University of Groningen

New ways of audience engagement

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State of the Arts

Generating

Revenue Online

More and more arts and cultural institutions, artists and festivals generate revenue with digital formats. Not only are they often more successful than they thought. They also dis–cover new forms of appreciation, creativity, and connection with colleagues and digital visitors. **Focus starting on page 6**

Values and valuation

Aura, experience and being together. For many professionals in arts and culture, these are the central values of analogue cultural formats, which cannot be replaced by digital ones. Unfortunately, this skepticism or contempt regarding digital cultural offerings as well as an unwillingness to pay for them is also being assumed for the audience – without actually asking them about it. Are aura, experience, and being together as valuable to the visitors as they are for us professionals? And are these aspects really pivotal for their visits to cultural institutions? Is it not rather about valuable content, no matter if analogue or digital? Additionally, digital formats and events also mean financial expenses for cultural institutions and artists. So why should they be for free? First and foremost, what it needs to make digital paid formats attractive are new parameters, such as lower prices, creative formats or the principle of shortened availability. As well as a mindset for digital business models for cultural institutions and artists. There are already numerous examples from arts and culture proving that new forms of experience or community are possible in the digital world – and not only in times of limited analogue access.

Be courageous!

State of the Arts

Dirk Schütz
(Publisher)

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Content

Sydney Dance Company's Digital
Pivot **21**

A film festival goes online **40**

Bringing Heritage Institutions to the
Digital World **48**

BOOK REVIEW

Managing Culture. Reflecting on Exchange in Global Times

Every arts and cultural manager is influenced by internationalization and globalization. This also means that they should pay attention to the circumstances that fundamentally influence international work in the cultural sector. This book is a perfect introduction.

by Kristin Oswald

https://bit.ly/review_managingculture

COVID-19 AND CULTURE IN AFRICA

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A comparative analysis of economic impact studies

The pandemic has influenced the cultural and creative industries of most African countries. A look at current studies on the situation of the continent shows the extent of the consequences.

by Ribio Nzeza Bunketi Buse

https://bit.ly/COVID_CCI_Africa

TIME MANAGEMENT FOR CREATIVES

For artist entrepreneurs, successful time management is successful self-management. And successful self-management requires planning and organization and discipline—the ability to respond and commit to your needs and wants first and foremost.

by Judith Teitelman

https://bit.ly/timemanagement_artists

#BLACKLIVESMATTER & THE ARTS SECTOR

"Struggling is not enough"

We are living in the collision of two pandemics, the coronavirus crisis and the ancient, global and persistent pandemic of racism. In recent weeks thousands of people have taken the streets to reaffirm that #BlackLivesMatter. Now the demonstrations advance inside arts institutions, which will be forced to reflect on which side they are from when it comes to racial equity (and more).

by Beth Ponte

https://bit.ly/Blacklivesmatter_culture

BOOK REVIEW

Cultural Participation - A Handbook

The concept of cultural participation has seen an increasing boom in recent years. But is this „career" just a fad of cultural policy and cultural management of our time or will it shape the future? A book from Switzerland addresses this question with articles in German, French and Italian.

by Benjamin Hanke

https://bit.ly/Review_CulturalParticipation

THE PANDEMIC & TRANSFORMATION

The Ascendance of „Digital Culture"

One of the most distinctive outcomes of the crisis for the cultural sector is that it shrunk the global to fit our computer screens and made local events resound globally. The digital or immaterial became tangible, substituting for what we previously enjoyed as physical and proximate.

by Stoyan V. Sgourev

http://bit.ly/Ascendance_DigitalCulture

4

Reading for change

Gestion cultural en Argentina
(Cultural management in Argentina)
Emiliano Fuentes Firmani y Jose A. Tasat (eds.),
RGC Libros 2019.

Cultural management was introduced in South America in the 1990s as part of the neoliberalisation of the public and cultural sector. Twenty years later, this book by cultural management training institutions in Argentina introduces the current state of the discussion about the professionalization of the sector and identifies research trends from different positions. Underlying is the need to advance cultural policies, address the problems of this region, and break the (post–)colonial patterns established by the classical North Atlantic experiences.

Critique of Black Reason
Achille Mbembe,
Duke University Press, 2017.

This book exposes the relevance of „decolonization" for our common future. Its thesis is that „black reason" – which postulates the non-humanity of racialized subjects – fosters new modalities of exclusion. In this sense, Mbembe investigates the conceptual foundations of the neoliberal model and links them with imperialism. He reminds us once again that the idea of race is a fiction: a particularly efficient one. If, in the black becoming of the world, the denial of self-determination extends to the majority, it is time for culture to recover the possibility of assuming the future as a right of collective construction.

