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## **Museum-Partner Observation #2**

Interactive and digital exhibits should enhance audience engagement and promote the museum's mission. According to the 2016 NMC Horizon Report, "technology must be an integrated part of the visitor experience and . . . museums should avoid master plans where technology feels forced or where it is just a technology layer superimposed over the museum."<sup>1</sup> Rather than adopting technology because it is available, museums should incorporate it thoughtfully into digital and interactive exhibits.

The five principles mentioned in the Science Museum Group's Digital Strategy<sup>2</sup> provide guidance on how to accomplish this task.

Audience Centered. Museums should find effective methods of gauging audience needs. Technology should offer more ways that museum exhibits can connect with audiences and develop content that responds to their interests.

Sustainable and Scalable. Adopting new technology can be expensive. Museums should recognize that their commitment is a long term one. Rather than using technology as a flashy gimmick, it should be done thoughtfully and steadily.

Entrepreneurial and Innovative. Like any new endeavor, incorporating technology will take trial and error. Museums should remain committed to trying new technologies and responding to changing audience needs. In addition, museums should be open to ideas from other organizations and industries and perhaps seek to build partnerships that would develop their ability to utilize technology.

Open, Reusable and Sharable. Museums should be willing to share their content within the bounds of the law. This includes images of their collection as well as scholarship and research.

Embedded across the Organization. A museum's commitment to adapting technology should extend to its internal organizational functions. Museums should promote a staff culture that connects the traditional museum objectives, such as collecting and education, with advancing technology.

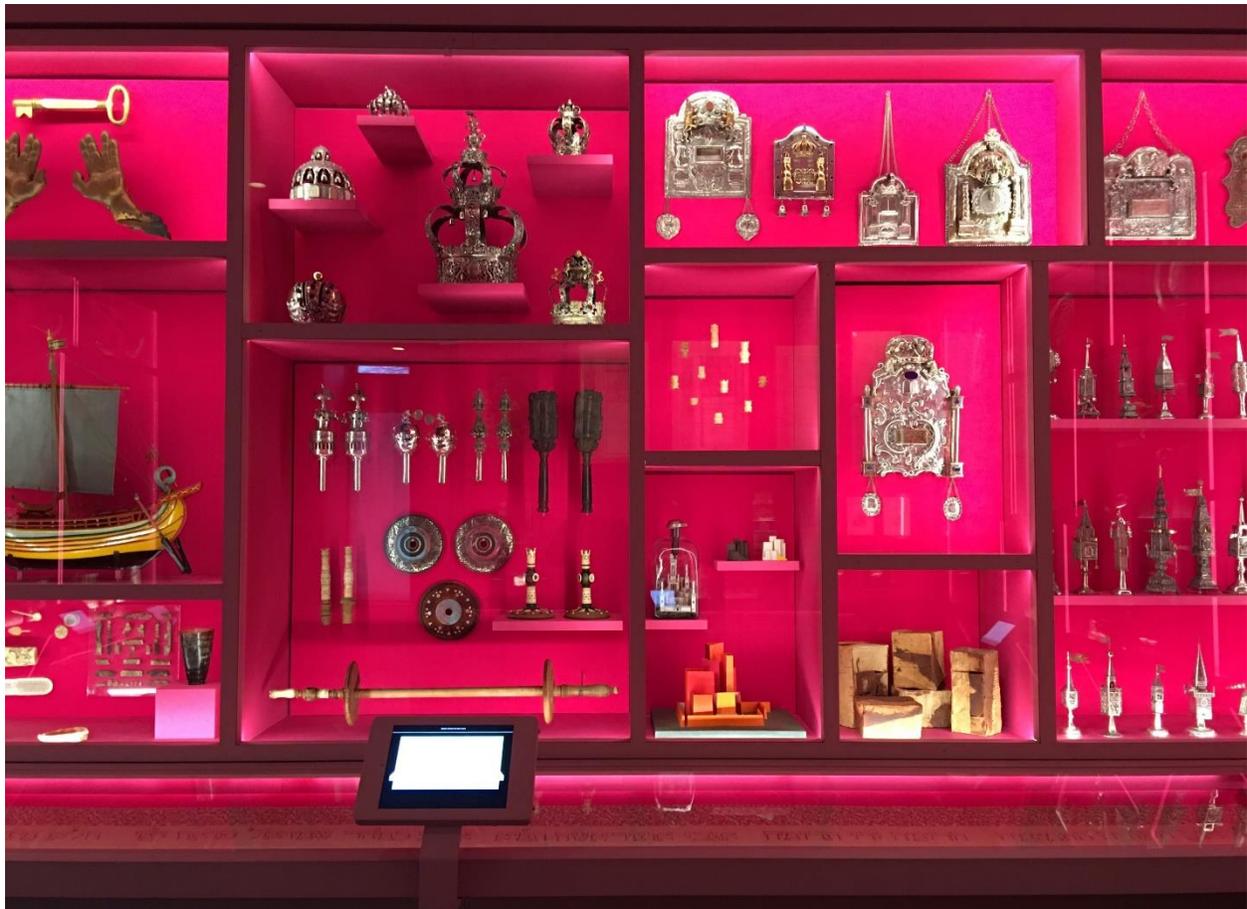
The Jewish Museum has made significant efforts to blend the digital and physical world in its exhibitions. My chosen object, *Model of the Second Temple in Jerusalem in a Bottle* currently is displayed in the *Scenes from the Collection* exhibition. As I discussed in a previous

