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Change the Narrative

Using Journalistic Storytelling to Make Museum Exhibitions More Inclusive

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Contents

About the Author

Donna Mitchell earned her Bachelor of Science in Communication with a major in journalism and electronic media from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. She has had her work published in *The Tennessee Journalist* and provided storytelling services to a variety of nonprofits through fundraising campaigns, branding campaigns, and social media content creation.

Acknowledgments

Executive Summary

This report examines how storytelling techniques used by journalists could be applied to museum exhibitions to create more comprehensive, engaging narratives. Although many museums have begun acknowledging their colonialist history, too few have made considerable changes to their acquisition practices, hiring practices, and exhibition design to present fair representations of the people and objects about which they seek to educate the public.

In Section 1 of the report, I focus on the colonialist history of museums, and how, in the midst of a racial reckoning in the United States, museums are being called on to address their practices. Second, I focus on the similar evolution occurring in journalism. In the second half of the report, I focus on how narrative journalism and immersive journalism can help tell a more comprehensive story and how solutions journalism can help measure the impact of a story. Next, Section 2 of the report presents two case studies to analyze how well two museums' exhibitions, "Arts AIDS America" and "Women's Work," told the story of the people/objects on display. A conclusion follows the case studies.

This research is based on scholarly and professional articles, interviews, case studies, and participant observation.

This report finds that:

Museums are considered the most trusted institutions in America. Of the people surveyed, the number one reason for this trust is because museums are seen as neutral institutions. However, their acquisition practices, hiring practices, and exhibition design suggest that museums are not neutral.

Museums are rooted in colonialism, which is the reason for their systemically racist practices. After recent civil unrest in the U.S., people are calling on cultural institutions, like museums, to address their histories by examining their policies and practices.

Journalism is undergoing a similar transition to museums in terms of calls for diversity in newsrooms and reporting.

Journalism is moving quicker than museums to initiate change by turning to storytelling techniques that address the concept of objectivity.

There are many museums actively working to change the narrative, like McClung Museum in Knoxville, Tennessee, but there are still more techniques that could be used to accelerate the change.

Creating narratives that incorporate rich character development and author/character voice for use on exhibition labels allows museum goers to interpret the history for themselves.

Designing exhibitions that incorporate virtual reality (VR) or augmented reality (AR) provides innovative opportunities for empathy and impact.

Writing labels, crafting outreach materials, and establishing programming that addresses solutions to the issue presented in the exhibition encourages museum goers to get involved in the community.

Introduction

On a cold February day in 2019, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City unexpectedly ended an exhibition. Patrons looked on with confused expressions as "Nedjemankh and His Gilded Coffin" left the building with federal authorities. The museum staff had just been informed that the exhibition's center piece was in fact looted from Egypt. The Manhattan District Attorney's Office came in to investigate and concluded that the coffin has been stolen in 2011. The museum acquired the coffin from Parisian art dealer Christophe Kunicki, who allegedly provided fake historical records about the object (Scher, 2019). The MET agreed to turn over "Nedjemankh and His Gilded Coffin" to the Egyptian government without controversy in an act of repatriation.

Since the passing of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act[1] in 1990, two schools of thought dominate conversations about repatriation (Wunderlich, 2017). Supporters argue that returning human remains and cultural objects is necessary to preserving cultural identity, while critics argue that returning remains and objects will eventually obliterate museums' collections (Wunderlich, 2017). These repatriation conversations are just a subset of the larger dialogue about museums, representation and trust. If museums are to be stewards of a nation's history, shouldn't their acquisition procedures be carried out with the utmost transparency? Furthermore, shouldn't the narrative, or the story, told by the museum's exhibitions be told accurately and fairly?

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[1]The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 and the regulations (43 CFR Part 10) that allow for its implementation address the rights of lineal descendants, Indian tribes, and Native Hawaiian organizations (parties with standing) to Native American human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, and objects of cultural patrimony (cultural items).

Focus of the Report

The focus of this report is to provide a brief overview of three styles of journalism that could potentially be useful for museums' curators to consider for better exhibition storytelling. The report is divided into two main sections. The first section of the report will trace the nearly identical transformations museums and journalism are undergoing by analyzing their information dissemination practices, histories, and reckonings. The second half of the report will provide a brief overview of three styles of journalism: narrative journalism and immersive journalism, both useful strategies for telling the story, and solutions journalism, an effective strategy for measuring the impact of a story. For each style of journalism, I provide a brief overview defining the practice, examples that exemplify the practice, potential ethical concerns, and ways museums could implement the style of journalism into their exhibitions.

The goal of this report is for readers to make the connection between storytelling in journalism and storytelling through museum exhibitions. Readers should gain an understanding of narrative journalism, immersive journalism, and solutions journalism and appreciate how these methods could help museums improve the current stories their exhibitions are perpetuating.

