Building museum brands in a changing world context

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Wolff Olins

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Q: Where does yesterday meet today?

A: In the museum!

Don’t Eat the Pictures: Sesame Street at the Metropolitan Museum of Art
190 People
21 Languages
4 Offices
1 Business
A World View
A passion for museums
Drawing from experience and learning's across sectors
Brand building

Helping organizations uncover, articulate, push forward and deliver on what makes them uniquely relevant in a changing world.
Define
Create
Deliver

... Organization as what?
... Experienced how?
... Delivered how?

Game changing brands for positive impact
In the museum world the value of “brand” is (slowly) being recognized

From incidental to intentional

Clear proposition to audiences, to funders, to partners, to their people

Identity and communications with greater ROI

A tool for decision making and prioritization

To extend the reach of scholarship
But intentional means anticipating future shifts

Museums must identify how a rapidly changing world context could affect their audiences, and the role and relevance of their institution going forward
Look inside

WHAT’S SPECIAL
ABOUT THE MUSEUM

Look outside

WHAT THE WORLD NEEDS
+ WHERE IT’S HEADED

BRAND
A continuous cycle of trendwatching

- TRACK AND GATHER MACROTREND ISSUES + INTERDISCIPLINARY INSIGHTS
- MAP MUSEUM ACTIVITY
- ZERO IN ON KEY THEMES UNDERLYING MUSEUM ENGAGEMENT
Tap into our network of future forward thinkers

Alexa Karolinski
Filmmaker

Miranda Siegel
Writer/Cultural critic

Shane Snow
Cofounder Contently

Alexa Karolinski
Filmmaker

Daniel Siders
Technologist/Futurist

Hans Ulrich Obrist
Director of the Serpentine

Boyoung Lee
Creative Director at Shinsegae
Map museum activity
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Museum metaphors</th>
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<tr>
<td>Museum as research institute</td>
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<td>Museum as school</td>
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<td>Museum as entertainment</td>
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<td>Museum as archive</td>
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<td>Museum as encyclopedia</td>
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<td>Museum as “mind exercise”</td>
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<td>Museum as church</td>
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<td>Museum as (night)club</td>
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<td>Museum as symphony</td>
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<td>Museum as public space</td>
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<td>Museum as exclusive private space</td>
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<td>Museum as landmark</td>
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<td>Museum as city</td>
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<td>Museum as embassy</td>
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<td>Museum as piece of architecture</td>
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<td>Museum as luxury brand</td>
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<td>Museum as corporate vehicle</td>
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<td>Museum as non-commercial space</td>
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<td>Museum as theatre</td>
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<td>Museum as lab</td>
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<td>Museum as art space</td>
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<td>Museum as network node</td>
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Museum as resource
Visitor as user
Museums negotiate...

Digital / Analog
Encyclopedic / Specific
Permanent / Temporary
Timeless / Timely
Canon / Avant-Garde
Commercial / Non-commercial
Good for you / Fun for you
Global / Local
Public / Private
Audiences and Their Worlds Are Changing
5 Themes

1. Institutional authority challenged
   Authority is no longer assumed, and readily sidestepped

2. New learning
   Information overload necessitates new forms of learning

3. Authentic experiences on the up
   Desire for ‘in real life’ experiences

4. Spirituality beyond religion
   Rise of spirituality and a desire to connect

5. What is / isn’t art
   Democratization and globalization breaking down boundaries
Hierarchies of power are in flux: authority is no longer assumed—and often sidestepped
Faith in both corporations and government at all time low

GALLUP
And there is a blurring of lines and roles between the two

Google’s project Loon connects underserved and rural areas to wifi

UIDAI - provides Indians a digital identity to use for receiving government subsidies, banking, and education
New media allows the public to challenge traditional sources of authority – and become sources of authority themselves

“Between 2010 and 2012, China’s citizens exposed 156 corruption cases via new media (Weibo, net forums), twice that of traditional media reporting”

*Chinese academy of Social Sciences, June 2013*
...or provide a platform for all manners of experts

“I have 1700 followers on Instagram, which honestly I think is a large amount for someone who isn’t really relevant”

- Futurepanelist, writer
While those in new media challenge the conventions of authority and power.

CASUAL IS THE NEW FORMAL
Traditional media players are rethinking partnerships and how they engage the public

Former underground mainstay Vice partners with HBO

Deeper editorial, but more ways to engage (e.g. online, events)
Audiences are seeking

- trustworthy, verified sources of information
- transparency, not just assumed facades
- platforms to contextualize a new set of experts, and to contribute
- knowledge sharing, not dictation
Museums are responding...
What do kids know about art? Only everything.

Welcome to MoMA Unadulterated, an unofficial audio tour created by kids. Each piece of art is analyzed by experts aged 3-10, as they share their unique, unfiltered perspective on such things as composition, the art's
“WE’RE USING A TONE OF VOICE THAT APPEALS, SHORT BITES ON TWITTER... WHEREAS USUALLY MUSEUMS SPEAK IN THE VOICE OF GOD”
CROWDSOURCING IS A BIG FORCE FOR CHANGE, PARTICULARLY WHERE OBSERVATION IS CRITICAL TO IDENTIFY SPECIES
National Palace Museum
Digitalization Projects: Open Data
Questions to consider

What about your institution provides trust and access vs. intimidation or elitism?

How is your museum being generous with your position of authority, and how are you a trusted, valuable resource in your audiences lives?

How might this affect your development and partnership strategies?
2. LEARNING

Ever-accelerating information overload necessitates new, networked forms of awareness, attention, and content consumption.
618,725 tweets per minute during the 2014 World Cup Final
We are learning how to negotiate the tidal wave of content...

Snacking (Snapchat) vs. Bingeing (Netflix)

....Or learning to consume more, faster
And use the internet as auxiliary brain
From data classification to pattern recognition

“Our electrically-configured world has forced us to move from the habit of data classification to the mode of pattern recognition. We can no longer build serially, block-by-block, step-by-step, because instant communication ensures that all factors of the environment and of experience coexist in a state of active interplay.”

-Marshall McLuhan
Rethinking how and where we learn...
...and challenging conventions
Audiences are seeking

- respite from information overload
- ways to successfully self-lead their discovery + learning process
- options of different modes and depths of learning
  (snacking vs. binge-ing)
- meaning, not data
Museums are responding...
National Museum of China
Nature in Western Art – Masterpieces from The Met
Tate

Magic Tate Ball
The New Museum
NEW INC

The first museum-led incubator
Questions to consider...

How can museums take advantage of new forms of technology to unlock the potential of their scholarship?

How do help audiences “snack” - spark their curiosity – and then “binge”?

What might it mean to be an “encyclopedic” museum in an era of pattern recognition?

What is the future for museum research and scholarship?
3. AUTHENTIC

A sense of the world as too big and too virtual has led to increased desire to find authenticity in analog, local or intense “in-real-life” experiences.
“The internet made the museum’s function of representing art history obsolete. Of course, in the case of the internet, spectators lose direct access to the original artworks—and thus the aura of authenticity gets lost. And so museum visitors are invited to undertake a pilgrimage to art museums in search of the Holy Grail of originality and authenticity.”

– Boris Groys, Art Historian
#ARTSELFIE

EMINEM ➔

⇠ MONA LISA
The continued rise of event culture

COACHELLA ATTENDANCE INCREASED 225x SINCE 1999

BURNING MAN ATTENDANCE INCREASED 68x SINCE 1993
Even if it is to see something virtual...
Audiences are seeking

Authenticity through objects
- access to the real deal
- a sense of connection to physical things, their auras, patinas and history

Authenticity through events
- live events that prove “they were there”
- Experiences of intensity
Museums are responding...
Rijksmuseum

No screens rule
National Palace Museum
ARTicket – Animated Ticket
Questions to consider

How can museums tap into the rising significance of event-based culture?

How can museums use their collections to feed people’s desires for “the real deal”?

How can a digital and social media strategy augment vs. interrupt people’s experience of the museum?
4. SPIRITUALITY

The rise of secular spiritual attitudes and a desire to connect to the beyond (and to others) outside the context of traditional religion
Rise of secular-spiritual attitudes (either alongside or in place of traditional religion)

1-in-6 people around the globe (1.1 billion, or 16%) have no religious affiliation...making the unaffiliated the 3rd-largest religious group worldwide, behind Christians and Muslims

68% of unaffiliated U.S. adults believe in “God or a higher power”

72% of U.S. Millennials more spiritual than religious

Source: Gallup + Pew 2013
In a secularising world, art has replaced religion as a touchstone of our reverence and devotion... but in practice art museums often abdicate much of their potential to function as new churches (places of consolation, meaning, sanctuary, redemption) …

– Alain de Botton, writer/philosopher/social entrepreneur
To commune, to reflect

“It’s like how Michael Pollan refers to preparing and eating a meal. It’s a human, out of screen experience, that brings people together. It lets us reflect. That’s a role museums should increasingly play”

- Interviewee, Asian Art Museum
Audiences are seeking

- places for solo contemplation
- a sense of connection to the beyond
- places for communal gathering
- contemporary rituals + pilgrimages
Museums are responding...
Marina Abramovic Institute
Hudson
The Met
Friday Nights
National Museum of Natural Science
Mayan Exhibition
Questions to consider?

How can museums best fulfil this societal need?

How can your collection and space help people contemplate and connect?
A globalized art world and democratized visual culture have broken down traditional boundaries between what is and isn’t art.
New artists
Established artists using new media
New audiences
Born daily...  

JEFF KOONS ➔

NORTH WEST  
(DAUGHTER OF KIM & KANYE)
Made daily…

Could Silicon Valley Contemporary Be the Next Art Basel?

Artspace
“They’re not the people who make a living as artists, art critics or professional art collectors ... These are people who hear about a great new film they want to go to. They hear that there's a terrific new fashion store that's very cool — they want to go there. They don’t differentiate between these cultural forms.”

Jeffrey Deitch
Audiences are seeking

- their own identities as artists
- art as a type of entertainment
- interdisciplinary forms of art and creativity
- ways to understand a new canon
Museums are responding...
National Taiwan Science Center
Here We Are in Taipei – Line Friends
The Serpentine
Digital Takeovers - Agnes
798 Art District – Beijing
Blended spaces
Questions to consider?

How much of a leadership role should your museums play in defining the “canon” in this changing landscape?

Which new art audiences are right for your museum?

How much is your museum willing to experiment with new forms of art and creativity?
So to recap
5 themes

1. **Institutional authority challenged**
   Authority is no longer assumed, and readily sidestepped

2. **New learning**
   Information overload necessitates new forms of learning

3. **Authentic experiences on the up**
   Desire for ‘in real life’ experiences

4. **Spirituality beyond religion**
   Rise of spirituality and a desire to connect

5. **What is / isn’t art**
   Democratization and globalization breaking down boundaries
But it’s not these 5 specific themes that really matter

It’s your organization’s readiness to identify, anticipate and negotiate future shifts – so you are able to play a more meaningful role in the lives of your audiences
To be their resource/ place/ platform

To look and think beyond their digital echo chambers and their everyday

For a lifetime of learning and inspiration – not a one off visit

To access to some of the greatest scholarship and minds on the planet

To push boundaries, to unlock the creativity that exists in us all

To build networks and communities to share, create, discuss

For the real deal
Thank you!
SEIZE THE FUTURE!