

The Relevant Art Museum: Views on the role of a 21st century museum

by

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Abstract

This thesis explores the role and relevance of art museums in today's society through nine online video interviews with Californian museum directors, programmers and a curator, as well as, architects and other experts. These videos live on a website I have created, *The Relevant Art Museum*¹.

My interest in the subject of museum relevance began when I moved from Finland to Los Angeles for ten months on a fellowship for a Master's degree program at USC Annenberg's School of Journalism. In Finland, recent public debate had been raging over whether or not Helsinki should acquire a Guggenheim museum. When I landed in Los Angeles in August 2012, the local art world there, too, was in turmoil because the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) had just forced the resignation of its long-time chief curator, Paul Schimmel. Even though the two discussions seemed at first worlds apart, I realized there were many commonalities --one of them being the question of museums' "raison d'être."

The relevance of a cultural institution is hard to measure, as it means different things for different museums depending on their mission, audience and location. For this project I chose to look through the lens of Southern California. California is home for 135,000 arts-related businesses, organizations and institutions (Americans for the Arts 2012). In

¹ <http://www.helenaliikanen.com/museumproject>

comparison to Finland, Southern Californian museums experiment a lot with audience engagement and offer a wide range of public programming from yoga classes to concerts in order to acquire and sustain relevance. Of the nine interviewees, most do not view the art in their museums as a sufficient public program. Most believe that it is their obligation as museums to provide additional services surrounding their exhibitions and permanent collections that contribute toward making their museums essential to civic and public life. By asking people to participate in a variety of activities, California museums hope to be effective institutionally for adding value to people's lives.

In alignment with the museums I have covered in this journalism thesis project, I too invite the audience to participate. Visitors to my website may comment and share their views, as well as add to and follow its Pinterest board created in collaboration with the existing Pinterest users. The Internet and social media extend the journalism story, and enhance the visit to museums by collecting and sharing relevant – as well as random -- information.

1. Introduction

“Do you want to paint with us today,” asked a young lady. The NextGen Boone Children’s Gallery at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art was full of children and parents drawing. I looked at my 10 month-old daughter and laughed. Clearly she was too young to paint, but I already knew we would be back.

LACMA’s Next Generation program is an example of one of many ways that art museums today engage their visitors. Institutions that used to base their existence on three things -- collection, preservation and display -- are increasingly providing services for the public. Stephen E. Weil, a museum philosopher, described the realignment as *“from being about something to being for somebody”* (Weil 1999, 170). It is no longer enough for a museum to hang art on the walls or place sculptures in the galleries and leave it at that, the museum audience wants context *and* engagement.

Today’s art museums compete with a vast number of art and entertainment providers. People choose where to spend their money and free time, and if those experiences are virtual or real-life. Museums must constantly update in order to compete for attention in contemporary society’s 24/7 technology-driven landscape and retain relevance. *“A museum has to be of quality and speak to its visitors the way that matters to them,”* Selma Holo, the director of the USC Fisher Museum said in her interview for this project (Holo 2012).

Holo is not alone. The eight other people interviewed for this thesis share her concern about speaking to museumgoers in ways that make a difference, but not all take the same approach. Some worry that by letting audiences take the lead, the original purpose of an art museum will be forgotten; others have less trouble handing over space and time in the museum for extra-art activities. Here are some of their opinions:

Nina Simon, for instance, is a museum consultant and director for the Santa Cruz Museum of Art and History, who believes that the only way museums can connect with today's public is to ask it to participate. *"When people can actively participate with cultural institutions, those places become central to cultural and community life,"* she wrote in her online book, *"The Participatory Museum"* (Simon 2010). Holly Jerger, the director of public programs at the Craft and Folk Art Museum shared this position, and her museum offers individual experiences where people use their hands: *"Our goal would be to offer everyone some sort of experience that relates to their personal interest and journey"* (Jerger 2012). But for Stephanie Barron, the senior curator and head of modern art at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), there are certain lines museums should not cross: *"I think museums are social spaces, but if there is more emphasis on the social space than on the art, I am not sure we are very different from The Grove² or the shopping mall"* (Barron 2012). By contrast, Marc Allen, the executive director of Machine Project, didn't see any problem in the rethinking of museums and

² The Grove is a shopping and entertainment center in Los Angeles.

their role in society. He sees an experience in a cultural institution as a constitution of many things. For some it can only serve as a “place to eat pie,” he said in his interview (Allen 2012).

While the audience may require art museums to offer more experiences than before, the art itself has gone through a transformation, too. The boundaries of today’s visual art are almost impossible to define. The artwork no longer wants to stay on the wall and, in recent years, dance and performance art have become an integral part of art museum exhibitions (Rocco 2012). The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) has even included video games in its collections (Kozinn 2012).

Framing the concept of relevance is complicated. Art museums speak to many different audiences: something that matters to one can be completely irrelevant for another. An art museum can also be relevant on a personal, local and/or national level. A museum can provide a relaxing place for one sole visitor or function as a collector of the memories for an entire community or offer cultural experiences for international tourists or a combination of all three. How should relevance then be measured? Ticket sales and visitor numbers don’t tell the whole story, even though they are often used to prove the worthiness of an institution (Koster 2006, 206). Selma Holo and Mari-Tere Alvarez, Ph.D., suggest that every museum should be able to demonstrate its own criteria of relevance in its own disciplines, whether it is modern art, science or gardens.

“Each needs to be able to provide evidence that the institution remains relevant to the public and that society will be worse without it.” (Holo and Álvarez 2009, 38).

Art museums can also be seen as relevant pieces of architecture, rescuers of entire cities or areas. The famous Bilbao effect, in which a single museum building managed to revitalize a withering Basque city, inspired the museum world – and still does. *“Bilbao changed everything. Cities are still collecting museums as pieces of civic pride. People are less interested in what is inside the museum than actually having a museum”,* said Mimi Zeiger, an architecture writer and critic in an interview (Zeiger 2012).

Architect Edwin Chan, a former design partner at Gehry Partners, the designers of Bilbao museum, sees that for a museum to really succeed, you need to have more than a shell. *“Obviously the building has a very strong iconic architectural presence and unfortunately that is the only thing people talk about. I believe that the building is successful not only because it is strong architecturally but also because it has got the content to fill it”* (Chan 2012).

2. Choice of medium

As participatory and open as art museums want to be, many are still very strict about filming and photographing on their premises. I encountered several problems during my project: while one museum allowed audio recording but no video equipment, another

let me bring a video camera but not a tripod. A third wasn't interested in welcoming me at all. The explanations for these restrictions varied from copyright issues to possible insurance cases.

Dissimilar stances on the taking of pictures or videos in museums were the recent subject of an article in the *New York Times* (Bernstein 2012). The article pointed to the Brooklyn Museum as a rare example, where permission to allow photography is incorporated in its agreements with lenders and artists. This museum even encourages visitors to share photos on Flickr. Nina Simon endorsed the museum's policy in the article. *"Museums should prioritize providing opportunities for visitors to engage in ways that are familiar and comfortable to them — and that means using cameras."*

Partly as a consequence of the problems I encountered when attempting to gather video material, I decided to realize this project as a website rather than as an extensive broadcast documentary. The website (www.helenaliikanen.com/museumproject) has the added benefit of allowing people to engage in conversation more easily than a TV program would have. The site is designed to look like a museum gallery; video interview is posted on the "wall" or home page as a piece of art. All of the content is then shared on social media (Pinterest), which further encourages audience interaction with the interviewees. The website also offers an eight-minute documentary on the subject for those who prefer long form storytelling over short conversational videos.

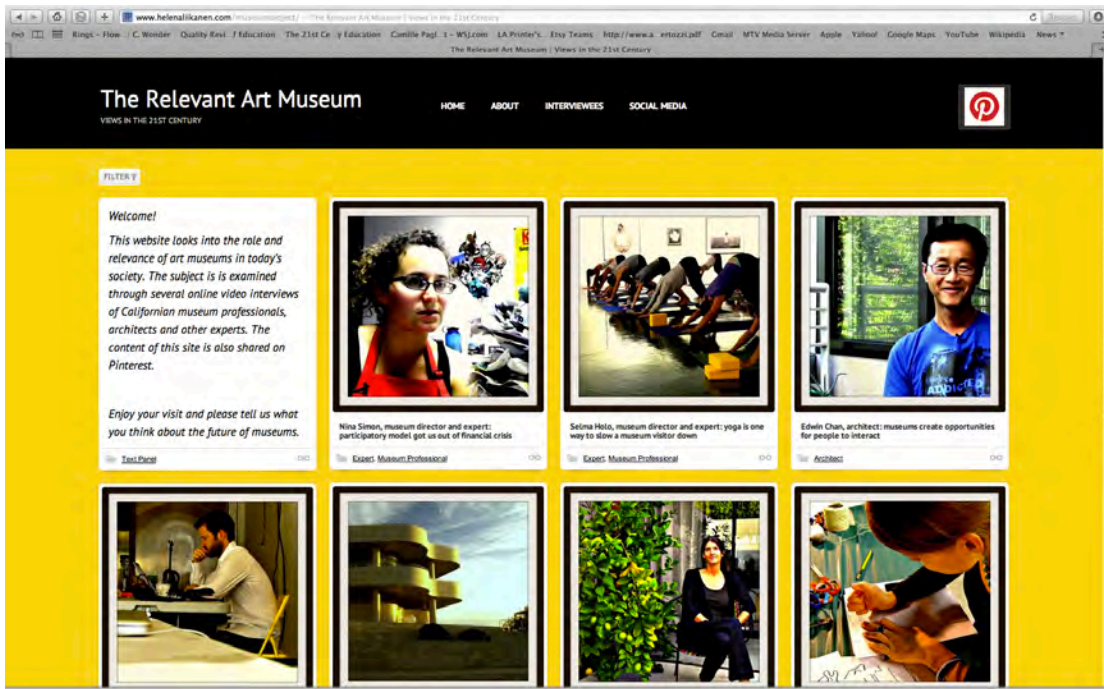


Figure 1: Screenshot of the website “The Relevant Art Museum”

The website is built using the WordPress theme, Shaken Grid, which closely approximates the look and feel of a museum gallery. The home page presents “the exhibition” of images that are photo-linked to the actual video posts. Videos have been uploaded to the site by using Vimeo. Underneath each separate video post there is a short introductory to the video interview. The menu on the top of the main page includes an about page, which explains the project, a presentation of the interviewees and a brief on the use of social media.