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<sup>1</sup> "Developing Effective Digital Strategies," NMC Horizon Report 2016 Museum Edition, p. 22, accessed at <http://cdn.nmc.org/media/2016-nmc-horizon-report-museum-EN.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> "Digital Strategy 2015-2017," Science Museum Group, accessed at <https://group.sciencemuseum.org.uk/policies-and-reports/digital-strategy/>

assignment, the gallery in which the object is shown uses iPads in lieu of object labels. *Model of the Second Temple in Jerusalem in a Bottle* is a part of the *Taxonomies* gallery, which houses a wide variety of small objects relating to Jewish history and culture within a modern Cabinet of Wonders. The small space and crowded display does not allow for traditional object labels. Instead, an iPad in front of each shelf shows visitors how objects are grouped and allows them to seek out information about individual artifacts. For *Model of the Second Temple in Jerusalem in a Bottle*, the iPad offers information about the object's title, artist name, date and place made, medium, and credit line.



Shelf showing *Model of the Second Temple in Jerusalem in a Bottle* with an iPad in front

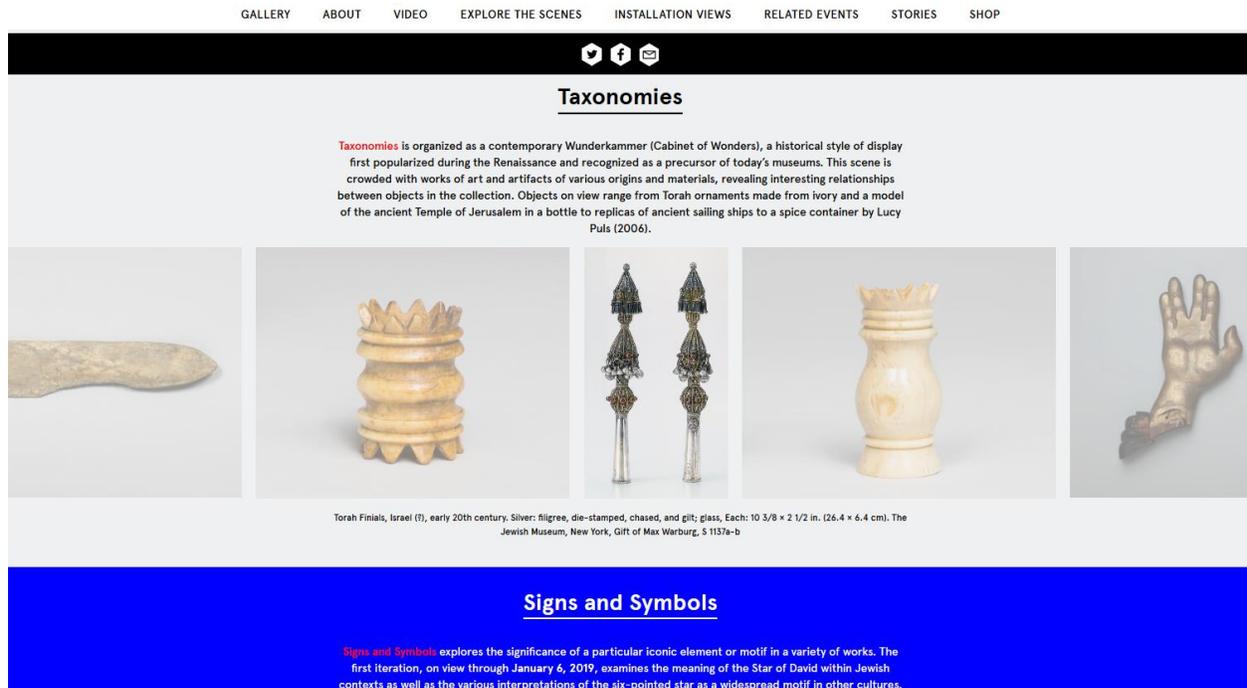
On Saturdays, the Jewish Sabbath, the Museum's interactive exhibition elements, audio guides, gift shop, and children's exhibition are not available. Admission to the Museum is free on these days as well as on select Jewish holidays.<sup>3</sup> As such, the Museum's use of technology remains consistent with its traditional mission and respects its significant Jewish audience.

