

Bompas & Parr's

The Future Of P-Leisure Report 2024



What is the Future of the Museum?

This report forms part of a new series by Bompas & Parr - The Future of P-Leisure started in July 2022. In it we explore the idea of 'public leisure' in a way that ultimately delivers 'pleasure' to its audiences. Previous reports have covered anything from Streaming Districts to Underwater Frontiers. This report takes a look at the world of Museums - what is the future of entertainment in the museum space?



P-Leisure Report 2023: The Future of Museums

Welcome to Bompas & Parr's P-Leisure Report, a report on the pleasures of public leisure in a way that itself gives its readers (or listeners) pleasure.

For this year's instalment, we're plunging into everything museological - weening out the future of museums as integral spaces of inspiration for people around the world. We want to unearth the raw material of museum experience, and make radical predictions about where it might be headed over the next decade.

Trash all the preconceptions you might have about museums - untouched collections held behind glass, endless corridors of perfectly catalogue artefacts. This is a study of museums as living, community-centre spaces that shape how we perceive the past, and where we might cultivate dreams for the future.

We at Bompas & Parr consider museums (and cultural institutions more generally) to be at a moment of epochal shift. Pressures to decolonise the museum have reached a high point. The consensus among those that work in the sector is that now is the time for fundamental shifts in the narrative and practice of museum experience. This is a great thing - revealing exciting new creative domains for museums, their curatorial direction and experiential possibilities.

As a result, this is a time of immense openness for museums. Museums don't exist within the four walls of a building, but can spill out onto the street. Museums live in the minds and imaginations of the people who visit. They exist in the digital realm, as they do in the ever more physical cultural custard we all wade through everyday, whether we like it or not.

This report is designed to stimulate your creativity as we dream up the future of civic and public space. It is presented in the context of the studio's forthcoming Museum of Shakespeare, a most-modern, polysensory spectacle, building on 400 years of creativity and the archeology of The Curtain Playhouse, where Romeo & Juliet was first performed.

At Bompas & Parr we love museums. We love visiting them. We love making them, and we love testing their limits.

Let's look to their future, now...



TO US MUSEUMS ARE...

As a genre of experience, museums have perhaps an unrivalled capacity to be weird. October 2022 saw the opening of Europe's only crab museum, a 'satisfyingly baffling' attraction that uses decapods as lenses to read history, science and climate change. We wonder, how weird is too weird for the museum?

Initiated by the great theorist of space Michel Foucault, this concept of the heterotopia has never been more relevant. Literally meaning a space made up of difference, the heterotopia is somewhere you go to be surprised - find objects (or people) lying in conjunction with things that are... well... different.

WEIRD PEOPLE-FOCUSED HETEROTOPIAS

Curating collections that give meaning to the lives of ordinary people, giving them an environment to find a sense of belonging surrounded by the artefacts that have helped build human civilisation.

They're also places where people can go to solve the creative problems they encounter in their own lives, either personally or professionally.

Museums are uniquely placed to tell the history and future of our emotions, letting guests reflect on their own personal emotional journey through life.

Places to remove oneself momentarily from the present, to find a space of reflection on the world and our lives within it.

EMOTIONAL FUTURISTIC SANCTUARIES

Museums look into the past in order to find solutions for tomorrow's challenges. Museums are uniquely futuristic - able to use the past to build the future.



MUSEUMS ARE BACK

Between April 2023 and June 2023, there were a total of 10.3 million visits to DCMS sponsored museums and galleries. This was 22.6% larger than the same period in 2022. However, visitor numbers between April 2023 and June 2023 remain around a fifth (19.2%) lower compared to the same period, pre-pandemic, in 2019.

MUSEUMS ARE CHANGING

The Young V&A reopened in 2023, formerly known as the Museum of Childhood. This new *monica* signifies a shift in the museum's approach to its young demographic. It takes an active role in youth participation, hoping to be "a world-class museum that nurtures curiosity, experimentation and celebrates play, Young V&A will be a global champion for children's creativity in all its forms."

LOTS STILL TO DO



Museums have a special responsibility for inclusive employment, seeing as their role in society is to reflect the culture and make up of that society.

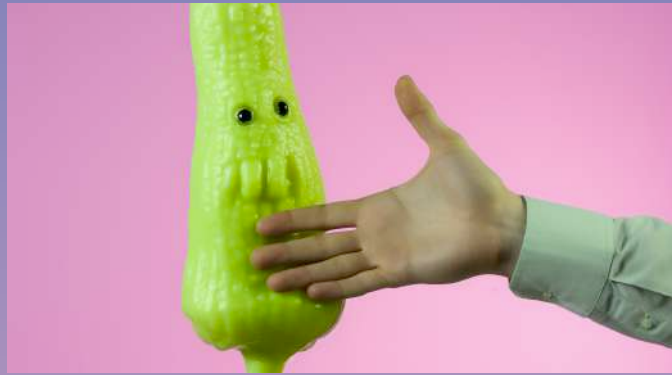
4% of museum staff live with disabilities, yet 24% of the population live with disability

Predictive Territories

Polarised Personalisation



Super Optimised Spatial Storytelling



The Anti-Museum



The Ultimate Date Museum



Rollercoaster Pedagogy



Endless In-betweens





Prediction 1

POLARISED

PERSONALISATION

1.

