I3. Competitive Analysis

Team Experience Museums Project (EMP)

Alli Hishikawa

Overview

Smartify is a free app that allows users to engage more with art museums by scanning and identifying artwork using their smartphone (iPhone or Android). After identifying the scanned art by creating a digital footprint and matching it to corresponding artwork in the system's database, the app provides the background of the piece and in doing so enables a richer and more meaningful art museum experience. The app currently provides its services to 30 major art museums around the world [1, 2].

Analysis

Our main and overall product goal is to create a more engaging and meaningful experience for museum visitors. The Smartify app addresses and accomplishes this goal by providing an easy and immediate method of connecting users with information about the artwork they are viewing [1, 2]. As discovered in our user interviews, information and context about an art piece is incredibly important to the quality of the experience. Two interviewees specifically emphasized the value of finding personal connection to artwork by learning about its history. Smartify fulfills this desire for information in a very easy and interactive manner, using augmented reality to display descriptions of artwork in real time when users capture the museum through the app's camera feature. The app also allows users to save their favorite artwork for later viewing and social sharing on their mobile device, ensuring that users are able to both retain and share lasting memories of their experience at the museum [1].

Image 1: Art museum visitor using the Smartify app to learn more about the pictured art [2]

The app has been dubbed the "Shazam of the art world", referencing the music identifying app that identifies songs for users in real time by recording music [2, 3]. Much like Shazam, which expands users' knowledge of music, Smartify develops museum visitors' knowledge of artwork. One notable result of the app is that it might distract from an authentic art museum experience, in which visitors are connected to artwork solely through what they see with their eyes and not what they see through a phone screen [4]. This, however, is not necessarily a negative outcome since it does not actually bar users from engaging with the artwork in meaningful ways. Art is more than just a painting on a wall; it is a unique creation made meaningful through its history and the process by which it was created. Smartify provides this essential aspect of context and background, thus engaging users in a fuller and more refined understanding of artwork. By utilizing the smartphone, a device familiar to a majority of museum-goers, Smartify enhances the art museum experience in a non-traditional way that ensures visitors are more fully immersed and informed in their museum visit.
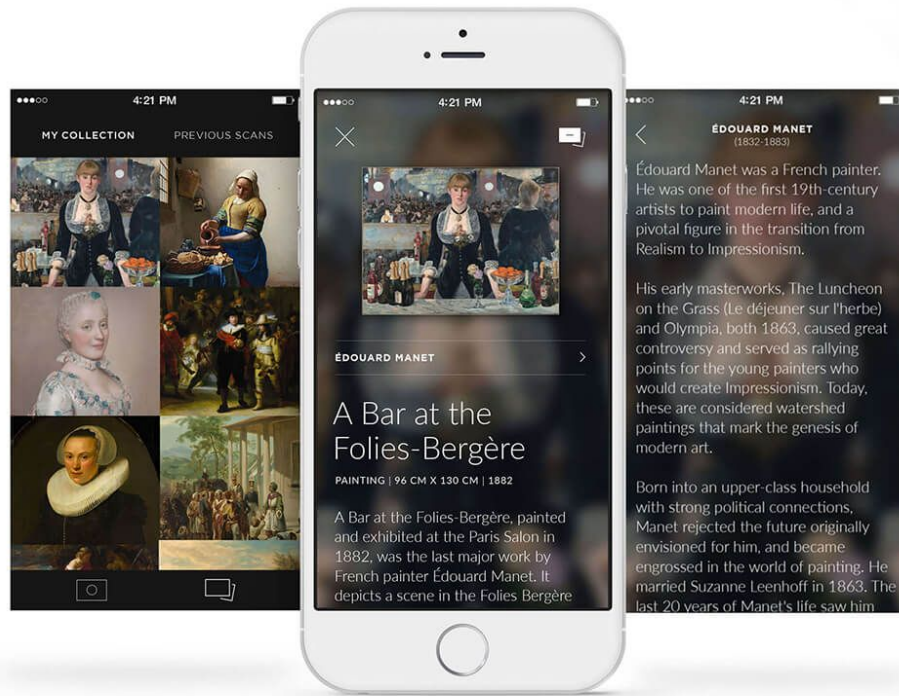
Image 2: Screen captures of the app, showing screens where users can access previously scanned and saved artwork [5]

[1] "Scan the Art, Uncover the Story." Smartify. Accessed January 30, 2019. https://smartify.org/.

