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LIS 258
Interactive Technology Assignment

Reactivating the Collection through Interactivity: Curate Your Own Exhibit

Interactive Exhibition

Curate Your Own Exhibit

Application Design Page:

<https://www.ideum.com/portfolio/curate-your-own-exhibit>

YouTube promo:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wmmU4F_j9ew

Writing on the challenges that museums face in the digital age, academics Ross Parry and Mary Ortiz-Williams note that museum curators are under increasing pressure to organize exhibitions that are “relevant, fresh, and engaging” (2007). Over the past fifteen years, interactive displays, labels, and applications have become popular ways of engaging museum audiences while offering unique opportunities for learning that enhance visitor experiences *and* knowledge retention. In their discussion of the future of museum labels, or didactic materials more broadly, Parry and Ortiz-Williams argue that museum professionals should look to the interactivity of web-based platforms, especially online publishing, when looking for new ways to build new relationships with increasingly diverse audiences as they activate the content of their exhibitions.

Extending these ideas to the museum collection more broadly, how might curators reactivate their collections by adapting the interactive technology of online databases and web-based applications? One way, as Parry and Ortiz-Williams suggest, is to embed user generated content through interactive displays.

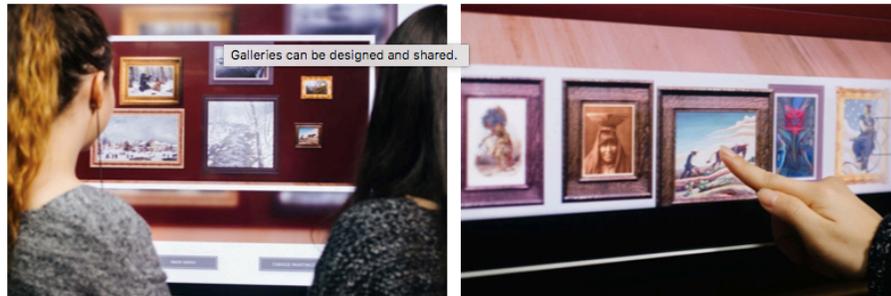
In 2016 the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Bentonville, Arkansas hired Ideum, a New Mexico creative design firm, to develop an interactive application that would allow visitors to explore its permanent collection through the creation of their own digital content. The result of this collaboration was Curate Your Own Exhibit, an onsite application that allows museumgoers to create virtual exhibitions that can be saved and shared on the museum's tumbler or via personal email.

Based on the museum's digitized collection, the application is accessed on a customized multi-touch drafting table (essentially an oversized tablet) that can be mounted or placed on a kiosk in the museum gallery. This innovative interactive application could be adapted for the Brooklyn Museum's Art of the Americas galleries, where my museum object, the *Gwa'sala Kwakwaka'wakw, Speaker Figure*, is housed. At the moment, this curatorial department uses static wall labels to contextualize its displayed objects, and could benefit from reactivating its holdings through interactive content.

Features

The Curate Your Own Exhibit app walks visitors through the process of curating an exhibition, beginning with the selection of a curatorial theme, such as "expressing nature" or "inspiring women." These themes correspond with subjects that are used to categorize search results on the museum's online collections database. After selecting a theme, visitors are asked to choose the background color and style of their virtual gallery. Once their virtual gallery space is prepared, they can begin to select and arrange objects that relate to their chosen theme. The objects are scaled to size so that the experience of

having to make careful selections according to the physical limitations of the gallery space are simulated, providing visitors with a key insight into the curatorial process.



Galleries can be designed and shared.

Visitors select artworks from the museum's collection.

Screenshot from Idem's online portfolio: "Curate Your Own Exhibition."

Visitors can determine the proximity with which their selected objects are displayed, and how they are shown in relation to each other by moving the items around the virtual gallery space. The virtual exhibition is finalized with an automatically generated exhibition checklist, a feature that emphasizes the importance of documentation while demonstrating how metadata is incorporated into wall labels.

Once every element of the virtual exhibition has been selected, the visitor can finalize it by sharing it online. Different digitized objects from the museum's collection are added periodically, providing an incentive for returning visitors who are interested in creating new virtual exhibitions.

Benefits of Incorporating a Similar Application in the Brooklyn Museum

This interactive application could be easily adapted for the Brooklyn Museum given that its online collection can be browsed or searched using "tabs" or keywords. On the Brooklyn Museum's website, users can add related keywords to any entry in the

online collection and are given the option to click on icons that represent entries for similar objects. For example, on the entry for *Speaker Figure* keywords according to media (wood; cedar), structure (figure), and subject (mouth; naked; speaking) are provided in addition to icons that link to other entries from the Art of the Americas collection. Having the option to explore the collections database onsite in a highly engaging way that allows visitors to think of the Art of the Americas galleries in a new way would reactivate this department while encouraging new connections to other sections of the museum.

In a virtual exhibition, for instance, a visitor could display *Speaker Figure* next to *America (Snoop Dogg)* (2002), a photograph of the well-known rapper by Andre Serrano, which is also in the Brooklyn Museum's collection, as part of a larger exploration of the power of representation. Visitors would be able to access these digitized objects through various user-generated tags like "powerful" or "figure." Juxtaposing objects this way would allow them to forge new connections across time and space, while taking a virtual tour of the museum that would encourage further exploration of its galleries and online collection.

Target Audiences

Target audiences for the incorporation of this application in the Brooklyn Museum's Art of the Americas galleries would be school groups or children and teenagers, and casual infrequent visitors. Both demographics are perhaps unfamiliar with the depth or range of the museum's collection, and could potentially be encouraged by such interactive technology, especially since it allows for a highly personalized level of

engagement with objects that are on display and in storage. Offering this type of access and hands-on experience likely results in return visits, promotes the museum's online collection, and reframes metadata as an important source of information.

References

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