Ciudadanos reemplazados por algoritmos
(Citizens replaced by algorithms)
Néstor García Canclini,
Bielefeld University Press, 2020.

Who still cares about citizens in the age of algorithms and platforms-based capitalism? This book researches the neoliberal capture of technology from a sociological perspective, asking if it is possible to improve the quality of democracy in the current transition „from institutions to applications". In this free downloadable publication, the author concludes that „the only thing that in the end seems to have become globalised is the feeling that almost everyone loses". However, he renews the hope that critical heterogeneities can be articulated from citizen protests in order to build a profound reform of the current global social system.

Federico Escribal studied Cultural Management and Cultural Policy with a focus on diversity. He was Director for the Promotion of Cultural Rights and Cultural Diversity at the National Culture Secretariat. He currently works as consultant for Argentina Futura, and as a professor and lecturer on arts management.

If you like to share your reading tips, just write us an email to office @artsmanagement.net!

5

The Digital Transformation of Business Models in the Creative Industries

By Feng Li

The Covid-19 global pandemic has hit the creative industries particularly hard. In the UK alone, a £74bn drop in revenues and a loss of 400,000 jobs have been projected, equating the loss of about one in five creative jobs. Leading arts organisations and industry bodies have already warned that the UK risks an exodus of talent from its creative sector. Thus, new sources of sustainable income for the creative industries are urgently needed.

Already before the pandemic, many talented, highly skilled artists and creatives were poor. So how could we draw inspiration from the institutional setups of some creative businesses, such as advertising agencies or successful theatre companies, where the organisational structures enable the creative talents to focus on being creative while others with commercial skills take care of the business activities? In particular, could digital technologies help them transform the way new ideas are created and distributed and capture a larger slice of the values they create without compromising their intellectual freedom and artistic integrity?

My curiosity about these questions led to a research project funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) on 'Sustainable and Scalable Business Models in the Creative Industries'; and then spiralled into a series of larger research projects funded by the RCUK's flagship Digital Economy Programme. The ideas in this paper have mostly emerged from

6

these projects, which demonstrate that the continuous rapid growth of the digital economy is indeed a silver lining. An increasing number of creative products and services is created, distributed, transacted or consumed online, allowing creative businesses to continue to generate revenues and engage with their audience. This has stimulated new creativity and innovation in the production, distribution and consumption of creative products and services, although the benefits by now are unevenly distributed. What could business leaders and policy makers do to lay the foundation for a sustainable and prosperous future for the cultural sector and the creative industries?

There is no shortage of general advices on how to make money online, but most such advices tend to focus on helping individuals earning some extra cash on the side by selling products or services. For the creative industries, however, earning money online takes significantly more than simply advertising on the internet and making a few extra sales. Digital technologies enable creative businesses and arts organisations to fundamentally rethink their products and services, structures and processes, organizational designs, infrastructure support and customer engagement, and their visions, strategies and business models. The challenge is to identify and implement sustainable and scalable approaches to capture a fair share of the financial values from existing and new creative products and services using digital technologies, and mitigate the huge risks involved. Policy interventions and increased public funding are necessary, but ultimately, new solutions need to be found from within the field, particularly by adopting new digital business models to make adequate money online while pursuing social and cultural objectives, both now and in the future.

"What could business leaders and policy makers do to lay the foundation for a sustainable and prosperous future for the cultural sector and the creative industries?"

What is so special about the creative industries?

Compared with most other sectors of the economy, the creative industries are a broad church consisting of a wide range of activities and many different types of organizations based on individual creativity, skill and talent. They represent a significant and rapidly growing sector of the world econ-

omy. In the UK, for example, they are comparable to the financial industry in size and have a strong global reputation in design, fashion, film, game, media, music and publishing. They create significant cultural goods both for domestic consumption and global export each year. As an economic sector, the creative industries also imply that the focus is not just on the art and artists, but also adjacent activities in the entire supply chain, including those 'non-creative' activities, products and people within the sector.

However, the notion of the creative industries is not without problems, and has been fiercely contested for valuing arts and culture primarily for their economic contribution rather than their contribution to ideas or society. Furthermore, since the links between creative industries and other sectors of the economy are difficult to disentangle, it raises practical difficulties in measuring the creative industries. Most studies focus on industries whose outputs rather than activities are considered creative, because creative occupations are found in all sectors of the economy. In addition, compared with most other sectors, the creative industries are characterised by high levels of self-employment and micro businesses. Many of them are below the VAT (value added tax) threshold in the UK, so the official economic data underestimate their full economic contributions. This is also reflected in the relatively junior ministerial representation in most national governments.

