

THE EXPLODED MUSEUM

OSLO SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN,
IN COLLABORATION WITH
INTERMEDIA, UNIVERSITY OF OSLO

PART OF *DESIGN FOR INTERACTIVE AND SOCIAL MEDIA*

5-23 OCTOBER 2009

BRIEF

In what ways can the use of enhanced interactive media within a museum/art gallery context enhance visitor engagement and experience... or is it just “a ruse to squeeze an extra few quid from gullible patrons happy to amble around like zombies while a disembodied academic voice tells them what to think”?

(the quote is from an article by Alfred Hickling in The Guardian, 29/11/2004)

“The museum is the sum not of the objects it contains but rather of the experiences it triggers.”

Peter Samis, Digital Technologies and the Museum Experience

“We don’t do our best when we simply instruct. We do our best when we answer questions alongside the visitor. And when we create a kind of conversation.... We don’t do our best when we create a one-way dialogue that is assertive and one-dimensional. We do our best when we offer multiple avenues of interpretation, and when we keep a lot of room for audience response”

Madeleine Grynsztejn, SFMOMA
(San Francisco Museum of Modern Art)

Recent developments have opened up exciting new possibilities for the use of new technologies and media within museums and galleries, providing visitors with deeper, multimodal information and allowing for new interactions with artefacts to be made available to visitors. Convergence means this information can be made available on large and small screens, from personal probing and searches to collaborative, shared experiences.

The question explored in this course is: What are the affordances (and constraints) of interactive and social media in museum settings? How can technologies enhance visitors' experiences and interactions with museum artefacts, providing deeper understanding and engagement?

Your task is to create such an experience. You can choose the artefacts and themes you are enhancing – they can be an existing exhibition, a self-curated selection of artefacts or ideas, etc – but the experience you devise MUST enhance the visitor experience in a clearly defined way.

BACKGROUND

This is a three week group project, an integral part of the Design for Interactive and Social Media course, and also a new collaboration with InterMedia, an interdisciplinary research center at the University of Oslo.

The project aims to give students real-world experience of working with learning technology experts working with the museum sector to produce working application prototypes. Interdisciplinary collaborations often come up against internal communication barriers, and the designer often has the role of mediating these problems, to steer the collaborative group toward appropriate solutions, and communicate their ideas clearly and understandably to participants from other disciplines.

Additionally, in all technologically-driven applications, there is a negotiation between the original idea and the limitations and affordances of the available technology. During these three weeks, you will need to resolve these differences to produce a coherent and functional end prototype that can be tested and evaluated.

InterMedia will provide the technical infrastructure, equipment and support for the project. During weeks 2 and 3 (12-23 October) the course will be hosted at InterMedia and you will have access to equipment and staff there.

STRUCTURE

The first week will focus on research and brainstorming. What systems already exist in museums and galleries, and how effective are they? What purposes can these technologies be put to – why add this layer of technology to the user experience?

By examining current trends in this area, you will undoubtedly begin to see new opportunities and possibilities. It is these we will be nurturing in week 1. These ideas will inform but not necessarily lead directly to the project you actually develop. Week one culminates in a presentation and group discussion about the practicalities, pros and cons of your various ideas. You will work in groups, but plan to present at least one idea per person.

Week 2 will focus on practical application. The technologies available will be discussed in depth, and you will begin the process of creating a project that is both conceptually and technically viable and strong. Can the ideas you generated in week one be used? This will require flexibility, clarity of vision, and strong communication skills.

Week 3 will be used to further develop the idea and project, turning it into a working prototype, user testing it, then communicating the idea and your findings to your peers and the world.

TIMETABLE

WEEK 1

MON 5 OCT

0930-1200 (AHO) Introduction to the project. (AR)
Overview of new media in museum application (PP)
1330-1630 (AHO) Initial brainstorming (AR, PP)

WED 7 OCT

0930-1200 (AHO) Refinement of ideas (AR)
1300-1600 (AHO) Museum visit (AR, PP)

THUR 8 OCT

0900-1200 (AHO) Refinement of ideas (AR, PP)
1300-1600 (AHO) Locative workshop (ESM, JK)

FRI 9 OCT (MOVE TO INTERMEDIA, UIO)

0930-1200 (UiO) Presentations and discussions (AR, PP)
1300-1530 (UiO) Introduction to technical infrastructure (AR, JT, OS, PP, TP)

WEEK 2

MON 12 OCT

0930-1200 (UiO) Brainstorming (MS, PP)
1300-1600 (UiO) Project development (AR, IS, JT, MW, OS, PP)

WED 14 OCT

0930-1200 (UiO) Project development, group tutorials (AR, IS, JT, MW, MS, OS, PP)
1300-1600 (AHO) Spaces and Places lecture (Erling Dokkholm) (Note this is at AHO!)

THURS 15 OCT

0900-1600 (UiO) Self directed study and project development (IS, JT, MS, MW, OS)

FRI 16 OCT

0900-1200 (UiO) Self directed study and project development (IS, JT, MS, MW, OS, PP)
1300-1530 (UiO) Group presentations and discussions (IS, JT, MS, MW, OS, PP)

WEEK 3

MON 19 OCT

0900-1200 (UiO) Design for Interactive Media Discussion (MS) (AHO)
1300-1600 (UiO) Project development (AR, IS, JT, OS, PP) (UiO)

WED 21 OCT

0900-1600 (UiO) Project development (AR, IS, JT, OS)

THUR 22 OCT

0900-1600 (UiO) Project development (AR, IS, JT, OS)

FRI 23 OCT

0900-1130 (UiO) Project development (AR, IS, JT, OS)
1230-1500 (UiO) Final project presentations (AR, IS, JT, MS, OS)

STAFF

AHO

AR Anthony Rowe (course co-leader)
MS Mosse Sjaastad
MW Marius Watz
ESM Einer Sneve Martinussen
JK Jørn Knutsen

INTERMEDIA, UIO

PP Palmyre Pierroux (course co-leader)
OS Ole Smørdal
IS Idunn Sen
JT Jeremy Toussaint
TP Tony Perritano

DELIVERABLES

- Functional and user tested prototype of enhanced museum/gallery application.
- Contribution to the group dynamic.
- Presentation of ideas.
- Online and video documentation.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

We are above all interested in the ideas, originality and appropriateness of the designs, but evaluation will also include process; in particular your ability to function as part of a cross disciplinary group, and to develop your ideas within technological constraints. The project itself will also be assessed for completion, technical competence and functionality (i.e. does it work), and usability (has it been user tested, has the user and local environment been fully considered).

Originality: How does this idea fit within the pantheon of existing applications in the field – does it build on what is there, what is new about it? You will need to demonstrate an understanding of existing applications, their strengths and weaknesses, and crucially to understand the implications of your own project.

Appropriateness: How effective is screen design, information architecture - does it cover its target audience (does it aim for the full audience, or a subset)? Is the application user-friendly and easy to understand? Does it add to the overall experience and understanding a visitor will have of the space/exhibition?

There will be a presentation at the end of the project, where the prototype can be demonstrated and presented as a pitch to a notional prospective client.

Written feedback on the project will be provided.

REFERENCES

Digital Technologies and the Museum Experience (Handheld Guides and other media). Eds Loic Tallon, Kevin Walker. Altamira 2008

New Heritage. New Media and Cultural Heritage. Eds. Kalay, Kvan and Affleck. Routledge 2008

WEB:

Fiona Romeo <http://www.vimeo.com/4717981>

<http://www.artnet.com/magazineus/news/artnetnews/museum-iphone-apps8-27-09.asp>