**SOCIALLY, P-LEISURABLE
EXPERIENCE WILL
POLARISE - MOVING TO
EITHER THE HIGHLY
INDIVIDUALISED OR
HIGHLY COLLECTIVISED.**

Prediction 1:
Polarised Personalisation



Radically collective or radically individual

We live in a time of increasingly polarised personalisation, with brands, business and consumers exhibiting a desire for experiences that either radically individualise or disperse our sense of self outwards into the collective.

According to researchers at the University of Waterloo and Arizona State University, the world is getting more individualistic. They've even managed to quantify it. Between 1960 -2012, the world became 12% more individualist, based on data analysis over this period in 78 countries.

And yet, this rise in individualism is occurring at a time when things are, simultaneously, more collectively organised. User generated content, the sharing economy, subscription-based entertainment and, most recently, AI image and text generation, all pose challenges to the idea of society as prioritising the individual.

We're seeing this push and pull between the individual and collective play out in the realm of museums. Curatorial strategies, technology and experiential are toggling between making guests the protagonists on their own personal odyssey, or asking them disappear into the crowd.

**BETWEEN 1960-2012, THE
WORLD BECAME 12% MORE
INDIVIDUALIST.**

- Henri C Santos et al. - Association for Psychological Science

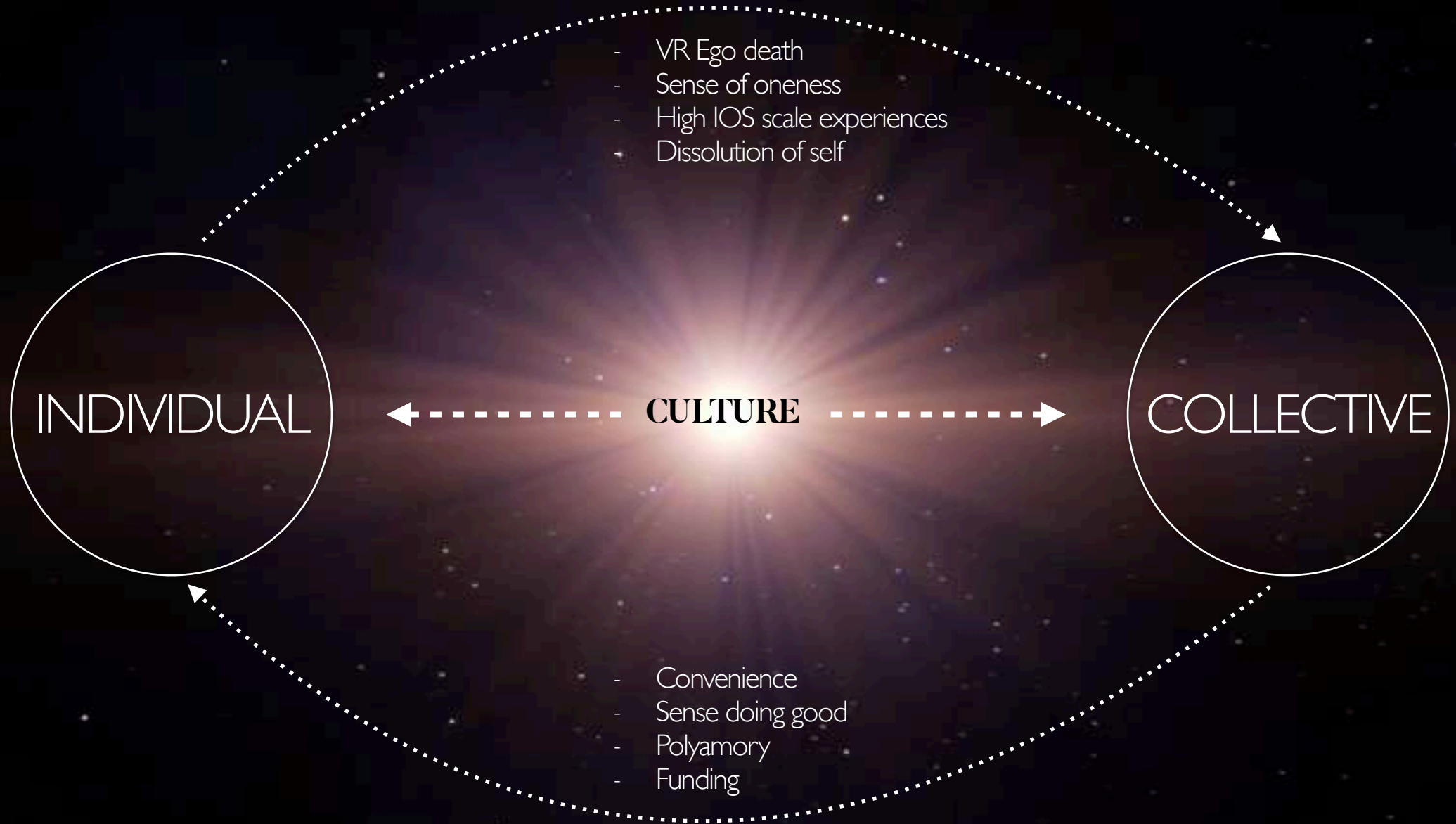
**Prediction 1:
Polarised Personalisation**