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Museums and Trust

According to the American Alliance of Museums, Americans consider museums to be the most trustworthy source of information in general, especially historical information ("Museum Facts & Data," 2020). In fact, recent research conducted by Colleen Dilenschneider, Chief Marketing Engagement Officer for IMPACTS, reveals that museums (art, history, science, and natural science) have a credibility value of around 78.0 (2019). One reason museums are so trusted is because people don't view museums as having a political agenda; in other words, they are viewed as neutral (Dilenschneider, 2019). But considering museums' history and practices, is this expectation of neutrality a myth?

Museums and the Myth of Neutrality

Dr. Elizabeth Rodini, Andrew Heiskell arts director at the American Academy in Rome, traces the complex history of museums in a recent report on the state on the changing functions of art museums. She argues that museums in Europe and North America have their beginnings in "elite personal collections," and visits to the collections were restricted to the wealthiest and most educated of society, usually white men (Rodini, 2019). Not to mention these items from personal collections were "acquired" from Indigenous and other minority communities. When public museums were founded, that is museums dedicated to educating the public, the breadth of visitors changed somewhat, but these institutions remained largely exclusive (Rodini, 2019). Examples of public museums are the Smithsonian Museums in Washington, D.C., and the Louvre Museum in Paris, France. Conversations addressing accessibility issues in museums, like who could and should visit, did not take place until the nineteenth century and were mainly concerned with economics and class, rather than gender and race (Rodini, 2019).

The most noticeable shift in the museum industry happened when the Industrial Revolution gave way to massive trade fairs where countries sought to display their goods to consumers (Rodini, 2019). London's Great Exhibition, the first international trade fair, took place in the newly built crystal palace and housed over 100,000 exhibitions (Rodini, 2019). Artisans and craftsmen, shunned by museums for their economic and class standing, were the intended target of these exhibitions (Rodini, 2019). Whereas museums never paid much attention to design, trade fairs placed a great amount of importance on installation and materials; patrons were even asked to look but not touch and had access to written labels and public lectures for more information about the exhibition (Rodini, 2019). It did not stop there, though. Trade fairs brought in sculptures and stained glass for patrons to view as well, dismantling the notion that art is for the upper echelon of society (Rodini, 2019). Museums quickly took note of how trade fairs addressed accessibility, and South Kensington Museum, later renamed the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1899, made its collection public as more or less a business decision (Rodini, 2019). Their first director, Henry Cole, even established extended visitation hours and offered free admission (Rodini, 2019).

Despite Cole's accomplishments with addressing accessibility, museums continue to struggle with issues of elitism and the "threshold fear" phenomena, which suggests that museums intimidate patrons who were not raised around museum culture and leading to feelings of being unwelcome and unrepresented (Rodini, 2019).

The fact that inclusivity concerns around museums still permeates society should not come as a surprise. Museums were inherently designed as white spaces that encouraged culture and conversation for the elites of society. By initially aligning themselves this way, they forfeited, by Merriam Webster's definition, the label of neutrality ("not favoring or joined to either side…"). As Rodini writes, "Clearly, museums have never been neutral spaces, and the conceit that they present widely shared social values to which we all aspire is wildly out of date" (2019). Catherine Shteynberg[2], curator of arts and culture at the McClung Museum in Knoxville, Tennessee, echoes Rodini's statement, "In like one sentence, no, museums are not neutral; they never have been."

[2]Interview with Catherine Shteynberg conducted via Zoom in April 2021.

Museums and the Forced Reckoning

In the wake of the police killings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor in 2020, museum staff, employees, and visitors began calling on museums in America, and across the pond as well, to address their histories of colonial acquisition practices, racism perpetuated by their collections, and lack of diverse staff and employees (Dafoe & Goldstein, 2020). For example, six former employees of the New Orleans Museum of Art accused the museum of perpetuating "a plantation-like culture behind its facade" (Greenberger, 2020). The former employees particularly called for the dismantling of "The Greenroom Parlor," which features a pre-Civil War interior, and for the inclusion of artwork created by black artists (Maccash, 2020). Organizers from Decolonize This Place (DTP), a grassroots movement to decolonize New York City and elsewhere, called on museums to be abolished (Boucher, 2020). Even an Instagram account, Change the Museum, was created to allow current or former employees and staff the chance to anonymously post their stories of discrimination at museums (Chiotakis, 2020).

Critics called foul as museums around the world released statements supporting the Black Lives Matter movement, yet still employed curators like Nancy Spector, chief curator of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York, who turned a blind eye toward racism within her own institution (Dafoe & Goldstein, 2020). In June 2019 Spector faced accusations, along with other museum staff, of racism by Chaedria LaBouvier, the museum's first black curator to organize an exhibition there. LaBouvier used Twitter to share instances she believed were racist, including not being invited by Spector to a panel about her own work (Kinsella, 2020). Though an independent investigation found Spector did not mistreat LaBouvier, she decided to depart the museum. LaBouvier's case underscores the especially growing movement calling for museums to diversify their collections, particularly for them to display more art created by BIPOC (black, indigenous, people of color) artists. In a study from William College, among 18 major museums, 85% of artists featured were white (Topaz, et. al, 2019). Additionally, only eight exhibitions of the past ten years at the Metropolitan Museum of Art have focused on African American

artists; this is out of the forty exhibitions they host each year (Ellis, 2019). Further compounding the inequities, 87% the of artists are men (Topaz, et. al, 2019). Shockingly, but perhaps not unexpected, art by African American women makes up just 3.3% of the collections in U.S. institutions (Burns & Halperin, 2019). With the inequities facing women artists, a BIPOC artist, especially an African American female artist, faces even more barriers in light of structural racism perpetuated by museums.