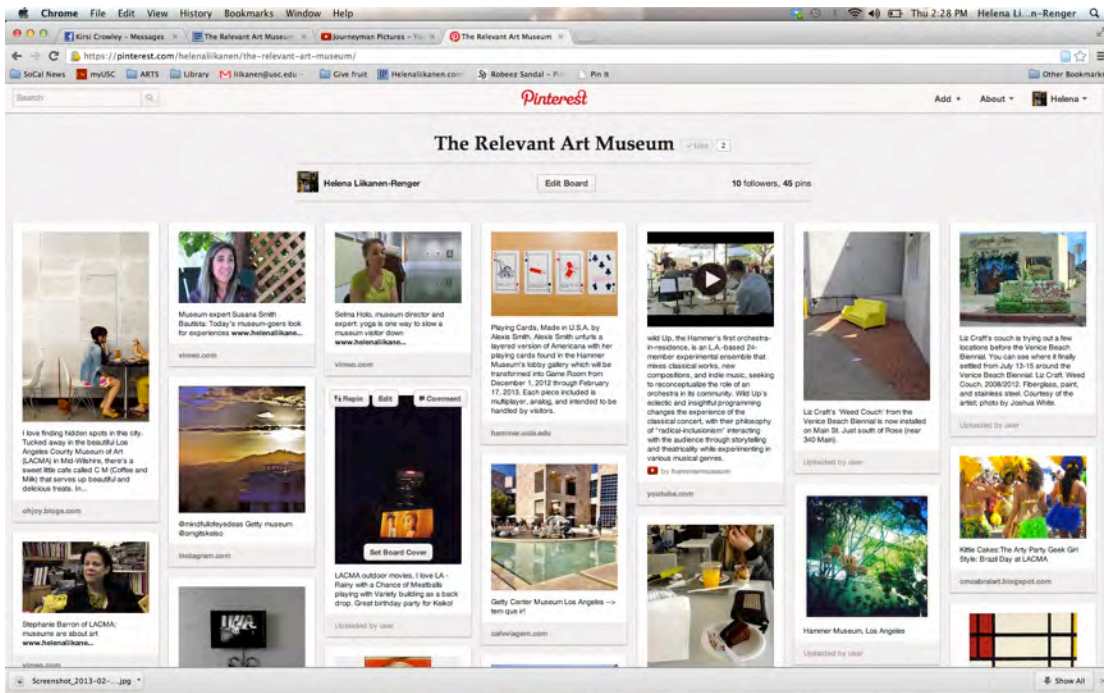


Figure 2: Screenshot of the Pinterest board “The Relevant Art Museum”

All of the original video content of the site is shared on Pinterest, which is a sort of gallery itself. Its boards are like the museums walls where curators, or in this case users, choose to hang or “pin” random images they find interesting primarily from the Internet. Above all, for my purposes, Pinterest potentially reaches a large audience. According to a collaborative of museum social media projects called Museum140, over 500 museums are already on Pinterest (Museum140 2012). And a recent study revealed that one of the most popular Pinterest themes is the subject of arts and crafts, which constitute as much as 12.4 % of all Pinterest boards (Moore 2012).

Many media outlets, including the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal* and *Washington Post* have successfully experimented with storytelling on Pinterest boards. Unlike many

of theirs, my project's Pinterest board will be a mixture of my own material and "pinned" relevant material from other Pinterest users. In this respect, my story is made in co-operation with the audience. Audience / visitors play a central role in how museums will develop in the future, so I believe that by giving them a possibility to have a say adds value to the actual piece of journalism. Audience's feedback and content can also provide valuable information to the readers/viewers of this story.

Discussion about the relevance of museums is far from over, and my website and Pinterest board make it possible to extend the research and debate for an infinite amount of time. More interviews, videos, photos and text can be added – which reflects the times we are in, when "relevance" continually shifts and little is permanent or static not even in museums which were once thought to be the bastions of holding history still for all to study.

3) Interviewees

California is a home of creative people, whether it is film, art or new technology. In California, there are over 135 000 arts-related businesses and organizations that employ over half a million people (Americans for the Arts 2012). All interviews for this project were conducted in California, and only one outside of Los Angeles. Los Angeles is the home of great art institutions and art schools like California Institute of Arts and Art Center College of Design in Pasadena. It also a city offers a comprehensive range of views on the aspect on the relevance of art museums.

The interview of Los Angeles-born museum director Nina Simon was conducted in Santa Cruz. I saw her as an important addition to the group, because her views on participatory museums are widely followed and have even proven to work at Museum of Art and History in Santa Cruz that recently suffered from economic problems. “For us, moving to this participatory and community based model, was the answer to getting us out of the financial crisis,” she said in her interview.

In order for the audience to learn more about the interviewees, I have created a separate Introductions page on the website, which can be found on the menu bar. The introductions include several links (seen here as underlined text) that lead the visitors to further readings.

Mark Allen is the executive director of [Machine Project](#), an unconventional non-profit storefront arts space in Echo Park, Los Angeles. Allen hosts performances, curates exhibitions and organizes workshops at Machine Project. But Machine Project is also a loose group of artists and performers, who get together to work on projects when invited by cultural institutions. At [LACMA](#) for example, Machine Project organized a 10-hour day of performances in 2008. Allen also serves on the Board of Directors of the [Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts](#) in New York City. [Learn more about Mark Allen and Machine Project.](#)

Stephanie Barron is senior curator and head of modern art at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA). She has curated many award-winning exhibitions, such as *David Hockney: A Retrospective* (1988); *“Degenerate Art”: The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany* (1991); *Made in California 1900-2000: Art, Image and Identity* (2000); and *Ken Price Sculpture: A Retrospective* (2012). Barron’s exhibitions and publications have three times been voted the best in the United States by the Association of International Art Critics. [Learn more about Stephanie Barron and her work in in Ken Price Sculpture: Retrospective.](#)

Susana Smith Bautista is an expert on museums, digital technology, the arts and strategic communication. She recently completed her Ph.D. as a Provost Fellow at the Annenberg School of Communication and Journalism, University of Southern California. In her research Smith Bautista focused on museums in the digital age. She has 20 years

of experience in the art world in Los Angeles, New York and Greece. [Learn more about Susana Smith Bautista on her website.](#)

Edwin Chan worked for over 25 years with Frank O. Gehry & Associates and later Gehry Partners, where he was the design partner on many notable projects, including the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao and the Weisman Art Museum in Minneapolis. Chan has also designed exhibitions, notably the blockbuster exhibition *Art of the Motorcycle Exhibition* at the Guggenheim NYC, Bilbao and Las Vegas. He has received many awards for his work, including the “Chevalier de l’Ordre des Arts et des Lettres” from the Republic of France. Chan recently established his own business: EC3. [Learn about Edwin Chan’s thoughts on inspiration and design in his interview on thirtyconversationsondesign.com.](#)

Dr. Selma Holo is the director of [USC Fisher Museum of Art](#) and a Professor of Art History. She joined USC in 1981 as the director of the Museum Studies graduate program, a position she held for over 25 years. Holo has also served as Curator for Acquisitions of Works of Art at the Norton Simon Museum in Pasadena. She specializes in the art history and museums of Los Angeles, Mexico and Spain. Holo is also the co-editor of the book, “Beyond the Turnstile: Making the Case for Museums and Sustainable Values,” which examines museums and their influence in society and culture. [Learn about Selma Holo’s work in her lecture on Museums and the World at Northeastern University Center.](#)

Holly Jerger is the director of public programs at the [Craft and Folk Art Museum](#) (CAFAM) She is also a contemporary printmaker, whose work has been shown in many art exhibitions. Jerger teaches many of CAFAM's programs, such as the "Community Printmaking Session." [Learn about Jerger's recent exhibits on Artslant.](#)

Nina Simon is the executive director of [Museum of Art and History \(MAH\)](#) at the [McPherson Center in Santa Cruz](#) since 2011. Simon is a well-know museum consultant and an exhibit-design expert. She is also the author of the book [Participatory Museum](#) and of the popular blog [Museum 2.0](#). Before joining the MAH Simon worked as the curator of Tech Virtual at the Tech Museum of Innovation in San Jose. [Learn more on how Simon wants to change the museums in her TEDx presentation.](#)

Linda Taalman is a Los Angeles-based architect and the co-director of [Taalman and Koch Architecture](#). Taalman is also an assistant professor at Woodbury School of Architecture. When she started her practice 15 years ago in New York, her first project was to transform the old factory building into a museum, the Dia: Beacon. The project established a long-term interest in art spaces. Since then she has worked on a number of projects in arts spaces, galleries, studios and artists' homes. [Learn about Taalman's views on art and architecture in Southern California in KCET Artbound.](#)

Dr. **Peter Tokofsky** is the education specialist for academic and adult programs at The J. Paul Getty Museum and Associate Adjunct Professor at UCLA, where he teaches classes in European folklore, cultural history and public art. Before joining the Getty, Tokofsky worked as the Executive Director of Craft and Folk Art Museum (CAFAM) in Los Angeles. Learn more about Tokofsky's work at the Getty on Photo District News.

4) Video interviews

The video interviews on the website are approximately 1.30 to 2.30 minutes long, lengths that have been proven to hold interest on YouTube. Here I have attached the screenshots of the different video interview pages and the introduction texts of each video as they appear on the website. I have also included the transcripts of the video interviews. The following is in in alphabetical order.