[2] Yalcinkaya, Gunseli, and Gunseli Yalcinkaya. "New App Smartify Hailed as "Shazam for the Art World"." Dezeen. October 06, 2017. Accessed January 30, 2019. https://www.dezeen.com/2017/10/08/new-app-smartify-hailed-shazam-art-world-technology/.

[3] Panko, Ben. "App Aims to Be the "Shazam" of the Art Museum." Smithsonian.com. October 12, 2017. Accessed January 30, 2019. https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/app-aims-be-shazam-art-museum-180965199/.

[4] "Do Smartphones and Their Cameras Enhance or Detract from the Museum Experience (or Can They Do Both)?" Association of Science - Technology Centers. July 19, 2016. Accessed January 30, 2019. https://www.astc.org/astc-dimensions/do-smartphones-and-their-cameras-enhance-or-detract-fr om-the-museum-experience-or-can-they-do-both/.

[5] "DIY Museum Tours with New Art-identifying App | Springwise." Springwise.com. July 12, 2018. Accessed January 31, 2019. https://www.springwise.com/diy-museum-tours-new-art-identifying-app/.

Alex Banh

Overview

The Henry Art Gallery is an art museum located on the University of Washington's Seattle Campus. The gallery is "internationally recognized for bold and challenging exhibitions, for pushing the boundaries of contemporary art and culture, and for being the first to premiere new works by established and emerging artists. Through individual experiences with art, we inspire visitors to upend their expectations and discover surprising connections." [1] These individual experiences with art were what I was curious in investigating, looking to see these works firsthand and analyze how and why they were displayed.

Analysis

I started my visit with the primary exhibit on display, "Between Bodies". Clemans in a review states that "Between Bodies" allows artists to "conjure a wider range of speculative realities and posit alternative ways of responding to environmental change [...] using multimedia, multisensory works of art to immerse us in discomfiting, sensuously beautiful encounters with other bodies — humans, animals, microorganisms, bodies of water, even bodies of knowledge." [2] The first thing I notice is the art museum setup familiar to me: Large summaries of the overall exhibit (fig. 1) accompanied by rooms and works, each of them paired with a smaller description. One item I immediately noticed about the descriptions were recommended readings from the artists attached to each description. (figs. 2, 3) Many of the books were offered in a reading room in the lobby of the museum. (fig. 4) I saw this as an interesting way to continue the engagement with the artwork and develop a sort of conversation with the artist. In the initial rooms of the exhibit, mixed media is already present: photo, video, and audio is combined with art pieces, all under an overarching theme. Physical interaction is present too through a 'seismic communication object' which asks you to touch or recline into the exhibit. (fig 5) The exhibit then flows into the center, a large room where textiles flow from the high ceiling. (fig 6) The drastic change in scale due to room sizes was an element immediately apparent to me.

Despite the high amount of interactivity present, many overlying themes and connections still felt removed. I frequently found myself asking "Wait, what was the theme of this area again?". This may be attributed to time pressure: I only had less than an hour at the gallery due to a prior commitment. The vagueness of the space may have also contributed, but Clemans in her review of "Between Bodies" suggests another view:

perhaps "Between Bodies" uses "ambiguity strategically, asking us to consider the natural world through different lenses". [2] Perhaps if I had embraced the ambiguity more, I would have received a different experience from the work. The more 'direct' aspects of the exhibit conveyed more to me: a dark room screening an informative video seemed to speak more to me than others. (fig 7) Despite my confusion in some areas, overall the exhibit utilizes a variety of novel and interesting means of display. One particular one which stood out to me was a room simulating a forest with ipads providing an augmented reality experience. Picking up an ipad lets you look at two avatars within the room and poetry text. (fig. 8) The poetry is also being read out loud, the words seemingly coming from a world where our environment has already been destroyed. A reflective element is also present independent of the exhibits: the inclusion of a "reflect and respond" room (fig. 9, 10, 11) prompting questions and allowing for creative reflection is an interesting way of personalizing the experience. The lobby of the museum (mentioned earlier) also allows for further reflection and investigation related to the exhibits. (fig. 12)

[1] "About the Henry." *Henry Art Gallery Website*, henryart.org/about/about-the-henry.
[2] Clemans, Gayle. "'Between Bodies' at Henry Art Gallery Asks Us to Consider the Natural   World through Different Lenses ." *The Seattle Times*, The Seattle Times, 1 Jan. 2016, www.seattletimes.com/entertainment/visual-arts/between-bodies-at-henry-art-gallery-asks-us-to-consider-the-natural-world-through-different-lenses/.

Supplemental Photos

All photos were taken by me from my visit to the Henry Art Gallery on Wednesday, January 30th, 2019.
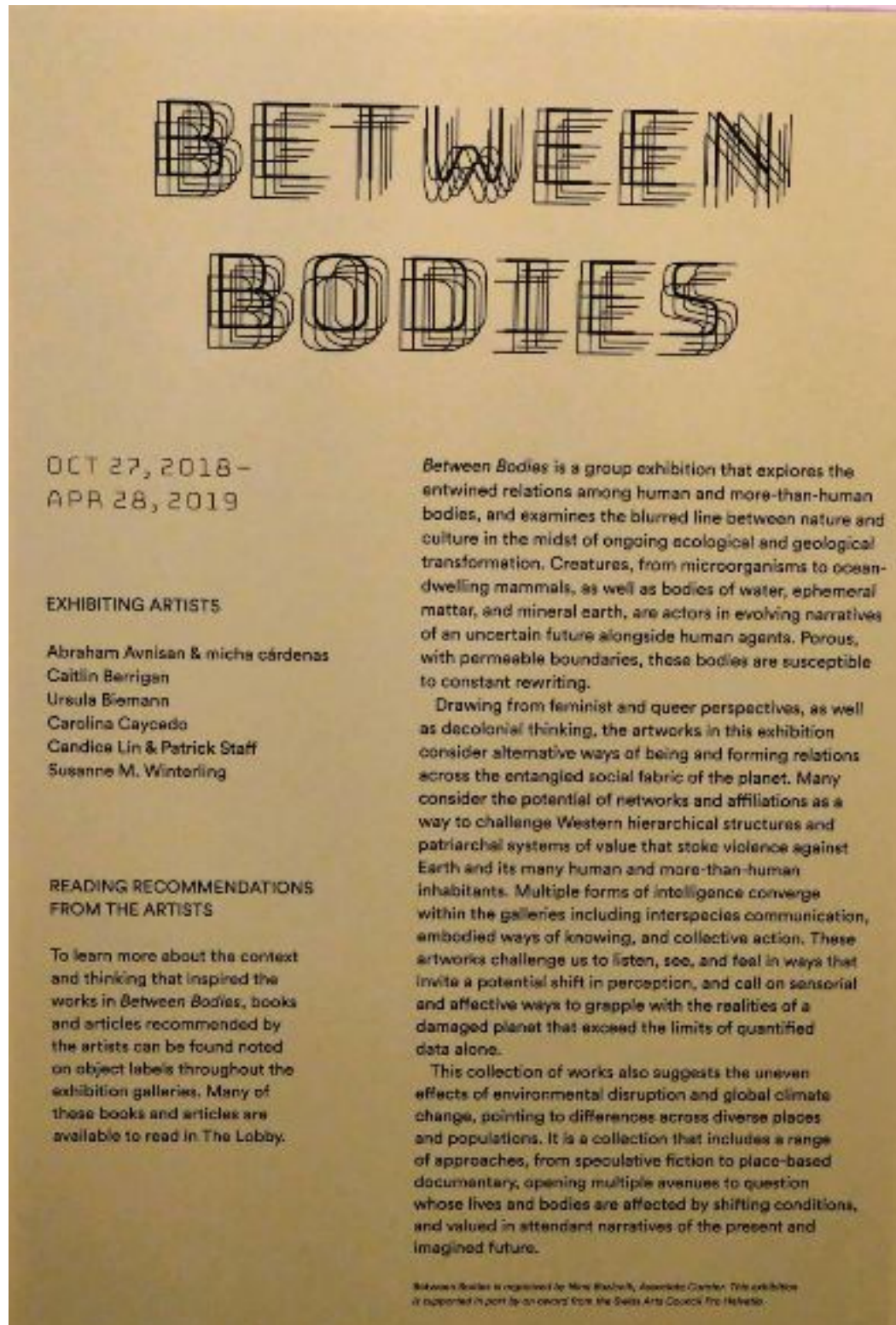
Figure 1

