

Book review

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This thought provoking book has 13 chapters, in the form of essays, written by 11 authors on the Future of Museums. The authors come from a range of backgrounds beyond art academics and thus provide an interesting range of views. Whilst the title may be ambiguous as to which kind of museums they are referring to, the book clearly states they are referring to museums of art. Nevertheless, the book will be of interest to all museum professionals and non-professionals alike. The book is easy to read and each chapter starts with an abstract providing an overview. As the title states, the future of (art) museums is discussed from a number of angles including their role in society, the use of technology, the mediarization of art, museum's contribution to the knowledge economy, the changing nature of services provided and the changing nature of work in the museum. One author comments that he is more worried about the future than the future of museums.

Chapter 1 act gives a brief one-line overview of each chapter and introduces their author(s).

Chapter 2, Changing Societies, Changing Art, Changing Museums? Museums are part and product of society and thus cannot remain static whilst society around them changes. Whilst they may be treated by some as another attraction and are often viewed in terms of the economic role they play, their role as a cultural institution should remain at the forefront.

Will There Still Be a Future when the Museum of the Future Arrives? Forms the basic question for Chapter 3. Cultural tourism has become part of our attention/experience/distracted economy. As the majority of

visitors to museums are not art professionals how will this change how museums present themselves and are evaluated? Museums have become part of the experience economy and become "highly corporatized" with guests raising greater complaints about service and museum restaurant food rather than the art. The future of museums will be a question of what society prioritises.

The following chapter; Museum services in the Era of Tourism, explores museums' integral role in the cultural tourism economy and how museums compete in the expanding leisure market.

Chapter 5; "Manifesto for a New Museum" discusses the idea that museums should become "a laboratory for the citizens to explore new worlds". With the growth of private museums vs public museums, the nature of what is considered a successful museum changes and there is danger that they will be viewed as entertainment places only. The future museum needs to go back to what it was: a placed of interdisciplinary research and networking.

Chapter 6 explores the changing nature of education and labour in museums. Are they only public storage facilities or "keepers of humanities' dreams"? Certainly museums are in a process of transformation as they grapple with the role that digitisation can and will play in the future. This will transform how museums store, access, share and produce art in terms of the space required and type of human skills required.

Yoko Ono Collecting Piece II in Chapter 7 provides an intriguing and inspiring work of art produced in 1963.

Chapter 8, "Entering the Flow: Museum between Archive and Gesamtwerk" explores how the museum's traditional role was to stop the flow of time and preserve objects. In doing so, museums lent hero status to objects included but created an inauthentic environment for those same objects.

The internet and digitalisation of objects can

The Future of Museums

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create a space for art to be part of the flow of events.

Chapter 9 explores the growing impact of multi-media in how we interact with and consume museums. In “The Future of Media determines the Future of Museums”, the author enquires how museums have been forced to comply with technology and will continue to do so in the future. They caution that due to radical multi-media consumerism some art has in fact been lost to museum visitors of the future, as museums have been unable to preserve the technology platforms that supports the art.

In contrast, Chapter 10; “The Renewal of the Museum in the Digital Epoch” looks at the positive role that technology can play in museums. Technology has changed the way people communicate, socialise and interact with museums. Technology can have an enabling effect in reaching the vision of each exhibition and mission of the museum. It can personalise and democratise the exhibitions. But for this to be realised museums will need a thought through and cohesive digital strategy, with long term vision and a commitment of human and financial resources.

Chapter 11: “The Museum of the Future”, explores how the future of museums has been discussed historically. The author suggests that the future of museums lies in the “para-museum”. Para – the Greek prefix meaning side-by-side or “beyond” refers to the author’s belief that the future museum will

simultaneously inhabit the contradictions that sit within the external community within which it finds itself.

2019 marks the 100th year the Bauhaus movement. “The Imaginary Bauhaus Museum”, Chapter 12, is in the form of an interview with the curator of this new museum.

The final chapter draws together themes from the book. In Chapter 13, “Conclusion: the Museum of the Future and the Future of Museums”, six common themes emerge and six thought provoking questions for the future of museums are proposed.

Yoko Ono Collecting Piece II (1963) provides food for future thought:

Break a contemporary museum into pieces with the means you have chosen. Collect the pieces and put it together with glue.

I can highly recommend this future orientated book for anyone involved in museums. In fact some chapters are relevant to professionals in the attractions industry generally; particularly to those that are involved in museum like learning institutions (aquariums, pop-up museums). The book was easy to read and very relevant to understanding the changing nature of our society and how this influences leisure demands.

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