4.1. Mark Allen of Machine Project: it is not critical to define the right way to use a museum

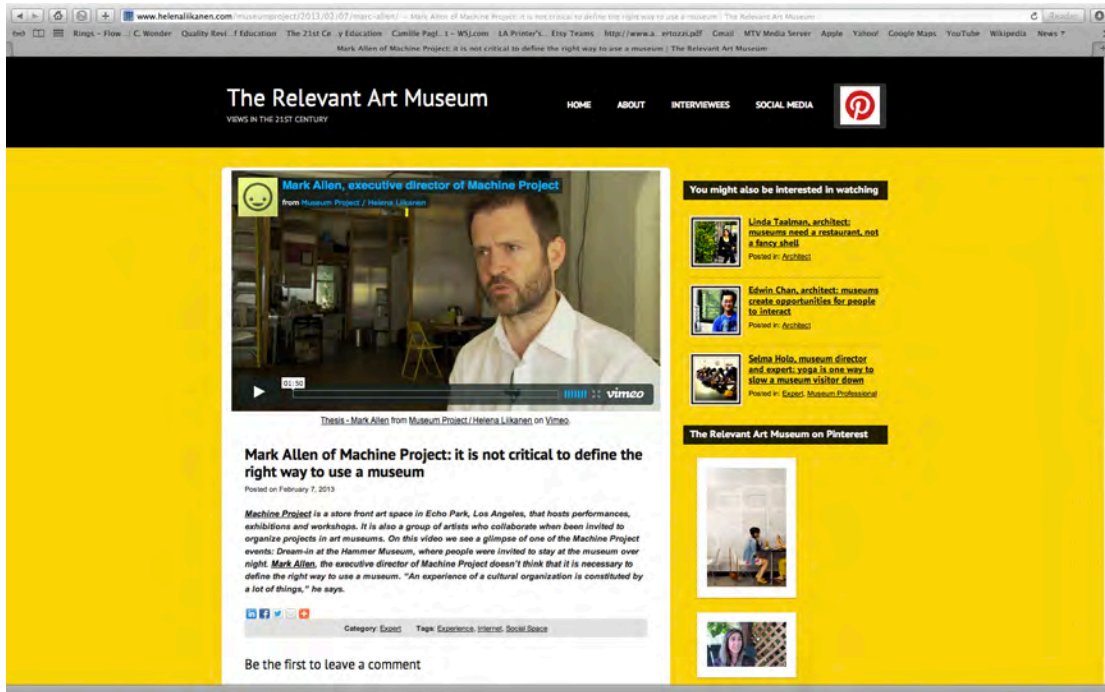


Figure 3: Screenshot of the interview page of Mark Allen

Introduction:

Machine Project is a store front art space in Echo Park, Los Angeles that hosts performances, exhibitions and workshops. It is also a group of artists who collaborate when been invited to organize projects in art museums. On this video we see a glimpse of one of the Machine Project events: *Dream-in at the Hammer Museum*, where people were invited to stay at the museum over night. Mark Allen, the executive director of Machine Project doesn't think that it is necessary to define the right way to use a museum. "An experience of a cultural organization is constituted by a lot of things," he says (Allen 2012).

Transcription of video:

MA: I think the experience of [a] cultural organization is constituted by a lot of things. Some of it the might be looking at art, but some of it is looking at things with other people at the same time and some of it maybe eating pie. I think it is not so critical to define what is the right way to use the museum and what is the wrong way or what is the good way to use the museum and what is a bad way. I don't think it really matters. It is just a space for people to get together and think about art.

[Text: Mark Allen is the executive director of Machine Project, a non-profit performance space in Los Angeles. In 2010 Machine Project hosted an over-night event called Dream-in at the Hammer Museum]

MA: Well, everybody slept and then the next day we had a camera crew that went around and very gently woke up people at dawn and asked them what they were dreaming of. And so, sometimes people wouldn't remember their dreams, sometimes they had very fantastical dreams. A lot of people would say things like I dreamed I was sleeping in a museum but it wasn't this museum, it was like a different museum.

MA: Maybe 50 years ago natural history museum was a reasonable place to try and learn about natural history. Where as now, one can access enormous quantities of information from your desk. And then the question becomes, what is it about being in

the specific presence of objects... what does that provide to you that a network experience can't?

MA: The public is more interested in experiences that happen with other people in a specific moment in time. My thesis would be that is a corollary response to consuming a lot of culture in virtual forms.

4.2 . Stephanie Barron of LACMA: museums are not shopping malls

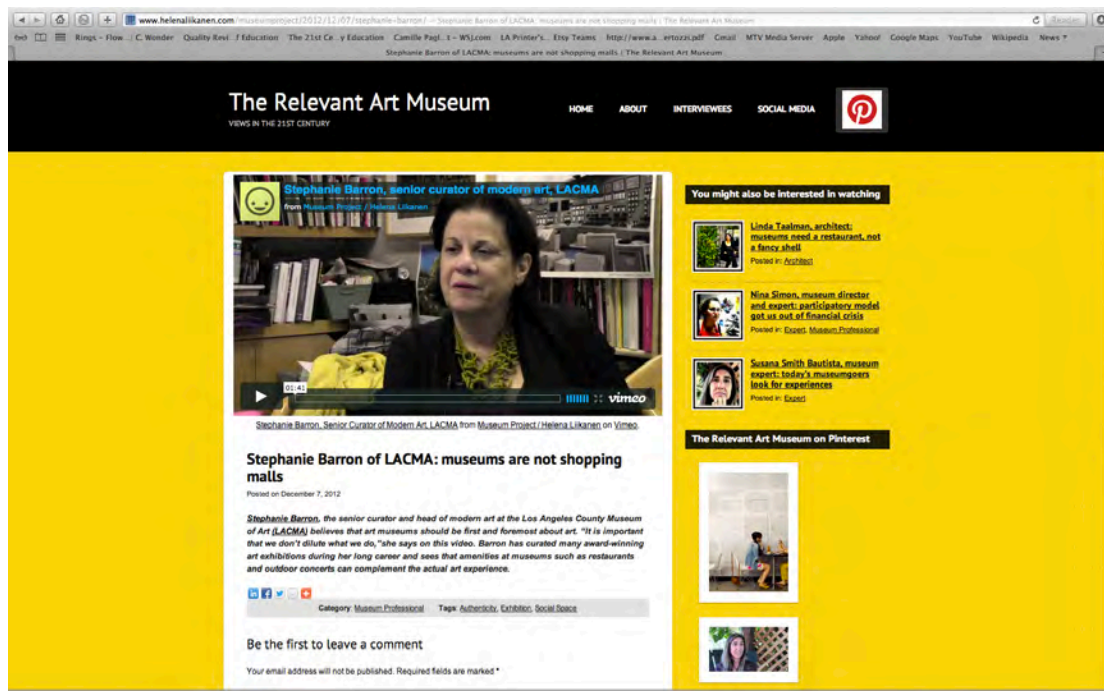


Figure 4: Screenshot of the interview page of Stephanie Barron

Introduction:

Stephanie Barron, the senior curator and head of modern art at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) believes that art museums should be first and foremost about art. “It is important that we don’t dilute what we do,” she says on this video. Barron has

curated many award-winning art exhibitions during her long career and sees that amenities at museums such as restaurants and outdoor concerts can complement the art experience (Barron 2012).

Transcription of video:

SB: I think museums are about art. And I think they are also social spaces, but if there is more emphasis on the social space than on the art, I am not sure we are very different from The Grove or from a shopping mall.

[Text: Stephanie Barron is the senior curator of modern art in Los Angeles County Museum of Art, LACMA.]

SB: I think it is really important that we don't dilute what we do. And I think we need to always remember that we are about the art. I have no problem with complimentary programming, but I think things that are very far afield, I think dilute the meaning of what a museum is.

SB: There is no question that amenities in a museum make an enormous difference. We have seen a tremendous uptick in our attendance and desirability of coming to the museum when you have a good restaurant, you've got a good bar, you offer music. But it is complementary to coming to the museum to experience the art.

SB: I think there has to be some place between gym classes in a museum and it being an

elitist institution. There has to be. And I think it is finding that ground that is what I am interested in.

4.3. Museum expert Susana Smith Bautista: today's museumgoers look for experiences

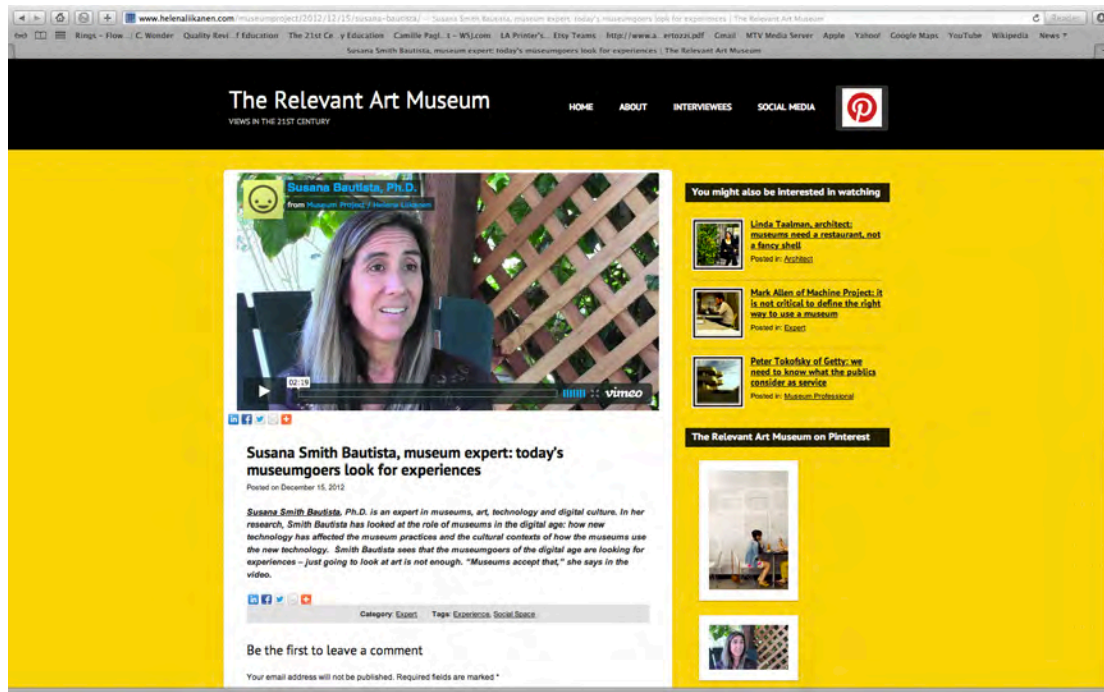


Figure 5: Screenshot of the interview page of Susana Smith Bautista

Introduction:

Susana Smith Bautista, Ph.D. is an expert in museums, art, technology and digital culture. In her research, Smith Bautista has looked at the role of museums in the digital age: how new technology has affected the museum practices and the cultural contexts of how the museums use the new technology. Smith Bautista sees that the museumgoers of the digital age are looking for experiences – just going to look at art is

not enough. "Museums accept that," she says in the video (Smith Bautista 2012).