The Museum's website offers more information about *Model of the Second Temple in Jerusalem in a Bottle*. For example, the web page for this particular object includes a brief description of the object's significance, its provenance, exhibition history, and links to an audio

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<sup>3</sup> Free Admission Days, Jewish Museum, accessed at <https://thejewishmuseum.org/visit>

post and educator resource.<sup>4</sup> The *Scenes from the Collection* web page offers plenty of information for virtual visitors.<sup>5</sup> It mirrors how the exhibition is laid out in seven different “scenes”: (1) Constellations, (2) Personas, (3) Taxonomies, (4) Signs and Symbols, (5) Masterpieces and Curiosities, (6) Accumulations, and (7) Television and Beyond. When virtual visitors click on each section, they can access all the objects displayed within each “scene.” The exhibition web page also contains a link to a document with all the wall texts and object labels within the exhibition (except for the artifacts in *Taxonomies*).<sup>6</sup> In addition, the Museum provides several installation views of the exhibition galleries.<sup>7</sup> While a physical visit to the Museum cannot be replaced, the Museum makes a substantial effort to make information available to those who cannot visit.



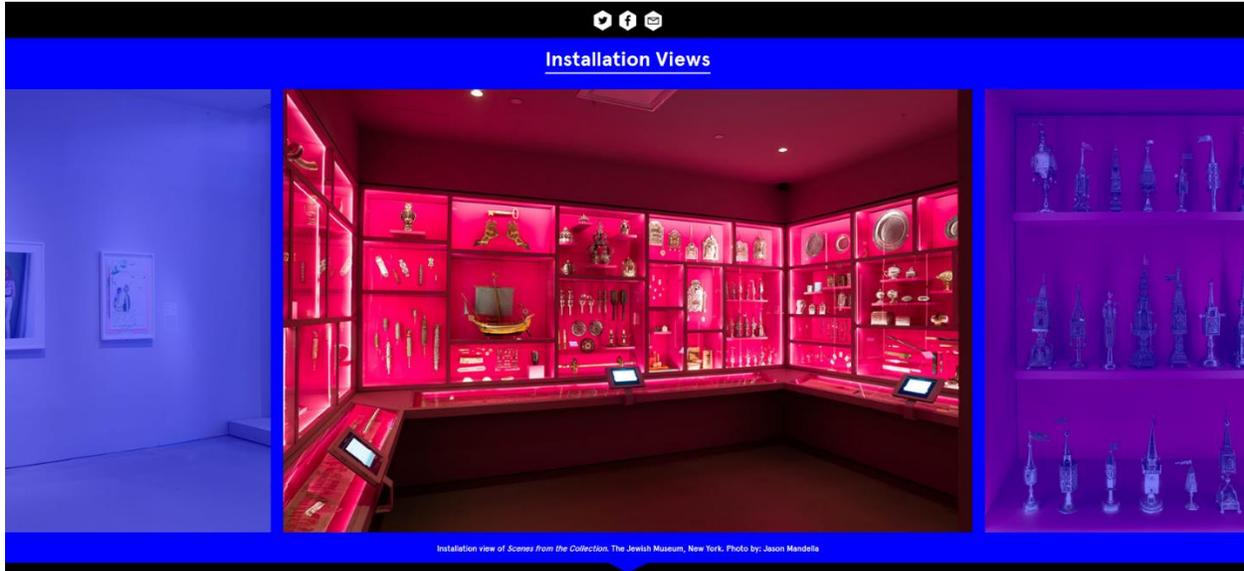
Screenshot of *Scenes from the Collection* exhibition page showing objects within the Taxonomies section.

<sup>4</sup> Moses Formstecher, *Model of the Second Temple in Jerusalem in a Bottle*. 1813, Jewish Museum, accessed at <https://thejewishmuseum.org/collection/17578-model-of-the-second-temple-in-jerusalem-in-a-bottle>

<sup>5</sup> *Scenes from the Collection*, Jewish Museum, accessed at <https://thejewishmuseum.org/exhibitions/scenes-from-the-collection>

<sup>6</sup> *Scenes from the Collection* Wall Texts and Object Labels, Jewish Museum, accessed at [http://assets.thejewishmuseum.org/exhibition\\_pdfs/Scenes\\_from\\_the\\_Collection\\_Checklist\\_as\\_of\\_1.26.18.pdf](http://assets.thejewishmuseum.org/exhibition_pdfs/Scenes_from_the_Collection_Checklist_as_of_1.26.18.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> *Scenes from the Collection* Installation Views, Jewish Museum, accessed at <https://www.jewishmuseum.org/exhibitions/scenes-from-the-collection#installation-views>



Screenshot of *Scenes from the Collection* exhibition page showing installation views of the *Taxonomies* gallery.

For *Model of the Second Temple in Jerusalem in a Bottle*, further measures can make the object more interactive. The iPad displays an image and basic information about the object. Perhaps the iPad could be programmed to show a higher resolution image that shows the artifact's intricate details. Since the object only can be seen from one angle, the iPad also could provide multiple images from different angles or a three dimensional rotating view. These measures do not appear to be financially burdensome and make use of the iPads already in the gallery.

The Museum also could implement interactive programs that offer visitors a more “hands-on” experience with the objects in its collection. For example, visitors of all ages would enjoy building their own models and learning about how they could be placed inside a bottle. This could be a computer program in an adjoining kiosk in the gallery. Or it could be an on-site studio or family program, using art materials to build models. Either way, it would promote greater interactivity with the object.