Self help | Self optimisation | Guest as protagonist
Digital way-finding | Echo-chambers | Dating apps
Predictive algorithms | VR headsets

Interests in networks | Sharing economies
Inclusivity & accessibility | "Democracy at the Top"
Crowd sourcing | User generated content

Things get *really* interesting, though, when one becomes the other...



Predictions

Digital Wayfinding for Collectively Individual Experiences

The best thing for talkability in museum experience is to give people highly individual experiences, that they compare with their friends after the experiences has ended. We predict, then, greater a use of innovative digital way finding to make museum spaces capable of accommodating thousands of visitors a day, but feel, to each visitor utterly bespoke and personal. Endless chat then ensues.

Museum Of Emotions

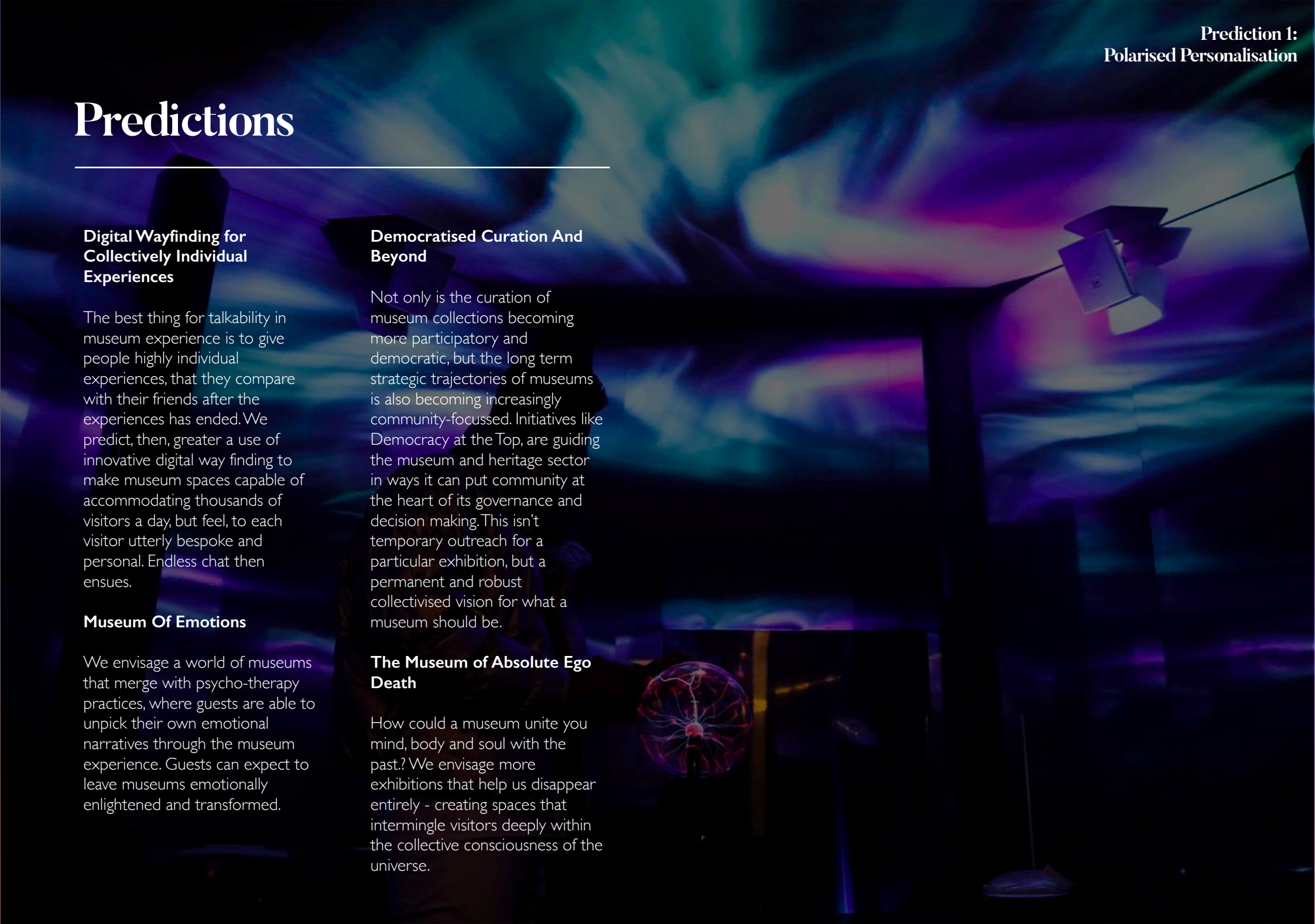
We envisage a world of museums that merge with psycho-therapy practices, where guests are able to unpick their own emotional narratives through the museum experience. Guests can expect to leave museums emotionally enlightened and transformed.