BETWEEN BODIES

OCT 27, 2018 –
APR 28, 2019

Between Bodies is a group exhibition that explores the entwined relations among human and more-than-human bodies, and examines the blurred line between nature and culture in the midst of ongoing ecological and geological transformation. Creatures, from microorganisms to ocean-dwelling mammals, as well as bodies of water, ephemeral matter, and mineral earth, are actors in evolving narratives of an uncertain future alongside human agents. Porous, with permeable boundaries, these bodies are susceptible to constant rewriting.

EXHIBITING ARTISTS

Abraham Avnisan & micha cárdenas
Caitlin Berrigan
Ursula Biemann
Carolina Caycedo
Candice Lin & Patrick Staff
Susanne M. Winterling

Drawing from feminist and queer perspectives, as well as decolonial thinking, the artworks in this exhibition consider alternative ways of being and forming relations across the entangled social fabric of the planet. Many consider the potential of networks and affiliations as a way to challenge Western hierarchical structures and patriarchal systems of value that stoke violence against Earth and its many human and more-than-human inhabitants. Multiple forms of intelligence converge within the galleries including interspecies communication, embodied ways of knowing, and collective action. These artworks challenge us to listen, see, and feel in ways that invite a potential shift in perception, and call on sensorial and affective ways to grapple with the realities of a damaged planet that exceed the limits of quantified data alone.