Transcription of video:

SSB: There are a lot more choices now, as far as where people spend their free time, where people spend their dollars. There is a lot of entertainment competition. There is the movies, there is all kinds of places for people to go to. So museums are aware that they have to compete.

[Text: Susana Smith Bautista is a recent Ph.D. graduate from the USC Annenberg School for Communication & Journalism. She is an expert in museums, art, technology, and digital culture.]

SSB: You have museums that have 5-star restaurants, that have cafés, that have jazz concerts, that have yoga classes, films.... They have become more a part of the social community scene than they were before. And they are okay with that, and the public is ok with that because they see a museum not only as going to see art, but an experience. This is partly how I have seen a place change in the digital age. It is this notion of place slash experience. Where you are not going to a place, you are going to have an experience. You are not going to see a work of art -- well, many people do of course -- but you want an experience. And then after the art you go and have coffee and meet a friend there and you talk. So it is more than just the artwork. And again, museums accept that.

SSB: Museums in the United States have a very broad funding base. They don't rely on government subsidies. They have to fight for their funding. That funding is not only in admissions. But that funding is in foundation, corporate marketing, and individuals. And if the museum is not seen as doing its job; as bringing people in, as being relevant, educating and doing other important work, then they are not going to get the funding. "

4.4. Edwin Chan, architect: museums create opportunities for people to interact

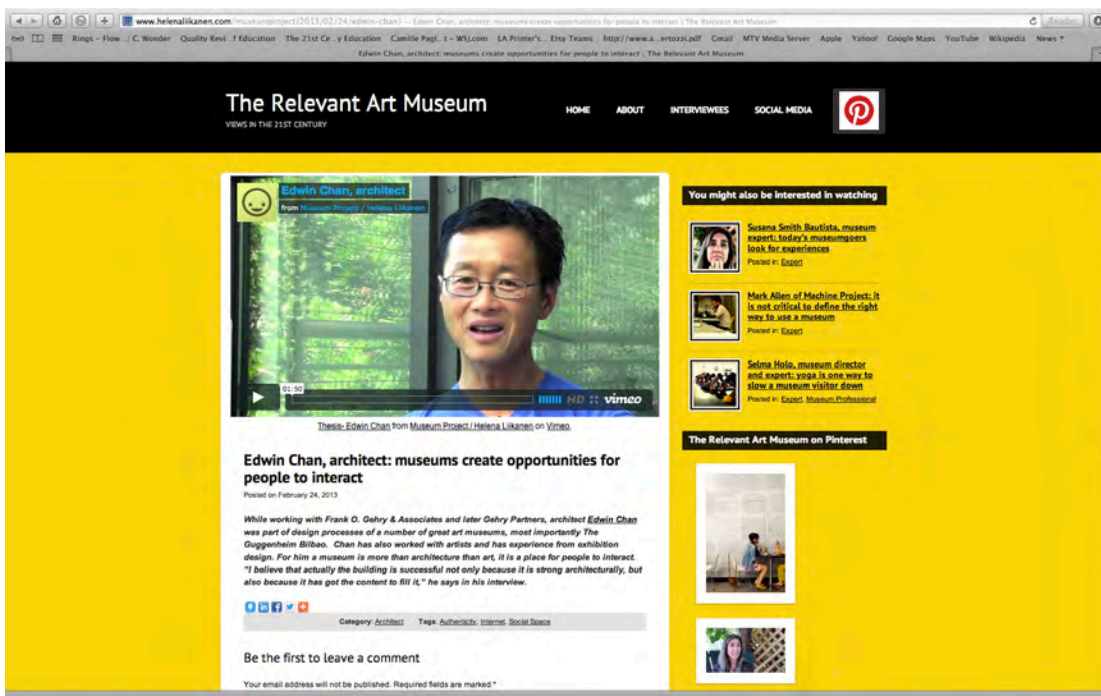


Figure 6: Screenshot of the interview page of Edwin Chan

Introduction:

While working with Frank O. Gehry & Associates and later Gehry Partners, architect Edwin Chan was part of design processes of a number of great art museums, most importantly Guggenheim Bilbao. Chan has also worked with artists and has experience

from exhibition design. For him a museum is more than architecture than art, it is a place for people to interact. “I believe that actually the building is successful not only because it is strong architecturally, but also because it has got the content to fill it,” he says in his interview (Chan 2012).

Transcription of video:

EC: I would be flattered, if the museum actually functions as a cultural place, as a social place, people would just go there to meet other people. That for me is a better use of a museum than just going there and standing in front of a painting, looking at it.

[Text: Edwin Chan worked with Frank O. Gehry Associates and later Gehry Partners for 25 years. He has recently started his own company, EC3. Chan’s projects include the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao and the Weisman Museum in Minneapolis.]

EC: See, I am of the belief that the success of Bilbao in some ways is an alignment of different forces. Obviously the building has a very strong iconic architectural presence and unfortunately that is the only thing people talk about is the look of the building. I believe that actually the building is successful not only because it is strong architecturally, but also because it has got the content to fill it.

EC: You want to find a project that is the perfect fit between I call the hardware and the software. And the software is the art, and the programming and the people. And in the end when you create architecture you have to remember that ultimately the museum is

there to support the art and to reinforce the life of the local people. Bilbao is successful only in that sense.

EC: Nothing can replace the tactile of this kind of encounter, this kind of urban... That is what urbanism is about. It is about creating these kinds of opportunities for people to interact. And I think museum should play that kind of a role. And the art in some way precipitates that. Maybe that is kind of one way to think about it.

4.5. Selma Holo, museum director and expert: yoga is one way to slow a museum visitor down

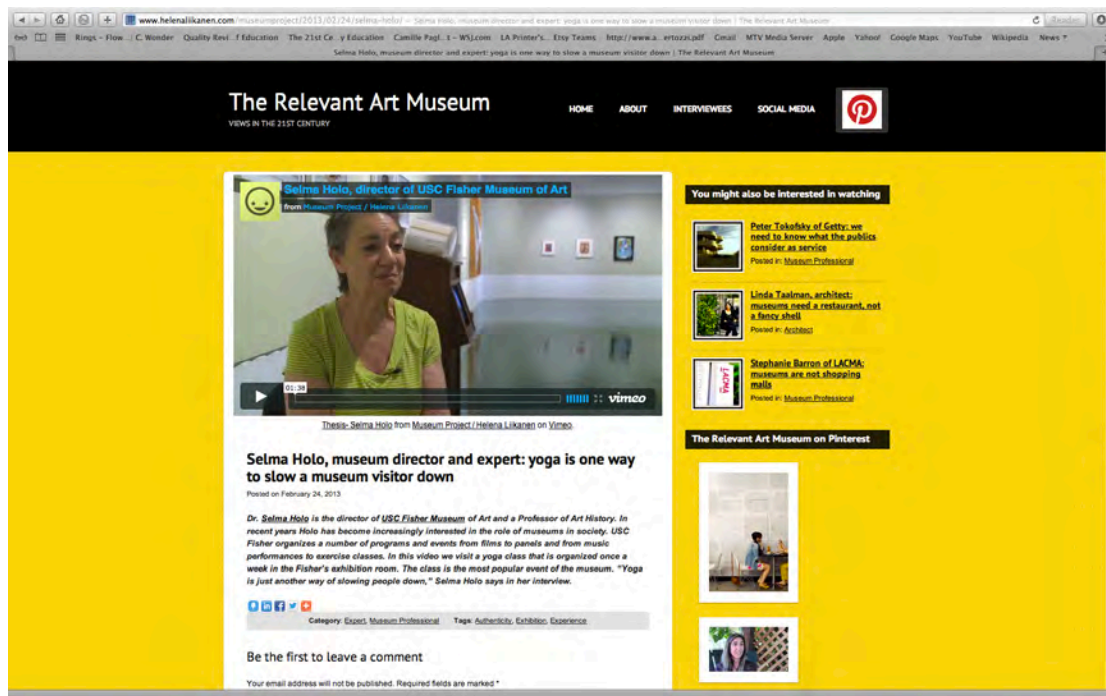


Figure 7: Screenshot of the interview page of Selma Holo

Introduction:

Dr. **Selma Holo** is the director of USC Fisher Museum of Art and a Professor of Art History. In recent years Holo has become increasingly interested in the role of museums in society. USC Fisher organizes a number of programs and events from films to panels and from music performances to exercise classes. In this video we visit a yoga class that is organized once a week in the Fisher's exhibition room. The class is the most popular event of the museum. "Yoga is just another way of slowing people down," Selma Holo says in her interview (Holo 2012).

Transcription of video:

SH: People in a museum are known to spend not more than eight seconds in front of work of art. When you spend eight seconds in front of work of art and that artist spent two years making it, there is something wrong.

[Text: Selma Holo is the director of USC Fisher Museum of Art. The yoga classes are the most popular events of the museum.]

SH: Yoga is just another way of slowing people down, as far as I am concerned. They come, they come with their yoga mats, they lie down or twist themselves into a pretzel in front of a work of art. But whether they like it or not, they are in the middle of a number of works of arts, they are looking at something for a rather long period of time. And I am convinced something sticks!"

SH: We are looking for a kind of participation, whether it is willful looking or whether it is a kind of performative acting in some way. We want people to be engaged, and that is something we didn't care too much about before. We just wanted them to come, click off that they came, walk through and that was good enough. They are not going to come, if that is all we do. And we want them to come back, make them feel that this is part of their living experience.

