

Although the Infinity Rooms draw the most attention, **don't miss the sculptures and paintings on display** (some are in the galleries while standing in line).

If your kids love Kusama's art as much as mine do, **consider attending [Infinity Flower](#)**, a collection of Yayoi Kusama's work being shown on the evening of July 12 or participating in the communal [Pom Pom Garden](#) creation at Volunteer

## If you go...

**Where:** Seattle Art Museum, 1300 First Ave., Seattle

**When:** The exhibit runs through September 10, with special hours (eg closed Tuesday, open later on Thursday a

**Tickets:** You need timed tickets. Advance tickets are already sold out through the end of the exhibition, but a limited number will be available daily on a first-come, first-served basis for day of entry, limited to four per person. On-site tickets are available for purchase at the museum.

For the best chance of getting a ticket, be in line when the museum opens on a weekday morning. Have a backup plan for what to do if you can't get a ticket (Hint: [Pike Place Market](#), with its newly opened MarketFront, is only blocks away).

**Daily prices:** \$34.95 for adults; \$32.95 for senior (65+); \$29.95 military (with ID); \$24.95 students and teens (13-17); \$12.95 children (12 and under) and SAM members.

**Discounts:** First Thursday is 50 percent off. Consider a membership, as members get in to special exhibits for free. Tickets for the exhibit are also available for purchase in advance.

**Info:** [kusama.site.seattleartmuseum.org](http://kusama.site.seattleartmuseum.org)

**Video:** This [NPR segment](#) provides an intro to Kusama's work.

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Gemma Alexander is a Seattle-based freelance writer with two daughters. When she is not writing for ParentMap, she [blogs about](#) much time on Twitter.

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