Democratised Curation And Beyond

Not only is the curation of museum collections becoming more participatory and democratic, but the long term strategic trajectories of museums is also becoming increasingly community-focussed. Initiatives like Democracy at the Top, are guiding the museum and heritage sector in ways it can put community at the heart of its governance and decision making. This isn't temporary outreach for a particular exhibition, but a permanent and robust collectivised vision for what a museum should be.

The Museum of Absolute Ego Death

How could a museum unite you mind, body and soul with the past.? We envisage more exhibitions that help us disappear entirely - creating spaces that intermingle visitors deeply within the collective consciousness of the universe.



Hypothetical Scenario – Polarised Personalisation

In this hypothetical scenario, cultural trends have undergone a radical transformation, leading to a society deeply divided between two extreme ideologies: radical individualism and radical collectivism. The polarization of these ideologies has seeped into every aspect of people's lives, finding its greatest expression in cultural experiences. Individuals are now driven by a burning desire to either be the sole protagonist of an experience or to completely merge with the collective consciousness, seeking a state of total "ego death."

Museum experiences have been particularly affected by this cultural dichotomy. On one hand, there are museums that cater to the radical individualists, offering immersive exhibitions that place visitors at the center of

attention. These museums employ cutting-edge technology to create personalized narratives, allowing individuals to curate their own journeys and become the heroes of their stories. Visitors can customize their experiences, selecting specific exhibits, themes, and even altering historical events to suit their desires.

On the other hand, there are museums designed for those embracing radical collectivism. These museums focus on dissolving individual boundaries and fostering a sense of unity. Visitors enter immersive spaces where their identities merge into a larger collective consciousness. Through virtual reality, biofeedback, and other technologies, these museums facilitate experiences where individuals become indistinguishable from the

crowd, losing their sense of self in a shared and interconnected narrative.

The cultural divide has transformed museums into arenas of ideological expression, reflecting the deep societal schism. People now make choices based on their preferred mode of experience, seeking either to celebrate their individuality or to dissolve it entirely. These museums act as cultural battlegrounds, where the clash between individualism and collectivism is fought through the medium of immersive art and storytelling.





“WE ARE ALL LICHENS”

Scott Gilbert,
Professor of Biology
Swarthmore College

A hand in a light green shirt sleeve holds a green cucumber vertically. Three black dots are placed on the cucumber's surface: one near the top, and two in the middle. The background is a solid purple color.

Prediction 2

**SUPER-OPTIMISED
SPATIAL STORY-
TELLING**

2.

**WE WILL LOOK FOR AS
MUCH NARRATIVE
INTENSITY IN MUSEUM
SPACES AS WE DO IN
STREAMED CONTENT.**

Giving Shape To Knowledge In Space

Museums will deliver ever-more optimised storytelling experiences, making visitors anticipate the next instalment of their spatialised narratives, just as they might eagerly await the next season of their favourite streaming series.

In world where everyone, everywhere thinks they know everything, the shape we give knowledge, rather than the knowledge itself, has become of primary importance. It is increasingly incumbent on museums to give thrilling, spatialised shape to civilisation's knowledge.

As a result the visitors' demand for stories, great stories, has risen. Gone are the days of passive observation and detached contemplation within museum walls. Museums must provide a compelling, emotionally motivated vision.



Predictions

Raising Awareness No More

In this trouble-ridden world, it is no longer enough to simply 'raise awareness'. Museums (and cultural institutions more generally) will begin to enact the changes people want to see. Museums will become, in short, prototypes of another world. Museums will become a parallel "now", rather than an abstract "future"

Real Hybridity

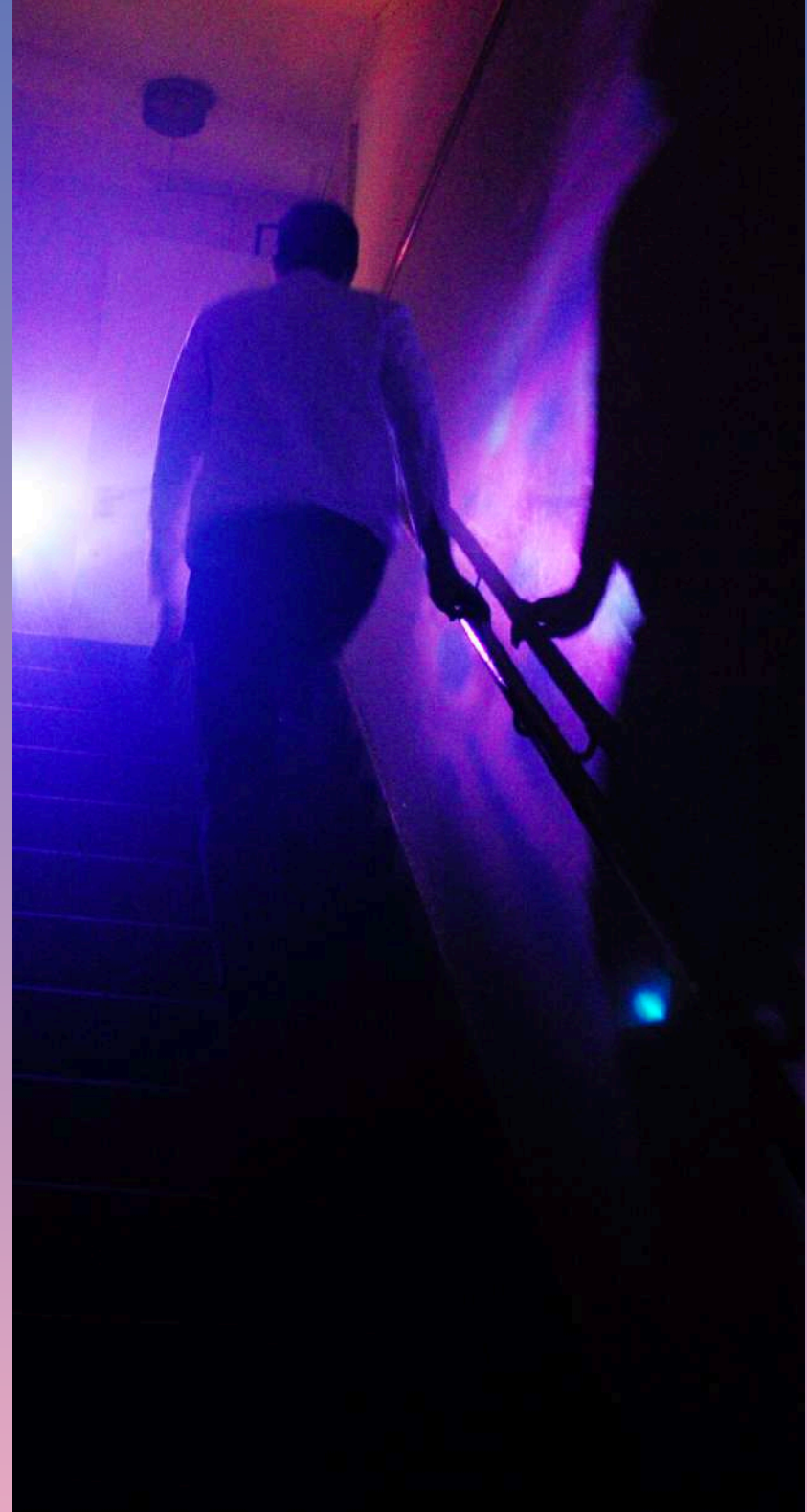
Current incarnations of hybridity, dominated by VR headsets, are too cerebral to give guests a truly immersive experience. All experience, now, is hybrid, with Gen Z able to switch fluidly between physical and digital worlds. This more dynamic, physical and playful form of hybridity is the future.

Cinematic Museums

Cinema-goers are increasingly familiar with the concept of the blockbuster Exhibition On Screen (EOS) where major exhibitions (such as the Vermeer at the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam), become an amazing cinema-based adventure. The format is an interesting one - spatial stories becoming cinematic. Expect a great deal of experimentation with this form in the coming months and years.

AI and Unknowable Knowledge

AI might be capable of a greater understanding of a museum's collections than a human ever could. It can now tell stories that would otherwise be impossible, or even reorganize them into a tailored journey for different audiences. Forget the AI scaremongering, let's use this technology to discover new things about ourselves.



Hypothetical Scenario - Storytelling

In this future, museums have undergone a profound transformation, shifting their primary function from being information hubs to becoming immersive storytelling experiences. The art of storytelling has evolved to such an extent that people now engage with museum narratives in a manner akin to how they immerse themselves in the latest Netflix series.

Gone are the days of passive observation and detached contemplation within museum walls. Instead, visitors step into dynamic worlds where storytelling takes center stage. Technologies, such as augmented reality, virtual reality, and holography, have revolutionised the museum experience. These tools transport visitors into

captivating narratives, blurring the lines between reality and fiction.

