

Bedroom secrets

Using web 2.0 to show how *The bedroom* by Vincent van Gogh is being restored.

Restoration 2.0: how can public involvement in a complex subject like the restoration of a masterpiece be realised in a new and visitor-friendly way, on site and online?



From January to around August 2010 Vincent van Gogh's painting *The bedroom* will be restored and subsequently given out on loan. The Van Gogh Museum would like to explain to visitors why one of the public's favourites will not be on view for such a protracted period.

Restoration is absolutely necessary in order to preserve this canvas. The restoration process offers a wonderful opportunity to give an up-to-date and highly accessible account of Van Gogh's work and life based on a key work from the collection and, in passing, to explain just what is involved in the museum's task of preserving and managing the collection. Using web 2.0 enables the museum to actively involve the public in the restoration process.

We aim to achieve this by:

- A weblog by the restorer giving regular updates on the progress of the restoration and answering questions from the public
- Chat sessions with restorers/curators via e.g. facebook, twitter. These sessions could for example be held on a Friday night in the museum in front of an audience, while at the same time allowing people at home to take part via eg. twitter. The responses from people at home are displayed in the museum via a twitterfall.
- Vodcasts: In the period leading up to the restoration we compile questions from museum visitors about *The bedroom* and its restoration. The painting's restorer and/or the curator answer these questions and the films are subsequently posted on the blog as well as on, for example, ArtBabble, YouTube and iTunesU.
- Twitter updates and new vodcasts following the progress of the restoration

- VIP visits to the restoration studio. The best online posts about the restoration win a visit to the restoration studio. Such visits, too, will be film and posted on the weblog, ArtBabble etc.

What are you looking to achieve? And why?

With this project and the associated use of web 2.0 we want to:

- Offer the public a glimpse behind the scenes of the work being done in the Van Gogh Museum (management and preservation of the collection); we want to show that the museum does more than simply put art works on display
- Involve visitors (online and on site) in the restoration process by asking them before and during the restoration process what they want to know about it
- Broaden and enhance the extent of public knowledge about Van Gogh
- Strengthen the ties with visitors, online and on site

A complex process like restoration usually takes place away from the public gaze -- 'behind closed doors'. We want to make that process accessible, among others by using web 2.0.

Who is your target audience?

We're targeting various groups:

- Lifelong learners. People who are looking for greater insight, who want to know more about the painting, the research and the restoration process.
- People all over the world who are interested in the artist Vincent van Gogh
- Visitors to the museum from home and abroad, online and on site.

What is it that makes your new project innovative? (Eg. new section of the public, new forms of cooperation, new type of distribution, new product, new work processes?)

By implementing a mix of various web 2.0 media to explain to a broad-based audience what's involved in the restoration process, using social network tools widely used by the public itself, a complex subject can be made easily accessible. What's more, by using web 2.0 we can initiate a lively discussion and exchange of information between members of the public themselves and between the public and the museum. By more closely linking the various web 2.0 applications -- and ideally integrating them fully with one another -- you create a system of mutual reinforcement, for example Flickr photo's on blog, Facebook, Hyves and website, with people being referred via Twitter. Videos on the blog can be posted via ArtBabble and from there users can access related content via 'notes'.

Why is it important that you use web 2.0?

With web 2.0 we can involve the public in a complex subject in an accessible, user-friendly and playful manner. Web 2.0 also provides the possibility to connect the inside world of the museum with the outside world and vice versa.

What help and/or expertise do you require in working out your project plan?

The Van Gogh Museum is already fairly active in various web 2.0 media, such as Facebook, Flickr, Hyves, Youtube and ArtBabble, but we feel there's still a lot more to be gained, particularly as regards:

- greater/better/more active involvement of Facebook users, Twitter followers and Hyves members in complex subjects such as restoration
- improved integration of the various web 2.0 possibilities
- developing an attractive blog on a complex subject
- developing practical skills and effectiveness when it comes to making video recordings and forging them into an attractive video film/vodcast.