This lack of representation of BIPOC artists continues museums' long history of colonialism, which is described by National Geographic as "when one nation subjugates another, conquering its population and exploiting it, often while forcing its own language and cultural values upon its people" (Blakemore, 2019). Museums have long displayed artifacts from marginalized communities around the globe while ignoring the cultural implications behind the acquisitions. Most of the calls from patrons and former museum employees are for items to be returned to the Benin region of Africa, including celebrated bronzes, as well as for human remains to be returned to Indigenous tribes across America (Hunt, 2019).

In order for museums to make real and lasting changes, critics argue there needs to be more than just statements of solidarity (Boucher, 2020). In her role as curator at McClung Museum, Catherine Shteynberg acknowledges that she is aware of some of the actions that need to take place, "Part of that work needs to be reaching out to these communities. And when we're doing consulting, making sure it's not just rubber stamping of text or content that we produce, but they're actually co-creating it with communities, and then they're getting paid for their work," she said. "I think that the other thing is, those same curators who in the early 2000s were like, 'Oh, my God, we have to talk to the public', are now understanding that if you're going to do an exhibition on BLM [Black Lives Matter], you don't just sit in your office and write that by yourself."

Journalism and Trust

This moment of reckoning for museums reflects a similar issue in the institution of journalism. Journalists belong to what is sometimes called the "Fourth Estate" because of their dedication to seeking and reporting the truth. The late American broadcast journalist Walter Cronkite was even dubbed "the most trusted man in America" as he delivered the nightly news for CBS (Columbia Broadcasting System). However, in recent years, trust in reporting the news "fully, accurately and fairly" has hit an all-time low. When Gallup first conducted a poll of trust in mass media (newspapers, television and radio) to deliver news in 1972, trust was between 68% and 72% (Brenan, 2020). By the 1990s trust began trending downward, but the majority of Americans held a favorable view of mass media (Brenan, 2020). The slow decline in trust can be attributed to what Daniel Kreiss, a media scholar, called "civic skepticism" (Schudson, 2020). Recall that Americans were witnesses to former President Richard Nixon's Watergate Scandal. Nixon was infamously antagonistic toward the press for their questioning of his involvement in the scandal and declared them to be the "enemy" (Schudson. 2020). Nixon also began referring to "the press" as "the media," a subtle change that would have longstanding reverberations (Giles, n.d.). Although dubbed with a less significant name, trust in "the media" remained favorably stable until 2004 when it hit 44% during George W. Bush's presidency (Brenan, 2020).

The Bush administration kept a tight hold on information shared with journalists, thus limiting the news readers received (Alterman & Zornick, 2008). The next drastic dip happened in 2016 when trust was at an all-time low of 32% in the wake of Donald Trump's election. Much like Nixon, Trump waged a war against journalists. He, too, referred to the media as the enemy, popularized the term "fake news," and openly attacked news organizations like NBC and MSNBC for reporting stories he claimed were fake (Pedersen, 2019). Trump infamously suspended the press pass of CNN's Jim Acosta, accusing him

of being a "rude, terrible person" after Acosta pressed Trump on his characterization of the migrant caravan moving through Mexico at that time (Gonzales, 2018). He didn't declare war on all media stations, though; he approved of sources like Fox News, Breitbart, OAN and Newsmax because he felt they were getting the news right (Smith, 2019). These stations openly peddled conspiracy theories and frequently provided a platform for Trump to share his misinformation campaign (Smith, 2019). At last count, the Washington Post counted 30,573 "false or misleading claims" told by Trump during his four years in office (Kessler et. al, 2021).

Trump's verbal assault on journalism helped contribute to the steady erosion of public trust in news (Hetherington & Ladd, 2020). In 2016, just 14% of Republicans trusted journalists, while 51% of Democrats did (Brenan, 2020). Contrast this data to the election of Democratic President Joe Biden in 2020 when trust of journalists among Democrats shot up to 73% while Republicans bottomed out to just 10% (Brenan, 2020). Though trust in the media is predominantly moving in opposite directions based on political affiliation in the U.S., the fact of the matter is that trust is down around the world (Toff et.al., 2020). In the Reuters Institute's Digital News Report from 2020, only 38% of people (fewer than four in ten) across forty markets around the world say they trust news. Some suggested reasons for the global decline in trust is a lack of understanding the difference between opinion pieces (op-ed) versus editorials, the inability to fact-check sources, and deficiencies in proportional coverage of marginalized communities (Toff et.al., 2020).