READING RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE ARTISTS

To learn more about the context and thinking that inspired the works in *Between Bodies*, books and articles recommended by the artists can be found noted on object labels throughout the exhibition galleries. Many of these books and articles are available to read in The Lobby.
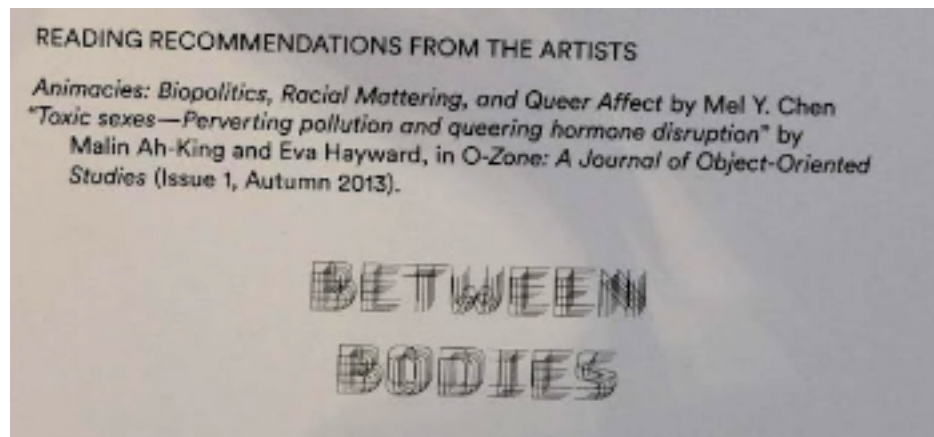
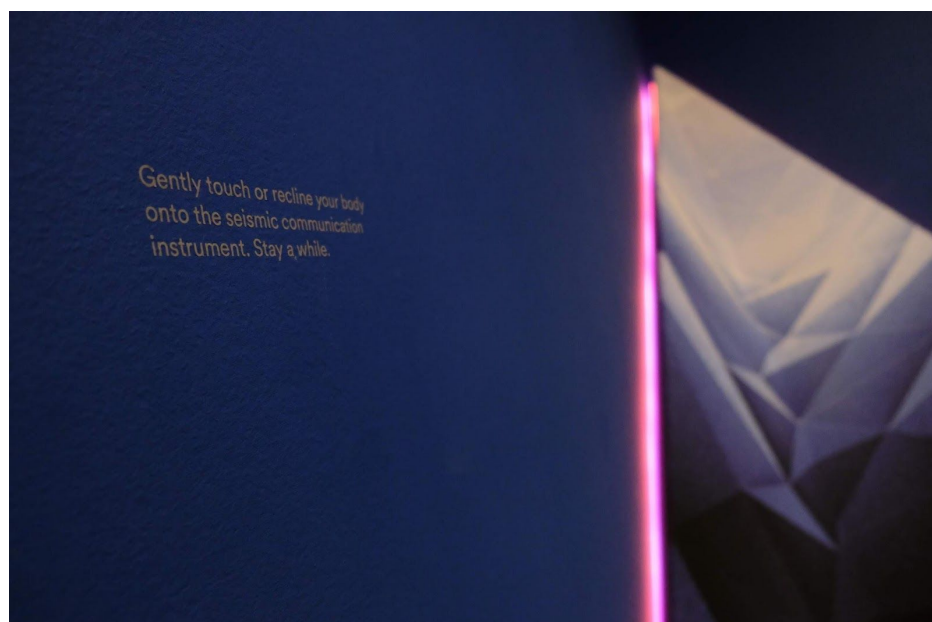This collection of works also suggests the uneven effects of environmental disruption and global climate change, pointing to differences across diverse places and populations. It is a collection that includes a range of approaches, from speculative fiction to place-based documentary, opening multiple avenues to question whose lives and bodies are affected by shifting conditions, and valued in attendant narratives of the present and imagined future.

Figure 2

Carolina Caycedo
Candice Lin & Patrick Staff
Susanne M. Winterling

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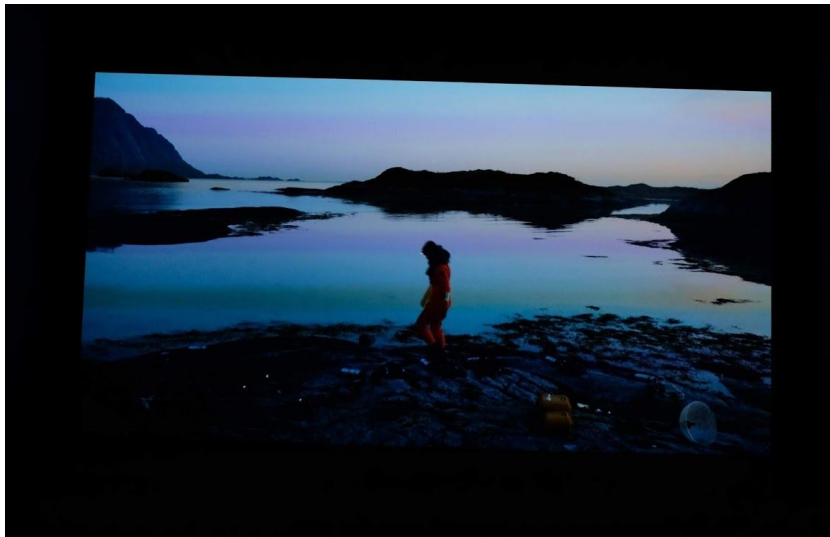available to read in The Lobby.