SH: We all have to make a case for our indispensability to society. Hospitals we know, we will be dead if we don't have them. But libraries have to make the case – in the time of the Internet, do books really matter? And they are working to make the case. The museums have to make the case that authenticity of experience in the face of works of art are important to your lives and will help you to become a richer, more inquisitive, a more creative person yourself.

4.6. Holly Jerger of the Craft and Folk Art Museum: exhibitions are springboards for workshops

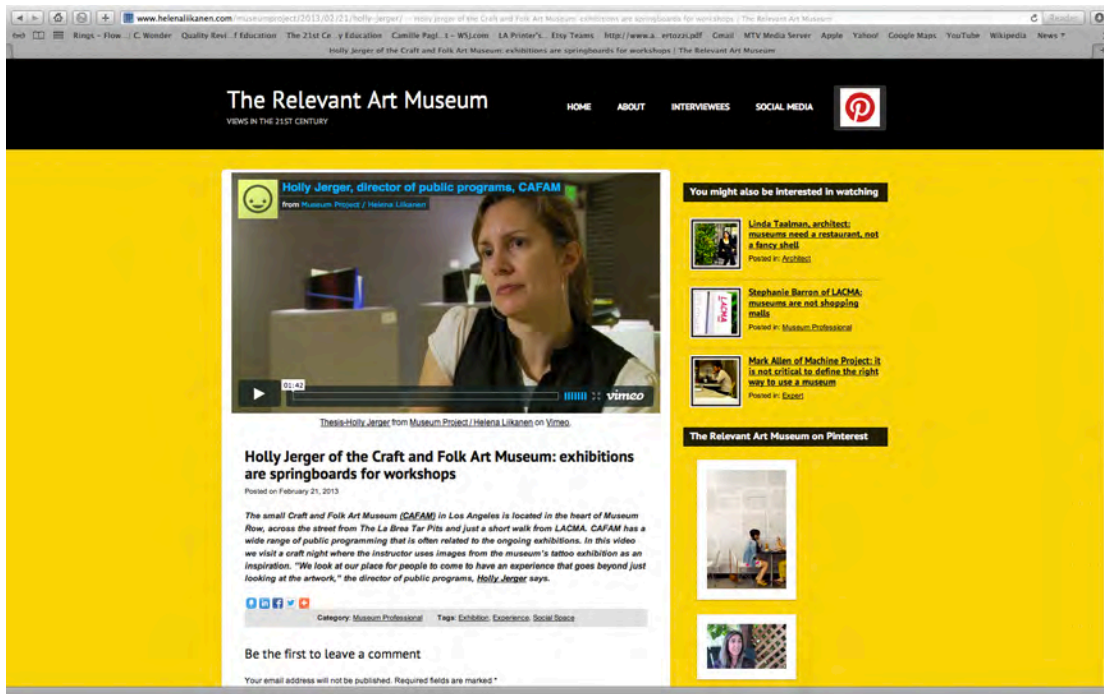


Figure 8: Screenshot of the interview page of Holly Jerger

Introduction:

The small Craft and Folk Art Museum (CAFAM) in Los Angeles is located in the heart of Museum Row, across the street from the La Brea Tar Pits and just a short walk from LACMA. CAFAM has a wide range of public programming that is often related to the ongoing exhibitions. In this video we visit a craft night where the instructor uses images from the museum's tattoo exhibition as an inspiration. "We look at our place for people to come to have an experience that goes beyond just looking at the artwork," the director of public programs, Holly Jerger says (Jerger 2012).

Transcription of video:

HJ: I think museums sort of traditionally were maybe more collection based. We have these objects, the public comes to see these objects. Where now it is... It is still about the objects and coming to look at them, but also I think museums are looking at their exhibitions MORE as a springboard to look at other topics. It can be using the glasswork in this exhibition as the bases of a hands-on workshop.

[Text: Holly Jerger is the director of public programming at the Craft and Folk Art Museum in Los Angeles. This participatory event is called ETSY Craft Night.]

Instructor: Then there are instructions for everybody. The instructions are on the front of how to punch it and then there are instructions on the back if you wanted to add the stich detailing. There are two easy stiches, one that is a solid line [...]

HJ: We look at our place for people to come to have an experience that goes beyond just looking at the artwork.

HJ: Our goal would be to offer everyone some sort of experience that relates to their own personal interest and journey.

HJ: I think for a certain segment of the public given their own interest and upbringing, they naturally view museums as something as valuable to them. But I think that the vast majority of the public doesn't do that automatically.

HJ: I think museums are thinking what do individuals want from their experience here versus we have the fantastic artwork that everybody is going to fluk to see. So yes, I think you are kind of competing with that in a certain degree. You have to prove why you are relevant to people.

4.7. Nina Simon, museum director and expert: participatory model got us out of financial crisis

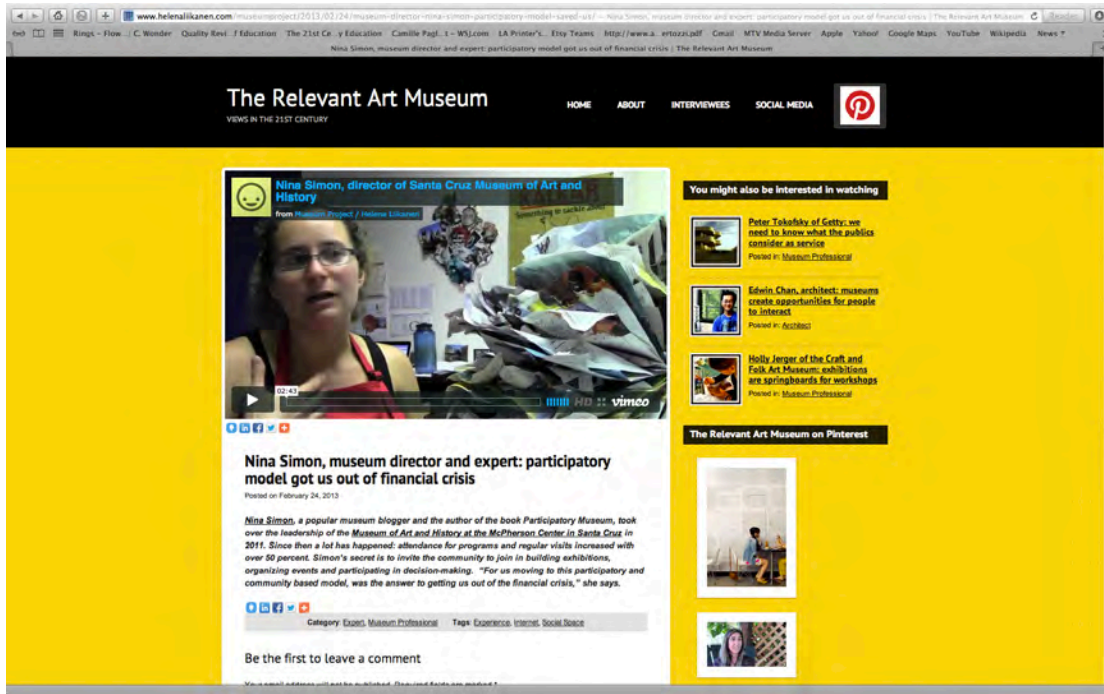


Figure 9: Screenshot of the interview page of Nina Simon

Introduction:

Nina Simon, a popular museum blogger and author of the book *Participatory Museum*, took over the leadership of the Museum of Art and History at the McPherson Center in Santa Cruz in 2011. Since then a lot has happened: attendance for programs and regular visits increased over 50 percent. Simon's secret is to invite the community to join in building exhibitions, organizing events and participating in decision-making. “For us, moving to this participatory and community based model, was the answer to getting us out of the financial crisis,” she says (Simon 2013).

Transcription of video:

NS: For us, moving to this participatory and community based model, was the answer to getting us out of the financial crisis.

[Text: Nina Simon is the director of Santa Cruz Museum of Art and History. She is also a popular blogger author of the book Participatory Museum.]

NS: It is true that there are huge controversies especially in Los Angeles right now on academic curation versus pandering spectacles with everything going on with MoCA. But fundamentally there is that question, well how are you going to reality check against how people actually use your museum. And that is how you test your relevance. You don't test it with lofty statements that aren't in some way justifiable by data. So for example: one of the things I know about our museum is that 70 percent of people who come, come on a Friday night. So they are coming to one of these events we will have tonight. So does that mean that the Friday night programming is highly relevant and the rest of the week exhibitions are not relevant? Not necessarily. It means that a lot of people are coming on a Friday night. From my perspective as a director, I shouldn't just say: ok, that is interesting. I have to really think about it. For most people the face of the museum is an event that is happening tonight. So it is really important that that event is not just a party, that that event feels like the mission of our museum. And is as much of an expression of our mission as our exhibition would be. It is not the fake front of getting people in and the other is where the real work is done. No. It is all real work.

NS: If a museum is funded for life, do what ever the heck you want. But if not, you have to really think about how are we going to make this of service, how are we going to make this of value. And honestly, I guess, I actually don't feel like you should be doing whatever you want. I feel like the downside or the flipside of this is museums or symphonies or any kind of organization that functionally just become tax havens for the small group of wealthy people who support and love them and are not really a public service but they are draining public resources. I think there is a real ethical question there.

NS: I get an email every week from a director somewhere in the country who is saying -- you know -- we don't know how we can be relevant to the young people in our community or we don't know how to fix our financial situation. And they are looking for answers. Our answer is not the answer for every place but we have had a tremendous turnaround and tremendous success just by saying: hey we think based on the research that here is where people are, here where is the opportunity is to do good and to be supported when doing it. Let's just go all in. What is the worst thing that could happen?

