

Global Museum
Johannes H. M. Groenewald
S21026034

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Submitted by: Johan Groenewald
Mentor: Derick de Bruyn
Course Leader: Karel Bakker

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Abstract:

The task of this project is to design a visitor-orientated museum using contemporary museum design models and state-of-the-art display technologies and link them with other international museum organizations so as to put Pretoria on the global museum map. Such a facility will also provide the people of Pretoria with a wealth of freely available and accredited information from local, national and international sources, as well as recreation and enjoyment. The museum could fit into the existing urban fabric, to contribute to the city's cultural and economic status.

The Global Museum could then be a building tying museum-related information into a contemporary visitor-orientated display using digital and cyberspace technology to allow both dynamic and visitor-specific displays, allowing each individual visitor to be a curator for his/her own cultural landscape.

The museum should focus on commercial, recreational, and visitor enjoyment activities to promote museum popularity and privatize/de-politicize the museum. The museum should also cater for mass-information availability, interactive visitor experience and social functions as well as any personal agenda the visitor might have that would lead to a museum activity a person would take for granted. (Falk H. and Dierking LD. 1990)

“The visitor's personal context is perhaps the single greatest influence on the visitors museum experience ... is important for museum professionals to understand the significance of visitors' agendas and to recognize that they can be manipulated by the museum”

(Falk H. and Dierking LD. 1990:37)

An architectural problem we are faced with today is the integration of physical and virtual space with the medium through which people view and perceive the digital. While databases, information networks and internet-related information sources are primarily Information Technology (IT) problems, the interface/medium between these and humans are architectural in nature.

Keywords:

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Network

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Sketch 1.1 *The museum was a container primarily for the preservation of information sources. Secondly for learned gentlemen to access these sources.* 10 & 19

Sketch 1.2 *The museum became a container for the preservation of artefacts. Secondly for learned gentlemen and the general public to access these sources on equal grounds.*..... 10

Sketch 1.3 *The museum concept as a storage house and the art contained within considered as 'specimens'. The visitor was forgotten.* 13

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Introduction

Scenario

The recent upsurge in the construction of new museum buildings is an important contemporary phenomenon. In recent years every major city has engaged in the creation of some new museum. This has happened for two specific reasons: the renewed interest in global institutional culture and the museum's function in relation to art itself and its comprehension, i.e. what effect the change of the museum has on art and vice versa. (Montaner J and Oliveras J. 1986:7)

It seems to be the responsibility of the contemporary state to establish ideological mediations between art history and treasures, and their enjoyment by the public. Since the Enlightenment the museum has been the institution for public dissemination of culture. The romantic revolution of 1830 to 1868 claimed a direct relationship between knowledge, art and its personal enjoyment. The consensus of the public organization of culture in museums seems to support demands for the creation of institutions which encourage the coming together of cultural exhibits and new users, but the question arises of how the immaterial commodities relate to the material ones. Social wellbeing is associated with domestic comfort and social security. It is also associated with a symbolic universe represented by art, travel, science and history. Thus an objective of advanced and advancing societies is to increase access to cultural commodities of which the value is deemed to be obsolete. (Ibid:7)

It must also be understood that museums function according to the concept of art and its comprehension. In today's social setting knowledge is no longer exclusive property, but freely available to all.

The architectural form that museum design takes must thus be capable of revealing the sacred content of art, historical documents and other important cultural information to the public. The architectural organization of space mediates between a multitude of objects, knowledge, documents and their given meaning. (Ibid:7)

Furthermore contemporary museum design creates dynamic and user-interactive displays using state-of-the-art technology and visitor-orientated design principles, and creates information exchange databases that link on global levels to provide free sharing of information. (Great Egyptian Museum Project – Giza:160)

Problematic

Are the display and functional standards of South African museums efficient and appropriate by today's museum design standards?

Enquiry 1

What are the international and contemporary museum standards and how does current South African museum design comply with those standards?

Enquiry 2

How does one create an enjoyable visitor-orientated experience that ultimately satisfies intellectual, cultural, social, recreational, aesthetic and economic needs?

Enquiry 3

What is appropriate architecture and tectonics when dealing with the interface between

the displayed digital information and the viewer? What acceptable and affordable (yet groundbreaking and norm-setting) available technology exists and how can the efficient dissemination of information be achieved?

Enquiry 4

How does one create an interactive and dynamic museum display? What related Information Technology (I.T.) problems are integrated through architectural solutions aimed at establishing information databases and free information sharing with museum visitors and other global museum institutions?

Task

The task is then to design a visitor-orientated museum using contemporary museum design models and state-of-the-art display technologies and link them with other international museum organizations so as to put Pretoria on the global museum map. Such a facility will also provide the people of Pretoria with a wealth of freely available and accredited information from local, national and international sources, as well as recreation and enjoyment. The museum could fit into the existing urban fabric, to contribute to the city's cultural and economic status.

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Proposal

Global Museum

The design proposal is the combination of the new functions of a digital/electronic display surface and the symbolic space of our time; and the constant evolution of the digital world.

The exhibition becomes a shell for the other functions of the building.

1. Artifact, animal, human cradle, art, history, context, culture, economy, general, etc.

These spaces need not represent traditional ornamental, symmetrical or geometrical architecture neither should they be blobs, meshes and deconstructions created by mouse, keyboard and visual computer software. Rather the use of soft contours as a metaphor for the quality of computer driven representations and systems should be incorporated. (Manovich L,2006:1-2)

Furthermore the building should not be a monumental and overpowering symbol as so many of its predecessors are, but rather it should be humble and on a human scale.

The main literature sources used in this project

MONTANER J and OLIVERAS J. *The Museum Of The Last Generation*, 1986, Academy Editions, London

SCHUBERT K. *The Curators Egg - the revolution of the museum concept from the French revolution to the present day*, 2000, One-off Press, London

- The way museums are designed today is the product of an ever-changing design model, in all aspects, of museum development since the British Museum (the first independent museum in the world) was founded in 1759 to the present day. A main focus of study would be specifically of what major shifts occurred in museum design and why changes were made. This study is also required to determine the next logical step in museum evolution following the contemporary design trends of museums.

LEACH N., 2002, *Designing For A Digital World*, Wiley-Academy, In association with RIBA Future Studies, Great Britain.

- A great architectural problems we are faced with today is the integration of physical and virtual space and the medium through which people view and perceive the digital (as mentioned above). The study will include Digital Culture, current digital design trends, and how digital design influences the physical in both the architectural and engineering fields, and vice versa.

FALK JH. and DIERKING LD. *The Museum Experience*, 1994, Whalesback Books, Washington, D.C

- The visitor's perspective has come to play an ever more important role in museum design. The purpose of this study will be to understand the museum experience from a visitor's personal point of view, visitor expectations and how the visitor's personal background would impact on his experience of the museum building. This study aims to create a space that both appeals to and fools the senses without alienating the visitor, while still providing a maximum amount of entertainment. This study includes an investigation of the visitor's personal, social and physical context. (This section is in Appendix a)

THE ARAB REPUBLIC OF EGYPT, MINISTRY OF CULTURE and THE SUPREME COUNCIL OF ANTIQUES. *The Great Egyptian Museum Project – GIZA*, International architecture competition architectural brief and competition rules.

- This study investigates the concepts of museum globalization and the design of a museum for the third millennium. It comprises the integration of Modularity, Theme, Dynamics and Networking. The aim is to create a museum that reflects cultural ideals and today's social needs, as well as the visitor's relationship with the exhibit.

Precedent Studies

Precedents that focuses on one or more of the following has been included in this study:

- Innovative museum display for visitor entertainment
- Museums that satisfy specific social or cultural needs
- The use of digital display methods and physical-virtual integrated displays
- Dynamic buildings
- Sustainable, controlled environments

Structure of this document

This study starts with the museum's history. Throughout this section the different museum models and ideals are identified. Following this museum concepts that had a big impact on the concept of the museum and its place in a contemporary world are investigated.

Furthermore I delved into Digital Culture and digital means of information sharing. Throughout this section of the document the written work is studied and inserted in italics points of interest that will guide the decisions make.

The next section is a case study of the Great Egyptian Museum Competition Brief as an example of a contemporary museum to understand its objectives of the museum and what it has become. This section includes the combination of the museum model identified within the first sections and Digital Culture investigated in the latter.

After these enquiries the document structure changes. The project is stied to place it within context and the building function, theory and accommodation schedule is stipulated, followed by the technical investigation and a conclusion.

Client

A client¹ could possibly require a museum within Pretoria's inner city that should ultimately be a state-of-the-art complex and provide access to a wealth of information and 'future' knowledge to the city. The building should use contemporary digital technology to create the effective and efficient dissemination of information. The museum should foster cultural awareness and contribute to the tourism industry. (Great Egyptian Museum Project – Giza:)

1. Possible clients include Guggenheim, Dimension Data (Jeremy Ord), IT Solutions (Ronnie Apteker), and The Supreme Council of Antiques. These clients are all commercially driven and not government driven to avoid museum political exploitation.

