

Kevin Quinn
Museum Partner Observation 2

How to Bridge the Digital and Physical Worlds

As Museum & Information Professionals, it is our responsibility to help patrons connect with the collections within our care. Whether we are working to curate an exhibit onsite, or allowing patrons to access our collections online, we are the conduits that allow patrons to experience the culture, history, and science behind what we have to offer. In the 21st century, creating a synchronous experience that blends the physical experience, with the digital, is the challenge that museums face. Confronting that challenge is difficult, but there are examples provided by certain institutions that have paved the way for other institutions to follow. In a previous post, I had discussed how The Frick Collection utilized mobile technology to provide patrons with a connection to each object in the museum. Interactive maps, audio guides, and immediate information, were some of the features that his technology boasted. In a world where our mobile devices are always connected, on, and within reach, this is a great way to blend both the physical and digital worlds.

Partner Museum Observation

For my partner museum, the blending of the physical and digital worlds is not a fully developed concept. They use their digital platforms to highlight their exhibits online, as well as special art contests, gatherings and functions. Other than these examples, the Heckscher doesn't do more to blend their physical and digital worlds. I surmise this is because they like maintaining the 'fine-art' atmosphere within their museum.

The Museum is currently closed for exhibition change and will re-open on Saturday, April 15!

Upcoming Exhibitions

Thaddeus Holownia: Walden Revisited April 15, 2017 - July 30, 2017



Thaddeus Holownia
Author's Ridge, Sleepy Hollow Cemetery, Concord, MA. 2001.
Toned gelatin silver contact print. 22.6 x 28.6 in.
Courtesy of the Artist, Corkin Gallery, Toronto.

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Thaddeus Holownia's *Walden Revisited* pays homage to the 19th century American writer Henry David Thoreau, whose experiment in simple living unfolded over two years at Walden Pond in Concord, Massachusetts beginning in 1845. Inspired by Ralph Waldo Emerson, who believed that individuals should seek a spiritually fulfilling relationship with the natural world, Thoreau's communion with nature comprised a close observation of the environment that is manifest in Holownia's monumental photographs conceived as *24 Tree Studies for Henry David Thoreau*. Presented as a full-gallery installation that approximates Thoreau's and Holownia's experience of Walden Woods, the images focus closely on individual trees, creating a portrait of the site and encouraging quiet contemplation of nature's grandeur. A companion exhibition – *Earth Muse: Art and the Environment* – features artists whose work continues the theme of reflection, highlighting nature's beauty and diversity, the eternal rhythms of the natural world, and man's impact on the environment.

Screenshot of the Upcoming Exhibits at the Heckscher



Screenshot of The Heckscher Museum of Art's Twitter page.

As a Museum-goer

As a museum-goer, I like to go in blind. I find it exciting to wander around a museum aimlessly and approach exhibits that catch my attention. In a way, I think this caters more to blending the physical and digital worlds because exhibits that utilize digital technologies are usually more vibrant and more attractive to patrons.

iBeacon and My Reaction

As museums seek to reach patrons, they must adapt to the technical world and utilize digital platforms to make connections. The iBeacon technology is a great way for museums to maximize their reach by connecting directly to devices that most, if not all, museum patrons have readily available. Creating these mobile 'kiosks' that transmit to patrons' mobile devices is genius way to distribute content that is valuable and relevant to their position in the museum. Although the technology needs to be developed more, the idea it is based off allows users to make sense of what's around them by utilizing technology they use regularly. As technology continues to develop, so will technologies like iBeacon.

While I think it's a great idea for museums to connect with patrons, I don't necessarily like the idea as a patron. I think there are plenty of ways that museums can continue to develop kiosks that don't involve connecting me opening up my mobile device in a building with hundreds of people. These networks would need to be monitored constantly to make sure that no one is taking advantage of the Bluetooth connection, which is technology that can be easily interfered with.