4.8. Linda Taalman, architect: museums need a restaurant, not a fancy shell

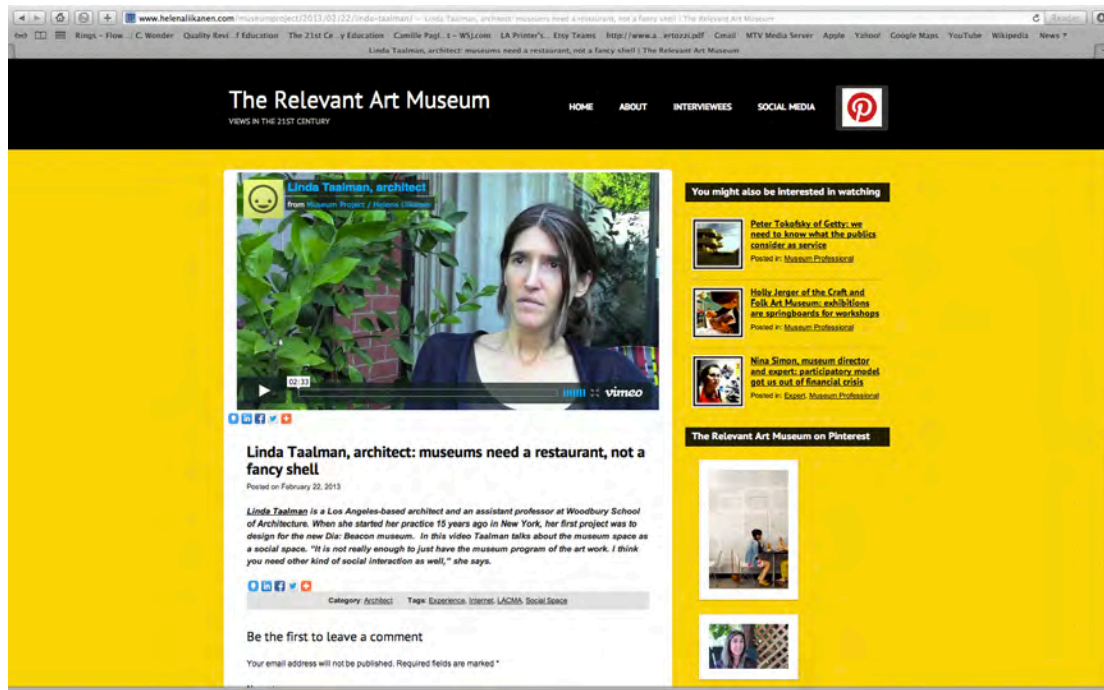


Figure 10: Screenshot of the interview page of Linda Taalman

Introduction:

Linda Taalman is a Los Angeles-based architect and an assistant professor at Woodbury School of Architecture. When she started her practice 15 years ago in New York, her first project was to design for the new Dia: Beacon. In this video Taalman talks about the museum space as a social space. “It is not really enough to just have the museum program of the art work. I think you need other kind of social interaction as well,” she says (Taalman 2012).

Transcription of video:

LT: The cost of the museum has to be mostly focused on how do we actually create this kind of social environment. It doesn't necessarily mean that you need a very fancy shell. That might not be where the money needs to be spent. It might be better to spend money to make sure you have the right kind of social programming in there. So, let's make sure we have a restaurant, let's make sure we have a café. Let's make sure we have a variety of spaces for different kind of activities to happen."

[Text: Linda Taalman is a Los Angeles based architect. She has done a number of projects on art galleries and artists' studios.]

LT: There is definitely a possibility that museums will have more of a role that is not even in physical space. That brings it more into... putting things out there through the Internet and having other ways for people to interact with artists. So they have maybe a physical component and a virtual component. At the same time the actual buildings I think will need to still be there.

LT: [...] and I do think that you need to have large-scale spaces because the work obviously is on such a variety of scales. You need to have room where you can bring in something very large. I still feel like the best spaces are going to be the ones that have the most ability to change, to be changed by the artist, or changed by the curators on an as needed bases.

LT: LACMA has gone through a lot of changes with the new buildings and projects they have installed on the site. I think they are doing a very interesting job of organizing space on an urban scale and getting people to actually have this social mixing environment. If you go in the plaza -- which you would think a plaza in Los Angeles wouldn't be a very active space, because it is a car culture -- it is actually pretty high functioning as a public space. If I go and sit on that plaza, I will inevitably run into two or three people that I know. That is a kind of experience that you hardly ever have in Los Angeles at all.

LT: It is not really enough to just have the museum program of the artwork. I think you need other kind of social interaction as well.

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4.9. Peter Tokofsky of Getty: we need to know what the publics consider as service

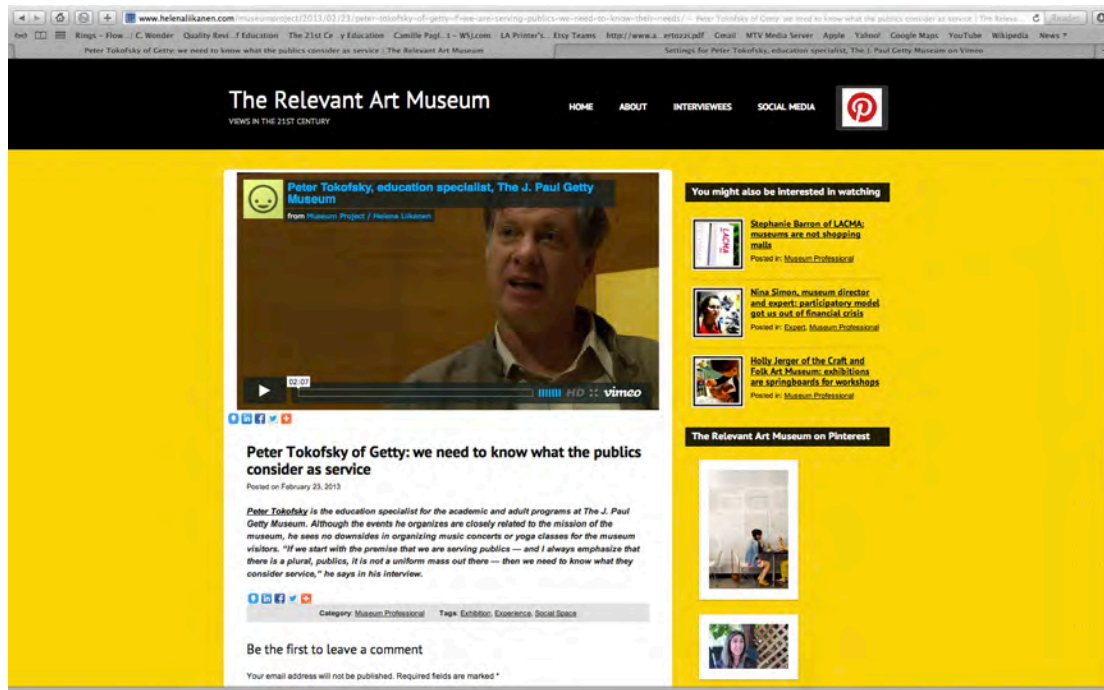


Figure 11: Screenshot of the interview page of Peter Tokofsky

Introduction:

Peter Tokofsky is the education specialist for the academic and adult programs at The J. Paul Getty Museum. Although the events he organizes are closely related to the mission of the museum, he sees no downsides in organizing music concerts or yoga classes for the museum visitors. "If we start with the premise that we are serving publics -- and I always emphasize that there is a plural, publics, it is not a uniform mass out there -- then we need to know what they consider service," he says in his interview (Tokofsky 2012).

Transcription of video:

PT: No one questions openings for art exhibitions that are just parties too. It is a select group of people who get to come and drink for free and have special access... You go to an opening and you see that more people are spending time mingling and trying to be seen by somebody than they are in the galleries. No one questions that. But as soon as you invite some young people in and have some pop music, people question that. And I think that is the problem.

[Text: Peter Tokofsky is the education specialist for academic and adult programs at The J. Paul Getty Museum.]

PT: If we start with the premise that we are serving publics. And I always emphasize that there is a plural, publics, it is not a uniform mass out there. Then we need to know what they consider service. If we hold masterpieces of 14th Century, but no one except for a very small segment of people wants to see them, then maybe that is an important service for a small public but let's not pretend that we are serving the other 99 percent. So I want there to be a mechanism – I think through social media we are starting to see those mechanisms that allow visitors to respond, to shape what we do. I think there is some fear of that, but what we see when we do it that visitors really treasure what museums do, they just want a little more voice.

PT: I actually understand the argument that says: if we start doing yoga and concerts and parties at a museum, have we lost what the museum is at its core, and is it just becoming a community center. We can do yoga at a park. So I think there is an interesting debate there. But I think that if we want to have that debate we have to have it on equal terms. A lot of things that don't get questioned have the same sorts of problems – that is one part of the argument. And the other part is that I don't know any museums that do something like yoga it doesn't connect to the art in some way. Some people would say that the contemplative state that yoga helps to achieve is very much similar to the state people want to be in when they look at art.

5. Conclusion

Digital technology has changed the ways people think about art and culture: museum visitors value experiences and want to take part in the actual creating of culture (Brown and Novak-Leonard 2011, 6). While California offers a rich range of museums to study, this movement towards participatory culture is not local but rather universal. California has some front-runners in the area, like museum director Nina Simon in Santa Cruz. But thanks to the new technology and Internet, the community of museum-visitors and creators of culture is international and shares its ideas.

Some fear that the change towards participatory culture in the art museums could potentially mean that the original reason of existence would be tampered. Art museums exist first and foremost because of works of art, but if people come to these institutions only to listen to a concert or do yoga, it can be hard distinguish a museum from a community center or a park. That is why, in my opinion, a participatory event at its best conveys the mission of the museum or exhibition and exposes people to art. It is not organized just to attract more visitors.

During this project it became clear however, that a participatory event of a kind can be difficult to organize. I saw for example the Craft and Folk Art Museum using its art exhibitions as springboards for the programs, like workshops. During the event the instructor used the images seen in the exhibition as part of the workshop. She also

encouraged people to visit the galleries, but in the end, only very rare took the time to look at art. Why? One reason was clearly practical: the workshop was organized on an outdoor patio where people could enter without visiting the galleries. But even if the happening is organized in the galleries, like the yoga classes at USC Fisher, it is hard to define how many people actually take time to look at art. It is not clear if the people really pay attention to the surrounding. Would they even come to a museum for other events than their usual ones, it is very uncertain. In order to encourage people to revisit for other purposes, like openings of new exhibitions, the participatory happenings should always be designed carefully and considered as important part of the museum as the actual exhibition. While social media is an important element in today's experiences, the future museum architects also have to think about how to accommodate the possible programming.