Journalism and the Myth of Objectivity

Similar to museums' claims to neutrality, the institution of journalism has long declared itself objective, or seeking to remain independent of outside influences. The. U.S. press was initially overtly partisan but shifted to focus on neutrality/objectivity in the 20th century, largely a business decision (Pressman, 2018). Several newspaper mergers and closings meant fewer papers in circulation, so the newspaper that survived needed to appeal to the masses rather than just a niche audience (Pressman, 2018). Throughout the 1940s

and 1950s, journalists began reporting verbatim what the elites said and did with no context or analysis, essentially giving the powerful of society their own platform to use how they wanted (Pressman, 2018). At the time, Senator Joseph McCarthy, infamous for his rampant accusations of communism, frequently had his unsubstantiated claims disseminated in newspapers (Pressman, 2018). The press changed their definition of objectivity in the 1960s, largely as a response to McCarthy, by allowing journalists to include context and analysis instead of just facts (Pressman, 2018). The new understanding of objectivity allowed for journalists to include their professional judgements only, and not their personal judgments (Pressman, 2018). Objectivity in journalism as the ideal way to tell a story has persisted since the 1960s, but critics like Brent Cunningham, *Columbia Journalism Review's* managing editor, say, "our [journalists'] pursuit of objectivity can trip us up on the way to report 'truth'" (Cunningham, 2003).

The lack of diversity in America's newsrooms has allowed for objectivity to be defined solely by white editors and reporters, much like the role of white curators. These "selective truths," as Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Wesley Lowery calls them, are designed to not offend the white reader, the assumed reader of the article (Lowery, 2020). Furthermore, Dr. Rachel Grant[3], an assistant professor of journalism at the University of Florida, maintains that "Objectivity, in this historical sense, was a part of the professionalization of our field. I don't prescribe to the idea of that. The idea that my gender, my race, my experiences, haven't influenced my storytelling is very problematic. You have to understand that there are cultural nuances that are part of those stories in the professionalization."

Newsrooms tiptoe around the truth through text and visual editing tactics that convey the newsroom's version of the narrative, the concept of media framing. Media framing is the idea that news media choose to focus on certain events and certain places to create a narrative ("Media Framing," n.d.). Examples of media framing are easy to spot in coverage of crime in BIPOC communities. A study conducted by Media Matters in New York found that between August 18 and December 13, 2014, four stations (WCBS,

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[3]Interview with Dr. Rachel Grant conducted via Zoom in April 2021.

WNBC, WABC and WNYW) overwhelmingly used their time to report on murder, theft and assault cases when African Americans were the suspects (Desmond-Harris, 2015). This overly perpetuated narrative that black and brown people are criminals has real implications for how they are treated in real life because the way media portrays certain issues influences people's worldviews ("Media Framing," n.d.).

Journalism and the Forced Reckoning

While some have abandoned news media for its perceived lack of credibility, others are just not watching at all. News avoidance, an increasingly growing concern for news organizations, happens when viewers do not watch the news, largely because of the negative stories, but also because of the overwhelming amount of news viewers are subjected to every day (Andersen and Skovsgarrd, 2019). Much of the "negative news" in recent years has been cases of racial unrest, particularly the police killings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor in 2020 (Jurkowitz, et.al). Many news organizations, like museums, issued Black Lives Matter statements, while journalists used Twitter to voice their experiences with covert and overt racism in the newsroom (Merrefield, 2020). However, this is not a new problem, as around 75% of newsroom employees are non-Hispanic white, compared to about 66% of all U.S. workers, according to a 2018 analysis from the Pew Research Center (Merrefield, 2020). Unfortunately, newsrooms haven't lived up to the goal of having minority employment reflective of the minority population of the national population ("ASNE Diversity History," 2021). According to the Pew Research Center, BIPOC individuals made up 40% of the U.S. population and are on track to make up over 50% of the population by 2044 (Budiman, 2020). This lack of diversity in newsrooms is more dangerous than it can seem. When white journalists are the primary storytellers, "this kind of reporting leaves out important contextual information such as the role of history, institutional policies, and inequitable practices" ("Race Reporting Guide," 2015). The lack of diversity can also suggest, as Dr. Rachel Grant believes, that "… these are no longer issues [race], or these are issues that only certain people have to deal with."

Part 3: Journalists and Curators as Information Gatekeepers

Museum curators, like journalists, have a public-facing role and are responsible for disseminating information. Perhaps, though, the most evident similarity is that both roles require they function as gatekeepers of information – that is, they decide what is printed or shown on television, in the case of a journalist, or what gets exhibited, in the case of a museum curator.

In this moment when both institutions are beginning to reconcile their public image with their histories of systemic racism, it could be useful for museums to look to journalism as a model for change. Shteynberg admits museums, especially art museums, are slow to change and suggests that might be the key distinction between the two institutions. "Maybe this is a difference between journalism and museums: Journalism moves quickly."

Museum narratives – and how they are framed – have a similar impact on how people understand important events, so the choices curators make about which stories or events to highlight have important implications. Without better storytelling techniques, museums will continue to design exhibitions that perpetuate trophyism, the idea that the object was gained through conquest and therefore lacks context (Kelly, 2010).

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Journalistic Storytelling Techniques

Section 2

Part 1: Narrative Journalism: Privileging the Reader

What Is Narrative Journalism?

Narrative journalism, also called literary journalism, is a storytelling technique that "combines factual reporting with narrative techniques and stylistic strategies traditionally associated with fiction" (Nordquist, 2020). The technique dates back to the late 19th century as a response to the burgeoning movement of objectivity in journalism (Nyakangi, 2020). Some of the most notable practitioners of narrative journalism are Joan Didion, Gay Talese, and Hunter S. Thompson ("The 100 Outstanding Journalists"). The features of narrative journalism are immersive reporting, where the authors immerse themselves in the subjects' world; character development, the process of building three-dimensional characters personalities and traits; and voice, the unique tone of the author or narrator (Nordquist, 2020). What makes narrative journalism unique is that interpreting the narrative becomes the responsibility of the reader rather than the writer; the author doesn't tell readers what to think about certain characters or places but allows readers to draw their own conclusions (Nordquist, 2020).

What Are Some Examples of Narrative Journalism?

A modern example is "Some Dreamers of the Golden Dream," published by Joan Didion in *The Saturday Evening Post* in 1966. It brings readers to San Bernardino County to witness the downward spiral of Lucille Miller, who killed her husband by lighting his car on fire with him in it, after learning of his extramarital affair (McDonald, 2012). She paints brilliant pictures of California and gives a depth to the characters not found in traditional journalism (McDonald, 2012). Her creativity combined with the factual events keeps readers on the edge of their seats to see what happens, and exactly how it does. The character development of Lucille Miller allows the readers to interpret their own opinion of whether her actions were justified.

A contemporary example is "The Skin I'm In: I've been interrogated by police more than 50 times- all because I'm black," by Desmond Cole. He paints the scenes of every place he's ever been interrogated and uses boldly descriptive words to describe the emotions he felt each time (Cole, 2015). Cole's creative descriptions combined with the factual account of his experiences immerses readers, if only for a short time, in his world. Particularly, this narrative affords readers from non-marginalized communities the opportunity to interpret the police's actions for themselves.

Ethical Issues with Narrative Journalism

The biggest issue concerning narrative journalism is the "reality boundary" (Sims, 2009). Critics are concerned that narrative journalists may be too creative in their writing and that it may become fiction writing, leading to fabrication, as in the cases of Jayson Blair, who wrote for *The New York Times*, and Stephen Glass, who wrote for *The New Republic* (Sims, 2009). This issue is particularly associated with narrative writing because this type of journalism combines factual reporting with techniques of creative writing (Nordquist, 2020).

How Can Museums Adopt This Technique?

Museums can create more immersive labels using narrative journalism style. Just stating the facts is not interesting and does not allow the reader the ability to connect with the exhibition. For example, a quote from a character in the exhibition could be used on the label to immerse museum goers in his/her voice and to gain a better understanding of his/her personality.

If the labels do not provide adequate room for a narrative, consider adding larger labels around the exhibition that can offer more detail.

Part 2: Immersive Journalism: Establishing Empathy

What Is Immersive Journalism?

National Public Radio defines immersive storytelling as stories in which audiences can interact with "visuals, audio, and data" (Lindamood, 2018). This technique is beginning to catch on because it offers new opportunities for audiences to feel empathy and gain a better understanding of contextually difficult news stories (Online News Association, 2020). The idea of using technology for storytelling was first introduced by Nonny de la Pena, who suggested virtual reality would allow readers to step into the story (Watson, 2017). A revolutionary example of immersive journalism is "Snow Fall: The Avalanche at Tunnel Creek," a multimedia feature published in *The New York Times* in 2012 by John Branch that used stunning graphics and an accompanying documentary to tell the story of a deadly avalanche in the northwestern corner of the U.S. Mariia Kukkakorpi and Mervi Pantti, media professors at the University of Helsinki, suggest the reason immersive storytelling stands in contrast to traditional storytelling is because "rather than being about 'storytelling,' it is about 'story-living,' as it allows the user to have an active role" (Kukkakorpi & Pantti, 2020).

What Are Some Examples of Immersive Journalism?

The most notable immersive storytelling technique journalists use is virtual reality (VR). Using this technique, audiences wear virtual reality headsets, like those from the Oculus technology brand, to enter into a 3D scenario created by news teams. For example, in 2019 *The New York Times* launched a VR documentary about the 1955 lynching of 14-year-old Emmett Till called "Remembering Emmett Till: The Legacy of a Lynching." The experience was a 360-degree video tracing Till's time in Mississippi up until his untimely death ("Remembering Emmett Till, 2019") Audiences could see the physical buildings Till saw to get a sense of what the community was like then ("Remembering Emmett Till," 2019). Their documentary won the Excellence in Immersive Storytelling award from the Online Journalism Awards organization in 2019 ("Online Journalism Awards," 2019). In the 2015 Virtual Reality Consumer Report,

79% of respondents who have tried the technology before reported a desire to use VR again (Terdiman, 2015). Minorities are also more likely than whites to have a passion for VR (Terdiman, 2015).

Augmented reality (AR) is closely linked to VR but offers a less immersive experience by not requiring a specialized headset. Rather, participants use the camera on their smartphone to see digital elements added to their live view (Gupton, 2017). Fashion magazine *W* launched an AR experience with their September 2017 issue. Readers could download *W's* "Behind the Page" app to view an interactive cover story on Katy Perry (Gupton, 2017).

Ethical Concerns with Immersive Journalism

Some of the current conversations around ethical issues in immersive journalism are about user privacy and in-game trauma (Kenwright, 2019). Critics argue VR and AR platforms collect data that identify individuals and put their personal information at risk, opening to door to fraud and identity theft (Dick, 2021). Critics also argue that certain content within the VR and AR worlds, like military combat zones, could cause physical reactions, including increased heart rate and increased blood pressure, as well as psychological reactions, including anxiety and fear (LaMotte, 2017).

With many new technologies, there are accessibility issues too. VR technology is expensive, so some people are going to be left out of the experience because they cannot afford the gear. However, as is the case with the Emmett Till documentary, audiences are still able to fully engage in the experience without using the VR headsets. Though the 3D experiences aren't there, news organizations hope that viewers still get the general idea ("Remembering Emmett Till," 2019).

How Can Museums Adopt This Technique?

Museums could turn one of their exhibitions into a VR experience. Think of the impact to visitors if, for example, they were on the Edmond Pettus Bridge on Bloody Sunday rather than just reading about it. The sights, sounds, and images would all create an engaging and immersive experience. The Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C., comes close to immersive storytelling by handing guests the name of someone who

lived during the Holocaust at the start of the tour, but it fails to go one step further by immersing viewers in the true horrors. To virtually go inside a concentration camp or to walk around an extermination site could make the exhibition that much more engaging. However, as mentioned on page 14, these immersive experiences, as engaging as they have the potential to be, could be too traumatizing for some guests. Perhaps AR experiences could provide a similar opportunity for immersion with less trauma involved.

Museums could write grants to pay for the technology to do VR as well as adapt an exhibition to be seen through VR. Offering those experiences digitally through their websites using both VR and AR technology could be less expensive and more accessible. The Smithsonian Museum in Washington, D.C., introduced an AR component for the Bone Hall in 2017 (Coates, 2020). Patrons can download an app on their phone called Skin and Bone, which allows them to hover their device over any one of the 13 skeletons featured in the app to see a reconstruction of the animal (Coates, 2020).

Part 3: Solutions Journalism: Solving the Problem

What Is Solutions Journalism?

According to the Solutions Journalism Network, solutions journalism is in-depth reporting on the response to a social problem. The reporting can be character-driven but also includes evidence of the effectiveness of the solution ("Solutions Journalism," 2016). The Solutions Journalism Network identifies 10 core reasons why this storytelling technique is useful, but the main reason is that it provides "a more complete view of society" by writing a "more accurate account of the state of play." Solutions journalists understand that when voices are excluded from a narrative, it "perpetuate[s] misleading beliefs about reality" ("Solutions Journalism," 2016). This storytelling technique has its roots in: Peace Journalism, a response to the Vietnam War by Johan Galtung in the 1960s; Civic or Public Journalism, a 1990s movement that encouraged citizens to participate in the reporting process; Citizen Journalism, a movement in the early 2000s that was

similar to Civic or Public Journalism that encouraged citizens to report on their community themselves; and Constructive Journalism, a popular movement in Europe that emerged in the 2010s and sought to engage the audience by focusing on how they can create positive changes in society (Bass, 2019). Solutions journalism is seen as an effective storytelling technique for empowering audiences because it spurs readers to get involved with the issue mentioned or even donate money to an organization working to solve the issue (Curry and Hammonds, 2014).

What Are Some Examples of Solutions Journalism?

In a six-part series, Mary Shinn reports on youth suicides over the last five years in La Plata County in Colorado. Shinn's piece is character driven as she starts with a narrative about Emma Harmon, a young woman who survived a suicide attempt (Shinn, 2018). Then, she incorporates data about the reports of suicidal people and suicide deaths. So far, this seems on par with traditional journalism, but Shinn deviates when she introduces a section on prevention efforts. She mentions the work that K-12 schools are doing, as well as clubs and primary care doctors, to prevent suicide (Shinn, 2018). For the rest of the series, Shinn continues to tell the stories of those affected by suicide but also weaves in the local and national suicide prevention methods that are being used to try and save lives (Shinn, 2018). Shinn also takes a page from the immersive journalism playbook by including audio stories from Sarah Flower.

A series of photographs by Anisa Sabiri shows how to do solutions photojournalism. The photographs depict the daily lives of women in Tajikistan (Ford, 2018). The photographs are as simple as women tending to their crops or as complex as women in a family counselling session (Ford, 2018). The photographs all seem to follow traditional photojournalism principles, but in the captions Sabiri presents readers with the social problem and the solution to the problem. Her captions reveal the extent of the physical and sexual violence against women in Tajikistan but that an "18-month pilot project, Zindagii Shoista (Living with Dignity) …has produced remarkable results" (Ford, 2018). The program provided 10 weekly family counselling sessions and training workshops to represent better coping mechanisms than violence (Ford, 2018).

Ethical Issues with Solutions Journalism

Critics of solutions journalism argue that this type of journalism is not objective because the journalist gets too involved in the solution, creating conflicts of interest (Bass, 2019).

How Can Museums Adopt This Technique?

The first area where museums can start using solutions journalism is in their labeling. Visitors need to know more than just the fact that Indigenous Americans were forcibly removed from their land by the Indian Removal Act of 1830. They need to know the solutions to that problem; what is being done now? Is there legislation that has been passed since 1830? A nonprofit now dedicated to the Indigenous population? These are examples of just some of the questions that need to be asked when doing solutions journalism.

Programming is another great way to address an issue and the solutions that could help. For example, if a museum has an exhibition about the Civil Rights Movement in America, it could create programs discussing Civil Rights legislation, voting rights legislation, and even the Black Lives Matter movement as solutions to the problem.

Newsletters or other forms of external communication could also allow for museums to acknowledge the social problems that exist within their institution. They could use external communication methods such as newsletters or blogs as ways to educate their visitors about the solutions that exist in their community. For example, Art Museum Teaching is a digital community forum for reflecting on issues within the museum field like community engagement and social justice. Most recently the site has published several solutions-based articles focusing on how museums can better interact with marginalized groups through engagement efforts and hiring practices (Murawski, n.d.).

Case Studies

The following section describes two real-world exhibitions in American museums. The first example, "Art AIDS America," first on display at the Tacoma Art Museum, is an exhibition that did not get the narrative right by disregarding important voices in the AIDS/HIV epidemic. The second example, "Women's Work," on display at McClung Museum, got the narrative right by including the art of marginalized groups and for including immersive and solutions-based experiences. Each case study includes an introduction to provide context, an analysis of the museum's use of storytelling techniques and then a set of recommendations for how the exhibition could have been improved with better storytelling techniques. Although the recommendations are specific to the case study, they can easily be adapted and modified to other exhibitions.

Arts AIDS America

The Tacoma Art Museum in Seattle, Washington, revealed "Art AIDS America" to the public on October 3, 2015 ("Art AIDS America," n.d.). The museum, founded in 1935, has collections focused largely on artists from the Northwest, as well as the general western U.S. region ("History and Vision," n.d.). The "Art AIDS America" exhibition focused on exploring the artistic responses to the HIV/AIDS epidemic with modern and contemporary pieces from artists like Jerome Caja and Keith Haring ("Art AIDS America," n.d.).

The exhibition was 10 years in the making and covered 30 years of artwork made in response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the U.S. ("Art AIDS America," n.d.). While many lauded the museum for bringing in a perhaps controversial exhibition, others were quick to point out that the exhibition did not fully account for all faces impacted by the HIV/AIDS epidemic (Ponnekanti, 2015). Chris Jordan, a Tacoma-based artist, drew attention to the fact that although African Americans have the highest death rate from AIDS and the highest infection rate from HIV, only four of the artists featured in the exhibition were African American (Ponnekanti, 2015). Protesters marched through the exhibit before

laying on the floor of the museum, symbolizing black deaths (Ponnekanti, 2015). The museum's curator, Rock Hushka, who is white, insisted that the point of the exhibition was to display art and that they were not looking through the lens of race (Ponnekanti, 2015). The museum director, Stephanie Stebich, who is also white, said there should have been more black and African American artists but that the exhibition was already complete and that it would be impossible for them to have changed it at that point.

During a community panel held to discuss the lack of diversity in the exhibition, Chris Jordan shared his perspective as a black artist, but Rock Hushka, the museum's curator, was not there (Ponnekanti, 2015). When Jordan finally reached Hushka via email, Hushka said that when he was curating the exhibition, he was not aware of the AIDS/HIV statistics in the black and African American community (Ponnekanti, 2015).

Analysis

Rock Hushka, the curator, failed to tell the whole story of the AIDS/HIV epidemic in America by leaving out important but marginalized voices. He did not investigate the subject matter thoroughly before he started gathering materials for the exhibition. Had he done proper research, he could have found the statistics that reveal how disproportionate deaths and infection rates are in the Black and African American community, and among minorities in general, compared to the white community.

Hushka's decision to leave out pieces of the story underscores museums' struggles with the myth of neutrality.

Their lack of engagement with the Black community reinforces museums' colonial acquisition practices. The Tacoma Art Museum essentially exploited Black artists' pieces without giving them any power.

Recommendations

Hushka could have consulted AIDS/HIV experts in the community to gain a holistic perspective of the epidemic before acquiring artwork so that the exhibition was more diverse.

Experts like researchers, doctors, survivors, etc., could have been featured panelists giving lectures about the state of AIDS/HIV today and educating the audience about the solutions being used.

There could have been an immersive experience like "As Much as I Can," a theatrical production where actors portraying four gay black men affected by HIV address the audience ("As Much As I Can, n.d.). Similarly, "360 VR," a virtual reality project from Google and Makhulu Media, educates audiences about HIV testing ("UNAIDS teams up with Google," 2018).

The exhibition could have included narrative pieces accompanying the more contemporary artwork from living artists.

Women's Work: Selected Women Artists from the McClung Museum

When Emma Thompson, graduate research assistant for exhibition curation, conducted research a couple of years ago, she noticed that McClung Museum had very little artwork created by women on display despite having several pieces in storage. The McClung Museum of Natural History and Culture was established in 1963 in Knoxville, Tennessee, and features collections focused on the Earth and its peoples ("History," n.d.).

Thompson's curiosity led to her curating the exhibition "Women's Work" to explore the underrepresentation of women artists in museums. As the data noted on page 12, women, especially BIPOC women, have historically been excluded from museum exhibitions.

"Women's Work" displays older pieces as well as contemporary work created by African American women like Althea Murphy-Price, an artist and professor at the University of Tennessee, and Indigenous women like Amanda Crowe, an Eastern Band Cherokee wood carver ("Women's Work," n.d.).

The exhibition debuted January 20, 2021, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic, patrons could not visit the museum to see it. Despite the logistics challenges, McClung Museum staff created a virtual tour of the exhibition. Several programs, including an Artist Talk with Jessica Caldas, a Puerto Rican-American artist, accompanied the exhibition.

Analysis

"Women's Work" stands out from museums' typical exhibitions for its sole focus on women artists, particularly BIPOC women artists. McClung Museum's racial and gender inclusion deconstructs the historical narrative that only white men create art worthy of display. Furthermore, the placards accompanying each piece help deconstruct the white male artist narrative by acknowledging why women artists have historically been underrepresented, i.e., race, gender and even their husbands taking credit for their work.

McClung's virtual tour of the exhibition is particularly notable because, while done out of necessity, it made the exhibition an immersive and engaging experience for not just Knoxville patrons but also patrons across the country and the world. The accompanying programming also lends itself well to community engagement by not just providing education on women's issues and women's history, but also how to address these issues. A suggested solution is evident in their event Independence Through Financial Literacy. The event descriptions notes that "The exhibition, in part, argues that the featured artists required freedom to pursue their creative work, which was tied closely to the ability to have financial independence." Highlighting a panel of three women in the financial sector underscores the museum's desire to better represent women in general but also speaks to the exhibition's ability to encourage conversations around the historical reasons women and BIPOC women have been neglected in museums.

Recommendations

Create a partnership with the University of Tennessee's Department of Women, Gender, and Sexuality to provide more programming such as panels and movie screenings. McClung did very little activity during Women's History Month (March), a perfect time for related engagement activities. The film "Big Eyes," starring Amy Adams, would have been appropriate to feature as it tells the story of Margaret Keane, an incredible artist whose husband takes credit for her work (O'Malley, 2014). "Frida," which depicts the life of famous Mexican painter Frida Kahlo, capturers her pioneering influence on art and culture (Ebert, 2002). Hosting panels that discuss the already passed or potential legislation advancing women could have also been useful to underscore the emerging solutions for addressing the problems of inequality for women.

Invite graduate students completing the Department of Women, Gender, and Sexuality's certificate program to present their required independent study findings.

Offer a career day aimed at women in underrepresented industries like STEM.

Provide virtual art lessons from contemporary artists featured in the exhibition.

Conclusion

This report analyzed how journalistic storytelling techniques could be applied to museum exhibitions to create more comprehensive narratives. A brief, but detailed history of museums' colonial roots provides an understanding of why there is such difficulty with telling fair stories. Recent racial unrest in the country caused former and current museum employees and staff, as well as museum goers, to challenge museums to address their history. It is noted that there is a similar evolution occurring in journalism in regard to systemic racism, but the institution has been quicker than museums to address the issue by embracing emerging forms of storytelling like narrative journalism, immersive journalism, and solutions journalism.

Museums can change the narrative if they can learn and implement journalistic storytelling techniques. Deeper character development, more immersive experiences, and solutions-based internal/external communication need to be considered during the design phase to be successful in this endeavor.

~ racial unrest in the country caused former and current museum employees and staff, as well as museum goers, to challenge museums to address their history... there is a similar evolution occurring in journalism... ~

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