Museums have become like vast interactive theaters, offering episodic story arcs and multi-layered plots that unfold as visitors progress through various exhibits. Each exhibit becomes a chapter, building upon the previous one, enticing visitors to explore further. The storytelling experience is not limited to visual displays but engages all the senses, incorporating soundscapes, scents, and tactile elements to create a truly immersive adventure.

Just as people eagerly await the next season of their favourite streaming series, visitors anticipate the next

instalment of museum narratives. The stories may span different genres, from historical reenactments to fantastical realms, offering something to captivate diverse interests. Museums have become cultural hubs, fostering a sense of community and shared enthusiasm as visitors discuss and speculate on the unfolding narratives, forming online fan communities akin to those surrounding popular TV shows.

In this future, museums have seamlessly merged art, technology, and storytelling to create unforgettable experiences that leave visitors yearning for more, blurring the boundaries between traditional museums and the entertainment industry.





Prediction 3

THE ANTI-MUSEUM

3.

**EVEN THE MOST
MAINSTREAM MUSEUMS
ARE QUESTIONING THE
LEGITIMACY AND ETHICS
OF THEIR VERY EXISTENCE.**

**THIS WILL INITIATE THE
'ANTI-MUSEUM' - A
MUSEUM FORMAT THAT
CONSTANTLY QUESTIONS
& REINVENTS OUR
PRECONCEPTIONS OF
WHAT A MUSEUM IS.**

Museums are at a crossroads

It's no secret that museums are at a crossroads. They are reexamining their collections, the legitimacy of how they were acquired, and how they can be used to create immersive visions for the future for their visitors.

Concepts of a “collection” will continue to expand

The categories of collections are no longer limited to art, antiques, historical pieces, or other precious items. Novel collections such as memes, internet trash, crabs and other miscellanea are forming the basis of celebrated institutions. Beyond this - people will continue to question whether the museum needs a physical collection at all.

Can a collection be entirely intangible? Can a museum be a particular way of walking down a street? These sorts of questions will be guiding the future of museum experience.



New Forms of (Im)permanence

Disappearing Museums

Traditionally, museums stand for permanence - the permanent place that culture and history are held and made accessible. The necessity for permanence, though, is being thrown into question, with the emergence of speculative museum designs like the 'disappearing museum' from The Random Institute.

"These colossal blueprints," say the random institute, "made of biodegradable material that naturally dissolves when exposed to rain, contrast with the sturdy, integrated, and permanent structures of typical museum architecture."

Invisible Museums

As museums become more community-led, people are wondering whether the museum is something that needs a physical collection for it to be a museum. Artist Jeanette Andrews is taking this notion to the extreme with her

project *Invisible Museums of the Unseen* - an outdoor digital experience built gradually by the movements and messages of previous participants. The work exists in two realms of the unseen: the architecture of the imaginary museum and the contents of the museum's unseen "galleries."

The Amnesiac Museum

Some museums are giving up entirely on the past - looking to bring guests a visceral sense of what the future holds. This is the case with the planned *Museum of the Future* in KSA, housed in what is (according to His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum) 'the most beautiful building in the world'. Instead of a collection, instead guests are allowed to navigate a set of multi sensory 'possible futures', 'bringing hope and knowledge back to the present.'

Curating Discomfort

Museums that actively make you

feel uncomfortable about the very fact that you're in a museum will grow in popularity. A kind of cultural masochism, if you will. This notion of curating discomfort was coined recently by The Hunterian Museum in Glasgow, Scotland, to address historic power imbalances within the museum and across all its activities. The notion isn't an exhibition, but an intervention across the museum's entire curatorial practice.

In this new frame, the Hunterian put on 'The Trembling Museum', shaking the very foundations of the museum's collection of African Art, devised through a collaboration between filmmaker and scholar Manthia Diawara and art historian and curator Terri Geis.

Memes Museum by 9GAG

The Memes Museum by 9GAG is a museum that collects internet trash - almost the opposite, you could say, of what a traditional museum would house. But internet trash has, I'm afraid, a massively

important part to play in the future in the anti-museum.

Museum of Stolen Things

Unesco, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, is planning a virtual museum of stolen cultural objects.

The digital experience will launch in 2025 with 600 works of art on the list of Interpol.

A satire, surely, of places like the British Museum, which is accused of exhibiting items stolen during Imperial rule, the experience is set to expand awareness of the illegally trafficked cultural artefacts.



Prediction 4

THE ULTIMATE DATE MUSEUM

4.