It is also important for every museum to come up with ways to measure the relevance. Visitor data is important, but there are many ways to look at the issue. Listening to what people talk about, what they think is relevant, is important. The director Nina Simon told me a story about two young men at the farmer's market, who praised the event organized by the museum. For her, it was unexpected and showed that the museum is touching people outside of the core visitors (Simon 2013).

The way people consume culture has changed everywhere. Many museums in Europe, Asia and Australia already offer participatory events, although maybe not to the same

extent as museums in California. Public engagement in museums is especially common to American museums, that are usually private institutions and responsible to private funders (Smith Bautista 2013). But it is clear that the change towards participatory is inevitable everywhere. My website offers a peek into what is going on in this part of the world -- maybe it will encourage a new museum to take part in the participatory movement.

6. Documentary

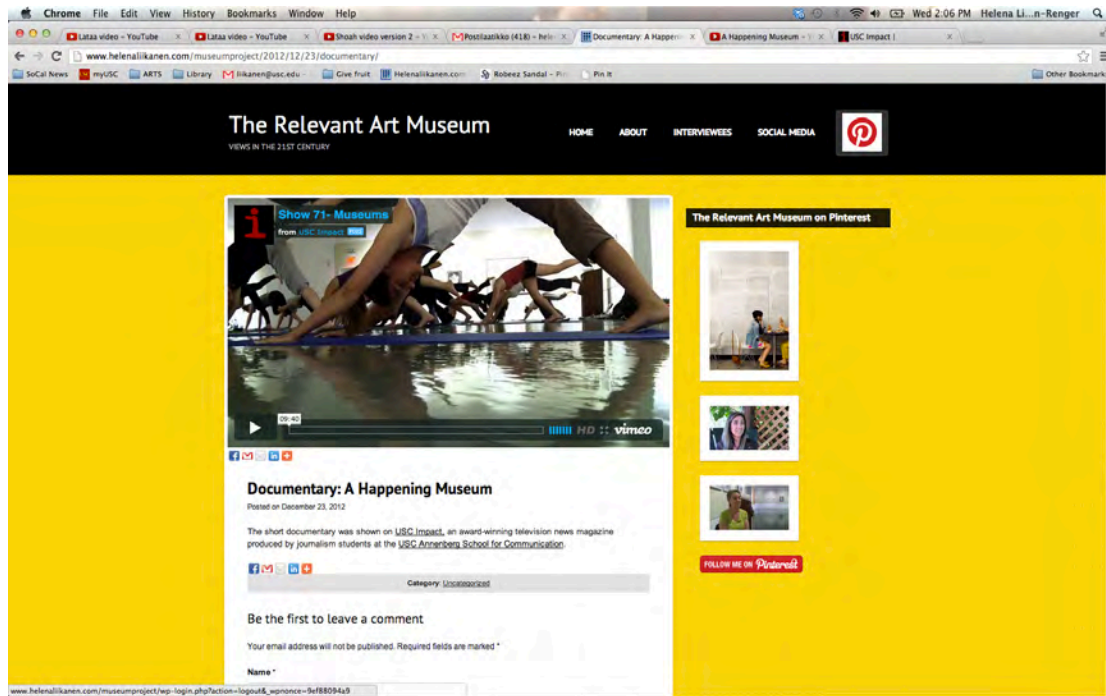


Figure 12: Screenshot of the documentary page

A Happening Museum
Produced by Helena Liikanen-Renger

NATS Yoga shot	
SOT SELMA HOLO, DIRECTOR OF USC FISHER MUSEUM OF ART [16:52:37-53:06]	<p>People in a museum are known to spend not more than eight seconds in front of work of art.</p> <p>Yoga is just another way of slowing people down, they come, they come with their yoga mats and twist themselves into a pretzel in front of a work of art .</p> <p>Whether they like it or not, they are looking at something for a rather long period of time. And I am convinced something sticks!</p>
NATS	

Exterior shots of the Fisher	
VO NARRATOR Opening shots of the yoga class	<p>THE WEEKLY YOGA CLASS AT THE USC FISHER MUSEUM IS ABOUT TO START.</p> <p>THIS IS ONE OF THE MANY WAYS THAT ART MUSEUMS TODAY ARE TRYING TO ENGAGE THE PUBLIC.</p>
SOT SELMA HOLO, DIRECTOR OF USC FISHER MUSEUM OF ART, LOS ANGELES [16:54:13-54:39] Shots from yoga class	<p>We are looking for a kind of participation, whether it is willful looking or whether it is a kind of performative acting in some way. We want people to be engaged, the way that we didn't care too much about before. We just wanted them to come, click off that they came, walked through and that was good enough. They are not going to come, if that is all we do. And we want them to come back, we want them to feel that this is part of their daily experience.</p>
VO NARRATOR Shots from yoga class	<p>BY ORGANIZING EVENTS AND PROGRAMS, MUSEUMS ARE DOING THEIR BEST TO PROVE THAT THEY STILL ARE RELEVANT TO US.</p> <p>MUSEUMS TODAY HAVE MANY OTHER SOURCES OF CULTURE AND ENTERTAINMENT TO COMPETE WITH, BIGGEST ONE BEING THE INTERNET.</p> <p>ANYONE OF US CAN VISIT THE GREATEST ART COLLECTIONS ONLINE.</p>
SOT SELMA HOLO, DIRECTOR OF USC FISHER MUSEUM OF ART 16:54:13-54:39 Shots from yoga class	<p>A museum has to be able make the case that it is indispensable in whatever society it is operating in. If it is not making that case, if it is not asking the questions people need to discuss, then the fact is that nobody will come. And if nobody comes, it is like the tree in the forest. If it falls and there is no one to hear it, it doesn't exist!</p>
GUITAR MUSIC	

<p>TRANSITION</p> <p>Exterior shot of the Hammer museum</p>	
<p>Guitar music continues...</p> <p>VO NARRATOR</p> <p>COURTESY OF Machine Project: Personal Soundtracks at the Hammer Museum (2010)</p> <p>COURTESY OF Machine Project: Overnight Dream-in at the Hammer Museum (2010)</p>	<p>HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO LOOK AT ART WITH A PERSONAL SOUNDTRACK LIKE THIS?</p> <p>MACHINE PROJECT A GROUP OF ARTISTS AND PERFORMERS IS A SPECIALIST IN AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT.</p> <p>THEY HAVE BEEN INVITED TO DO EXPERIMENTS TO VARIOUS MUSEUMS IN ORDER TO GIVE THE VISITORS NEW KINDS OF EXPERIENCES.</p> <p>LIKE THIS ONE THAT WAS ORGANIZED IN THE HAMMER MUSEUM, WHERE VISITORS WERE INVITED TO STAY AT THE MUSEUM OVER NIGHT.</p>
<p>SOT MARK ALLEN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF MACHINE PROJECT, LOS ANGELES [15:44:45- 15:45:05]</p> <p>Hammer shots</p>	<p>Well, everybody slept and then the next day we had a camera crew that went around and very gently woke up people at dawn and gently asked what they were dreaming of. ... Sometimes people wouldn't remember their dreams, sometimes they had very fantastical dreams. A lot of people said I dreamed I was sleeping in a museum but it wasn't this museum.</p>
<p>SOT MARK ALLEN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF MACHINE PROJECT [15:55:15-15:55:52]</p> <p>Hammer shots</p>	<p>Maybe 50 years ago Natural History museum was a reasonable place to learn about natural history where as now one can access enormous quantities of information on your desk so the question becomes, what is in being in the presence of objects that ... what does that provide to you that a network experience</p>

	can't provide.
<p>SOT MARK ALLEN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF MACHINE PROJECT [16:01:47- 16:02:07]</p> <p>Hammer shots</p>	Public is more interested in experiences that happen with other people in a specific moment of time. And my thesis is that it is a corollary response to the shift to consume culture in virtual forms.
<p>NATS</p> <p>Hammer Nap-in Exterior shots from CAFAM</p>	
NATSOUND, INSTRUCTOR	"There are two easy stiches. One that is a solid line, that is the back stitch..."
<p>VO NARRATOR</p> <p>CAFAM, craft night</p>	<p>INSTRUCTOR KC SEARS IS SHOWING HOW TO MAKE EMBROIDERY ON A PIECE OF PAPER.</p> <p>ETSY CRAFT NIGHT IS ONE OF THE MANY EVENTS THAT THE CRAFT AND FOLK ART MUSEUM ORGANIZES FOR ITS VISITORS.</p>
<p>SOT</p> <p>HOLLY JERGER, DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC PROGRAMMING, CAFAM, LOS ANGELES [15:03:09-15:03:16]</p>	We look at our place for people to come to have an experience that goes beyond just looking at the artwork.
<p>SOT</p> <p>HOLLY JERGER, DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC PROGRAMMING, CAFAM [15:03:33-15:03:41]</p>	Our goal would be able to offer everyone some sort of experience that relates to their personal interest and journey.
<p>VO NARRATOR</p> <p>CAFAM, close-ups from Etsy craft night</p>	<p>THE EVENTS AND WORKSHOPS ARE OFTEN RELATED TO THE ONGOING EXHIBITIONS.</p> <p>TONIGHT THE INSTRUCTOR USES IMAGES FROM THE CURRENT TATTOO EXHIBITION.</p> <p>IN THAT WAY PEOPLE ARE ENCOURAGED TO</p>