Figure 3

READING RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE ARTISTS

Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect by Mel Y. Chen
"*Toxic sexes—Perverting pollution and queering hormone disruption*" by
Malin Ah-King and Eva Hayward, in *O-Zone: A Journal of Object-Oriented
Studies* (Issue 1, Autumn 2013).

BETWEEN
BODIES

Figure 4

Figure 5

Gently touch or recline your body
onto the seismic communication
instrument. Stay a while.

Figure 6

Figure 7

Figure 8

Figure 9

Figure 10

Figure 11

Figure 12

Annie Xia

Overview

The Nintendo 3Ds Guide: Louvre is a piece of software designed for visitors to the Louvre Museum in France. The software can be used to experience the art in both the museum and at home [2]. In order to make the museum more engaging and interactive, the Louvre allows visitors to rent guides on a Nintendo 3Ds. The guide consists of GPS, 3D Imaging, and art information specifically made for the museum. Users state that the 3DS Guide made the experience more manageable as well as made the whole Louvre "resemble a Zeldaesque labyrinth ready to be explored" by relating the museum to a game on the console [1, 2]. The use of the 3DS combines art museum with the engaging aspect of gaming aimed to have children and adults manage their experience. Because of the familiar console, most found the guide intuitive and easy to use while others had more trouble [1]. Through the guide, users are able to view photographs, listen to audio commentary, see and zoom in high resolution images, and parse through 3D models and video commentaries about the artwork [1]. Because of the game console, the guide is often rented for children rather than adults who find the interface confusing and difficult to use [5]. Playing on gaming consoles such as Nintendo 3Ds falls in the domain of a younger demographic which contrasts with our goal of creating museum experiences more engaging for adult users rather than children [4].

Analysis

Some of the limitations to the guide are that it does not cover every exhibit, it does not take questions from users, and the GPS can sometimes be misleading about destinations [1]. Because you can only purchase or rent the game at the museum, visitors are unable to plan their visit ahead of seeing the exhibits which can be difficult for users that are pushed for time or enjoy planning before visits [3]. Another issue that users found was the short battery life that forced them to travel back to the front of the museum to trade out [5]. In my interview, my user expressed frustration in being rushed in art museums. This could severely impact users that are pushed for time or like an organized route to take in museums like some of our interviewees and personas. The guide is unable to adapt to the ever-changing museum exhibits. Because our interviewees specified their desire for a museum layout flow that would showcase the culture as a whole, the lack of flexibility in the guide would cause issues with visitors looking for a piece that the museum had removed or moved [5].

[1]

[1]

[5]

[1] Tieryas, Peter. "How Navigating the Louvre with a Nintendo 3DS Made Me Rethink the Future of Gaming, Art, and Virtual Reality." *Tor.com*, 26 Apr. 2015, www.tor.com/2015/03/27/how-navigating-the-louvre-with-a-nintendo-3ds-made-me-rethink-the-future-of-gaming-art-and-virtual-reality/.
[2] Nintendo. "Official Site - Louvre Guide for the Nintendo 3DS." *Artwork At Your Leisure - Louvre Guide for Nintendo 3DS*, 2013, louvreguide.nintendo.com/.
[3] Noordijk, Sander. "Nintendo 3DS Guide: Louvre Review - Review." *Nintendo World Report*, 21 Feb. 2014, www.nintendoworldreport.com/review/36655/nintendo-3ds-guide-louvre-review.
[4] Singh, Naina. "It's Game On At The Louvre!" *AMT Lab @ CMU*, 11 Jan. 2012, amt-lab.org/blog/2012/01/its-game-on-at-the-louvre.
[5] Schramm, Mike. "Touring the Louvre with a 3DS." *Engadget*, 19 Apr. 2012, www.engadget.com/2012/04/19/touring-the-louvre-with-a-3ds/.

Vishaka Nirmal

Overview

The Cooper Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum was renovated in 2013. The original space started out as Andrew Carnegie's home in 1902 [1]. The museum was in need of a renovation based on its disconnect with the extravagant exterior and futuristic art inside. The specific product that helped the museum tie itself into present times was The Pen. The Pen served as a ticket within the museum and allow you to interact and be actively engaged with the art available.

Product Goals

When creating The Pen, the design team came up with a set of design requirements. These design principles include:

1. "Not a barrier to entry – it just works
2. Extension of the content – the exhibitions are the focus, not The Pen
3. Belongs in the museum – The Pen experience is well designed, useful and beautiful.
4. Encourages discovery – The Pen unlocks content about the exhibitions
5. Part of an ecosystem – The Pen interaction is part of the larger museum experience
6. Context of use – Pen interaction and use is location dependent
7. Direct manipulation – The Pen enables new interactions with content" [1]

Benefits

As seen in Figure 1, The Pen was fully launched in 2015 and became a "museum diary," which allowed users to pick up a pen at the start of their experience, use it to draw on their interactive tables, and collect works of art along the way [1]. In terms of the design principles, The Pen was able to successfully belong as a part of the museum process. Similarly, The Pen was a success in that it allowed for more interaction and engagement. The Museum saw that in just three weeks, 11,000 visitors used about 9,000 pens, which excluded the group of children under age six who were not given a pen [1]. In this time period, the pens were used to save over 200,000 pieces and saved over 7,000 user-made designs [1]. These aligned with their design principles of encouraging discovery as well as direct manipulation of content. The Pen, along with the interactive tables, allow for a fully immersive ecosystem of interactivity within the museum, as seen in Figure 2.

Figure 1. Information Card about The Pen [1].

Figure 2. Interactive Tables at the Cooper Hewitt [1].

Users were able to easily gain access to The Pens and were given one as they were given their tickets, and it did not become a 'barrier to entry.' The Pen allowed users to look at the content, and save them with their Pens for later extension of information or context. For specific objects, this allows the museum to put up more information when looking at the saved work online after the user's visit. Where users wouldn't think to

read all the background or information at the museum, they have access to all the information about each piece they saved when they go home. This use of The Pen, rather than a phone to take pictures or look up information kept users more engaged with the art rather than their mobile devices.

Detractions

Although The Pen was ultimately a success, it does have shortcomings that are not seen on a daily basis but still question the Pen's future in the museum. When previously visiting the museum, the Cooper Hewitt had different databases for each type of visitor. Some were considered members, some just regular visitors, and some would be donors. When introducing The Pen, the databases had to be combined, forcing the museum to look at all their users as just visitors, which wasn't ideal for the museum [1]. In addition, the Pen does not require any email or identification, making the specific user's experience anonymous. Although praised by some users, this detracts from the museum's understanding of their visitor base. In addition, one of the main problems encountered with The Pen was the issue of one visitor buying tickets for multiple people. This requires extra work by the museum to pair the Pens with different accounts, even when one account was used for buying the ticket [1]. Apart from data, the main detraction that The Pen may come with is the lack of interacting with museum staff. Other than the introduction by staff about The Pen, they are not technically required throughout the exhibits to answer questions and explain art. This would detract from the social experience if users choose to gain their information from The Pen, rather than the staff.

[1] Chan, Sebastian and Aaron Cope. "Strategies against architecture: interactive media and transformative technology at Cooper Hewitt." MW2015: Museums and the Web 2015. Published April 6, 2015. Consulted October 20, 2015. http://mw2015.museumsandtheweb.com/paper/strategies-against-architecture-interactive-media-andtransformative-technology-at-cooper-hewitt/