**INCREASINGLY, MUSEUMS
WILL BECOME BACKDROPS
FOR EVER MORE VIBRANT
FORMS OF TOGETHERNESS.**

**AN AVERAGE OF 7.08% OF
PEOPLE REPORTED FEELING
LONELY OFTEN/ALWAYS
FROM NOVEMBER 2022 TO
FEBRUARY 2023. THIS
EQUATES TO AN ESTIMATED
3.7 MILLION PEOPLE.**

ONS survey, 2023

Museums Designed To Stimulate Relations

Let's be real - young people are bored, looking for things to do with their free time, whether it be after school or on the weekend. 2010 - 19 saw a £1bn decline in spending on youth services, resulting in the closure of 760 youth centres and 4,500 youth worker jobs. You simply have to ask: what are kids meant to do?

People are also lonely, with over 7% of the population often or always feeling lonely - that's almost 4 million people!

We also live at a time when online spaces are much more convivial than physical spaces, with IRL life needing to do much more to make people feel included, represented and stimulated.

Museums should step in.

Museums will become increasingly convivial - their contents and collections becoming a vibrant backdrops to a greater variety of complex leisure and social occasions.

Museums will become a place where young people hang out.





@turtlekiosk · [Follow](#)



museums admissions tickets should be dirt cheap. people think when they go to the museum they have to like concentrate hard and understand the art but honestly a much better way to do it is to go really often and just dilly dally when you're there

9:17 PM · Jun 10, 2023



1.9K



Reply



Copy link

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No Pressure, People

A LIBRARY OF SHADOWS:
A GARDEN OF FEAR

Muzak Museums

This may sound counter-intuitive, but for museums to become more inclusive, perhaps they need to stop trying so hard. As @turtlekiosk so eloquently says, one of then the most convivial ways to experience a museum is to 'dilly dally'. Museums of the future should take inspiration from Muzak, background music, in order to become the historical and cultural *backdrops* to a vibrant social present.

Public Sculptures

A survey conducted in 2022 by Art UK revealed that 79% of statues and sculptures dedicated to named people in London are - perhaps unsurprisingly - men. Public sculptures are the Muzak Museum *par excellence*, greater monumental experimentation is needed in the cities of this world.

Talk to Your Artefact

Museums are traditionally quiet, sombre spaces of reflection. Visitors pass from artefact to artefact, reading informative placards and learning the history of objects. The Ultimate Date Museum explores a museum space that actively encourages discussion, moving between artefacts with friends, and even meeting others, through placemaking design for groups, artefacts that talk back to you and large dining tables in Museum cafes.

24 Hour Museum

Typically, museums close just as the working day finishes. Museums of the future will host night experiences, bookable only in groups - experience a collection, hosted by great storytellers - for example a Punchdrunk guided tour at midnight.



Prediction 5

ROLLER COASTER

PEDAGOGY

5.
**TYPES OF ACCELERATED
MUSEUM EXPERIENCE
WILL EMERGE.**

High Speed Museums

“In the largest galleries with the most components, Serrell and Korn have found that visitors spend less time in large exhibitions than in small exhibitions. Visitors usually spend 14-30 min in a museum, with 80% of visitors staying, on average, less than 20 min”

Museum visitors are currently spending less time in large exhibitions - we hypothesise that this could be due to a lack of wayfinding, and storytelling to encourage visitors to traverse between exhibit items. What if museums enabled super fast experiences? What if visitors were given the means to travel from artefact to artefact at high speed?

Rollercoaster Pedagogy explores a world where you can stop by a museum on your commute home from work to immerse yourself in history at pace.



MpH = Museums per Hour

Funfair Galleries

Combining the thrill of the funfair with the education of a museum. Bob up and down and round on a carousel of history. See manuscript contents of yesteryear unfold as you slide down a helter skelter. View a collection of Chinese ceramics as you wobble through a fun house. Munch on buckets of nootropic infused popcorn to fuel your thinking as you wonder between museum rides.

Travelator scrolling

Imagine a museum that evolved around you, whilst you travelled along a travelator at high speed. Everyday we scroll through instagram - travelator scrolling puts that scrolling action at our feet, with content projected and displayed around the visitor.

Drive Thru Museums

Museums viewed from behind the steering wheel. Disused car parks are transformed into museums spaces, where visitors can drive through to view an exhibition at 5mph. Museum staff don rollerskates to deliver information, and those that wish to stick around can finish off in a museum diner.





Hypothetical Scenario - Rollercoaster Pedagogy

In the future museums have taken a new approach to their location strategy. The British Museum has found its lost items and has decided to innovate by opening up smaller, faster museums in local towns, in order to drive accessibility and create new reasons to visit its collections.

British Museum hubs target different audiences with different formats:

- Commuters who are leaving town to head back to their villages are encouraged to head home via the BM Drive Thru, to see bi-monthly rotating collections so that they can learn more about the history of their local area
- Gen Alpha head to the BM funfair at the weekend to learn about unusual histories and to see artefacts in a new light
- The British Museum takes over travelators in airports and underground stations, to enlighten travellers with contextual exhibits

Museums gradually become more intertwined in the everyday - studies show that people are visiting museums on average once a week - a vast increase compared to past surveys (in 2016, people were visiting museums only 3 - 4 times per year). Museums span more age groups as the museum visit seamlessly slots into the everyday consumer journey.