	VISIT THE ACTUAL SHOW.
<p>SOT HOLLY JERGER, DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC PROGRAMMING, CAFAM [15:04:07-15:04:23]</p>	<p>I think for a certain segment of the public given their interest and upbringing, they naturally view museums as something that is valuable to them. But I think that the vast majority of the public doesn't do that automatically.</p>
<p>SOT HOLLY JERGER, DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC PROGRAMMING, CAFAM [15:11:28-15:11:54]</p> <p>Ending with footage from Pacific Asia Museum</p>	<p>When there is less and less money, people are questioning the value of things and I think that many ways people think of museums and the arts as leisure activities, which they are to a certain degree, but I don't think that they credit them for the kind of educational and even critical thinking as skills that are developed by experiences like this.</p>
<p>VO NARRATOR</p> <p>Pacific Asia Museum shots</p>	<p>IT IS THE MID AUTUMN MOON FESTIVAL AT THE PASIFIC ASIA MUSEUM IN PASADENA.</p> <p>HERE THE SPECIAL EVENTS PLAY A VERY IMPORTANT ROLE.</p>
<p>SOT AMELIA CHAPMAN CURATOR OF EDUCATION PACIFIC ASIA MUSEUM [15:29:56-15:30:05]</p> <p>05:43: Missing appearance release on the girl behind the man</p>	<p>We of course have fabulous world-class exhibitions. But when you have programs, it brings in new people that might not think they are interested in art museums. They come for a free day and they realize that they are interested in art museums. It really helps us with our outreach, especially with the families.</p>
<p>VO NARRATOR</p>	<p>THE LARGEST VISITOR GROUPS OF THE MUSEUM ARE ASIAN AMERICAN, CAUSASIAN AND HISPANIC.</p>

	THE INVITATIONS TO THE EVENTS ARE SENT IN SEVERAL DIFFERENT LANGUAGES.
SOT AMELIA CHAPMAN CURATOR OF EDUCATION PACIFIC ASIA MUSEUM	It echoes the demographics of our community pretty strongly.
SOT AMELIA CHAPMAN CURATOR OF EDUCATION PACIFIC ASIA MUSEUM [15:30:35-15:30:44]	We design our programs to reach different audiences. Today we are reaching a family, all-ages audience. We also have programs that are designed more for adults.
SOT AMELIA CHAPMAN CURATOR OF EDUCATION PACIFIC ASIA MUSEUM [15:31:57- 32:11]	I think art museums are increasingly important in our community because people are so used to digital and cyber things and virtual reality, so it is nice give people a chance to have reality, real things.
SOT MARK ALLEN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF MACHINE PROJECT [16:11:37-16:12:10] Yoga finishing, “namaste”	I think the experience of [a] cultural organization is constituted by a lot of things. Some of it the might be looking at art, but some of it is looking at things with other people at the same time and some of it maybe eating pie. I think it is not so critical to define what is the right way to use the museum and what is the wrong way or what is the good way to use the museum and what is a bad way. I don’t think it really matters. It is just a space for people to get together and think about art.
SOT SELMA HOLO, DIRECTOR OF USC FISHER MUSEUM OF ART [16:58:29-16:58:50] Yoga class getting empty	We have to make a case for our indispensability to society. Hospitals we know, we will be dead if we don’t have them. But libraries have to make the case – in the time of the Internet, do books really still matter? And they are working to make the case. The museums have to make the case that authenticity of experience in the face of works of art are important to your lives and will help

	you to become a richer, a more inquisitive, a more creative person yourself.
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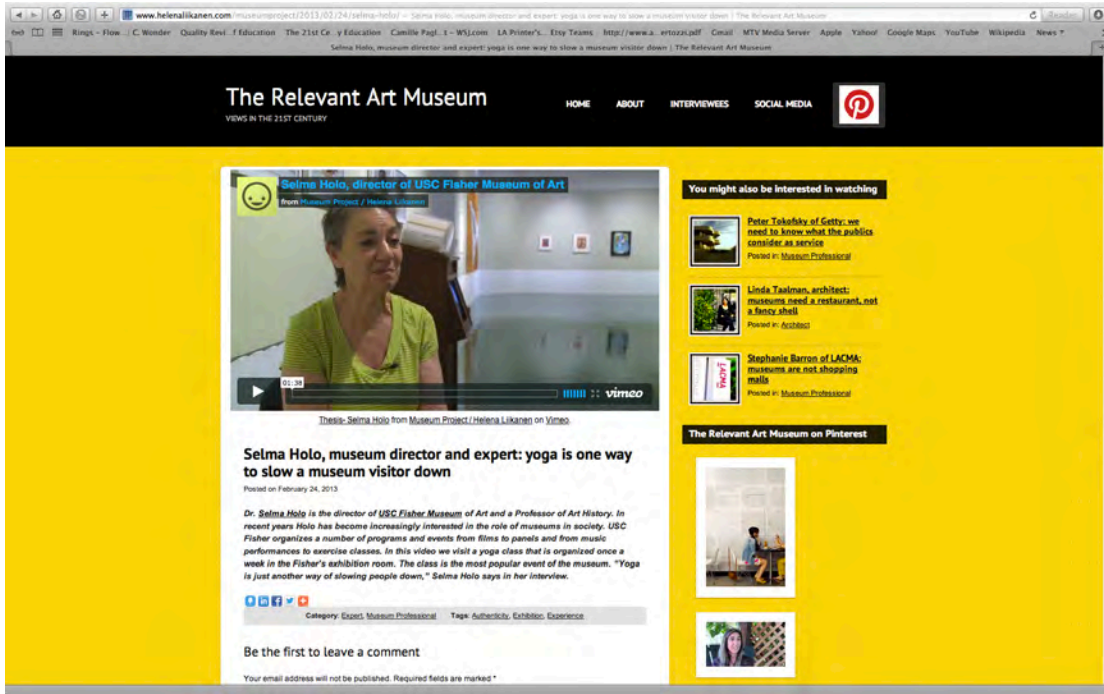
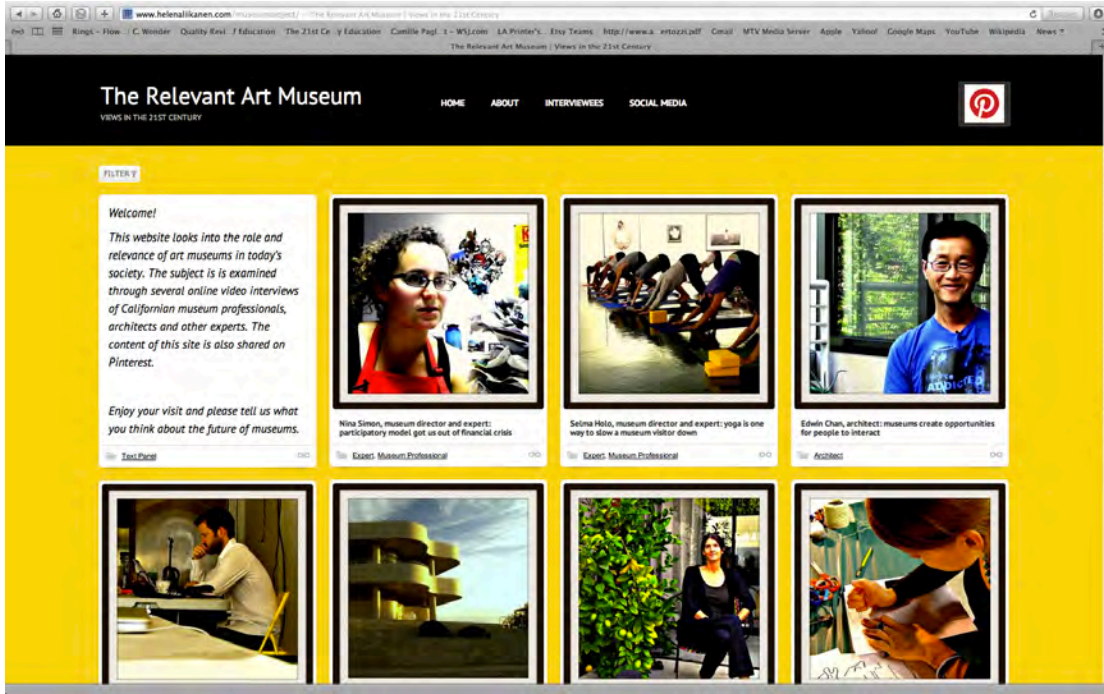
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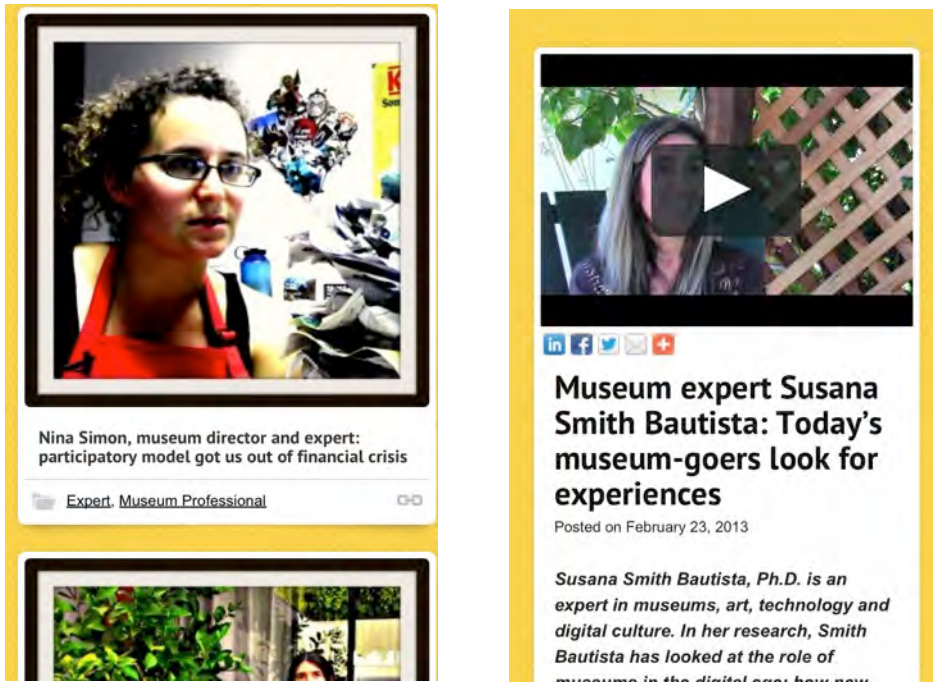
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October 21. Los Feliz, Los Angeles, Ca.

Appendix: Screenshots of the website on different devices

MacBook:



iPhone:



Android tablet:

