

Sharing and Developing Cultural Heritage Values through a Co-Creative Approach

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Abstract : In the space of just a few years, the European policy framework on cultural heritage has been completely overhauled, moving towards a people-centred and holistic approach, and eliminating the divisions between the tangible, intangible and digital dimensions. The European Union regards cultural heritage as a potential shared resource, highlighting that all stakeholders share responsibility for its transmission to future generations. This new framework will potentially change the way in which cultural institutions manage, protect and provide access to their heritage. It will change the way in which citizens and communities engage with their cultural heritage and naturally influence the way that professionals deal with it. Participating in the creation of cultural heritage awareness can lead to an increased perception of its value, be it economic, social, environmental or cultural. It can also strengthen our personal identity, sense of belonging and community citizenship. Open Atelier, a Creative Europe project, is based on this foundation, with the goal through co-creation to develop the use, understanding and engagement with our cultural heritage. The project aim to transform selected parts of the heritage into an "experience lab" – an interactive, co-creative, dynamic and participatory space, where cultural heritage is the point of departure for new interactions and experiences between the audience and the museum and its professionals. Through a workshop-based approach built on interdisciplinary collaboration and co-creative processes, Open Atelier has started to design, develop, test, and evaluate a set of Experiences. The first collaborative initiative was set out in the discourse and knowledge of a highly creative period in Denmark where a specific group of Scandinavian artists, the Skagen Painters, gathered in the village of Skagen, the northernmost part of Denmark from the late 1870s until the turn of the century. The Art Museums of Skagen have a large collection of photos from the period, that has never been the subject of more thorough research. The photos display a variation of many different subjects: community, family photos, reproductions of art works, costume parties, family gatherings etc., and carry with them the energies of those peoples' work and life and evoke instances of communication with the past. This paper is about how we in Open Atelier connect these special stories, this legacy, with another place, in another time, in another context and with another audience. The first Open Atelier Experience – the performance "Around the Lighthouse" – was an initiative resulted from the collaboration between AMAT, an Italian creative organisation, and the Art Museums of Skagen. A group of Italian artists developed a co-creative investigation and reinterpretation of a selection of these historical photos. A poetic journey through videos and voices, aimed at exploring new perspectives on the museum and its heritage. An experiment on how to create new ways to actively engage audiences in the way cultural heritage is explored, interpreted, mediated, presented, and used to examine contemporary issues. This article is about this experiment and its findings, and how different views and methodologies can be adopted to discuss the cultural heritage in museums around Europe and their connection to the community.

Keywords : cultural heritage, community, innovation, museums

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