Prediction 6

ENDLESS IN - BETWEENS

6.

ALL THE IN-BETWEEN
SPACES OF MUSEUMS WILL
FLOURISH.

In Love with Liminality

Liminal spaces have become the source of immense interest online in the last few years. 2019 saw the emergence of The Backrooms - posts depicting eerily deserted in-between spaces such as corridors and waiting rooms.

To experience the backrooms, visitors explore an endless maze of empty office rooms or other institutional-like rooms, with no expectation or hope of them ending. What unites them is an eerie sense of abandonment.

The Backrooms are reached by you 'noclipping out of reality' - accessed via digital glitches in graphic code, meaning you can pass through walls or achieve impossible feats.

#liminalspaces has amassed 100 million views on TikTok, with videos finding entrances to the backrooms on Google Earth growing popular.

In 2022, The Backrooms became its own game - Escape the Backrooms, where players traverse through eerie backrooms levels while avoiding entities and other danger to try and escape.



Finding The Backrooms

The Outernet and Beyond...

This love of liminality has found its way into the programming of the Outernet (the immersive video experience space at Centre Point in London) - with *Liminal Lands* by Jakob Kudsk Steensen. This piece created intriguingly liminal landscape textures between the physical and digital, making visible the otherwise unseen macro and microscopic ecosystems of the wetlands of Southern France.

The Outernet is, itself, a deeply liminal type of experience - playing with the distinction between inside and outside, public and private space. Expect more of this form of blurring in the future.

Borderlands

The liminal is an important conceptual starting point for Bompas & Parr's forthcoming Museum of Shakespeare, situated on and around the ruins of the Curtain Theatre in Shoreditch, London. Theatrical pleasure was, in Shakespeare's time, banned from taking place within the city walls - forced onto the city's edges. Part of the job of the museum, then, is to re-awaken this 'edgy' nature of theatrical experience in this period - while also allowing guests to merge their creativity with that of the bard himself.

The World's Most Beautiful Corridor

The world's most beautiful corridor is set to re-open at the end of this year - The Vasari Corridor or *Corridoio Vasariano* in Florence, leading from the Palazzo Pitti and the Palazzo Vecchio. Over the centuries the corridor has been filled with priceless works of art, for the nobility to enjoy as they strode in peace from one palace to the next. The 73 windows were gradually blocked to protect the paintings as the corridor was opened to the public. Closed in 2016 for renovation - the windows of the Vasari Corridor will be opened once again, allowing light to stream through the corridor once more.

2023 saw the start of construction started on The Line - the much anticipated line city in Saudi Arabia. As the concept of the city moves from a networked space, to a linear space, we envision similar shifts in the layouts of museum spaces. What, we wonder, might the curatorial challenges of the linear museums of The Line be?

Archive Sleepovers

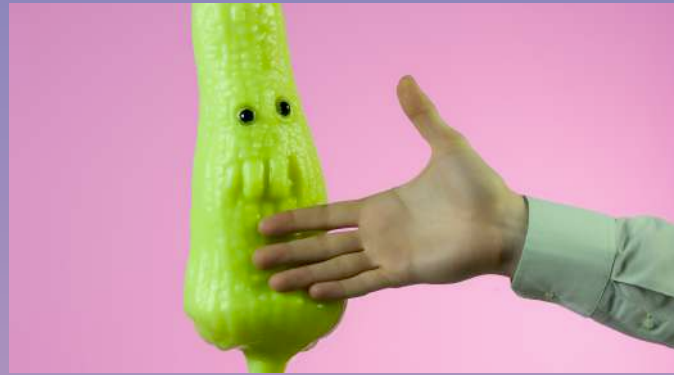
Museums with collections are waking up to the fact that often their most fascinating spaces are the archives. This is the case for London's Science Museum's new archive space, held in large WW2 aircraft hangars outside of the city. Far from the linearity of The Vasari Corridor, this is museum experience at its most explorative, non-linear and immersive. What about archive sleepovers amidst the extraordinary collections of a museum like the Science Museum? Allow kids (supervised of course), to set up camp for the night, surrounded by a potentially never ending journey of education and discovery.

Predictive Territories - Summary

Polarised Personalisation



Super optimised spatial storytelling



The Anti-Museum



The Ultimate Date Museum



Rollercoaster Pedagogy



Endless In-betweens



A pink sculpture of a man with curly hair, blowing bubbles. The man is shown in profile, facing left, with his mouth open and a yellow straw in it. He is holding a cluster of bubbles in his right hand. The background is dark grey.

Thank You

For further details please contact:
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BOMPAS & PARR