The creative industries are not only a significant engine of economic growth, job creation, and social cohesion, but also a hub of managerial innovation and experimentation and new organisational and business practice, which stimulate innovation and entrepreneurship in other sectors of the economy. They include the full range of organisational characteristics, from large multinationals, major national and regional businesses to micro-businesses; and the full spectrum of activities, from the digitally native sectors (such as digital games) where many new business models are developed, traditional sectors that have been significantly disrupted by digital technologies (e.g. publishing, advertising, design and music), and areas where the full impacts of digital technologies are still to emerge (e.g. fine art, museums and cultural heritage). The creative industries offer an ideal setting for experiment in new ways of value creation and capture through digital technologies and the adoption of new digital business models for making money online.

What is a business model?

In this section, I will present a holistic business model framework which can be used both as a cognitive tool to understand emerging phenomena and a planning tool to explore innovative ways of transforming business models.

A business model is one of those unfortunate concepts of which the view or definition held by one person often differs slightly or even significantly from those held by others. This is usually not a problem in everyday conversation, but as a management concept it lacks rigour, which creates serious problems when undertaking research, developing business strategies or making policy.

What can be said is that a business model provides the vital link between a firm's vision and strategy with its structures and processes, and it determines the way a company or organisation defines objectives, motivates effort, coordinates activities and allocates resources, as well as its sources of revenue, cost structure, and make-or-buy options. The design of a business model defines the value logics specific to the firm, and how much room is available for operational manoeuvre. Having a good business model is critical to the survival and development of any organisation. Much of the business model transformation in recent years has been enabled by digital technologies.

"Having a good business model is critical to the survival and development of any organisation."

An essential concept that has been emphasised by nearly every business model study is the notion of value as a multi-layered construct. My research with business leaders from the creative industries has highlighted the importance of an organisation's rationale and logic for value recognition (sensing), value creation (production), value delivery (distribution) and value capture (realisation).

The top layer is the value proposition, which defines the products, the market segments the company or organisation targets, and the financial or pricing model it adopts for revenue generation. The middle layer is the value architecture, which defines how businesses sense (identify), create,

deliver and capture value. At the foundation is the functional architecture, which consists of product innovation and commercialisation, infrastructure management for production and delivery, and customer relations management. By translating a firm's strategy into organisational structures and processes, the business model determines who does what, where, when, how and how much (Figure 1).
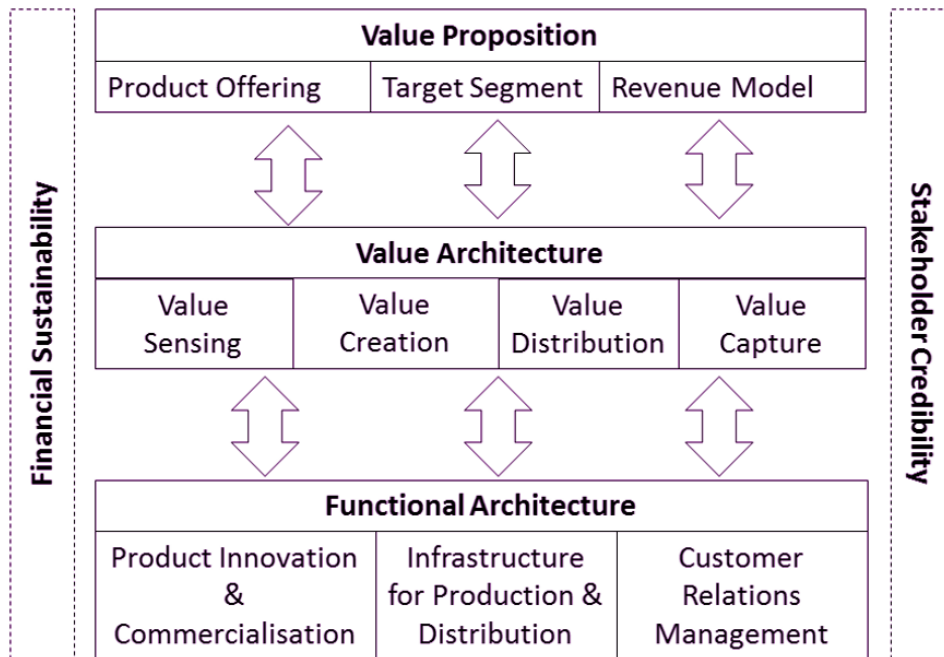
Figure 1: A Holistic Business Model Framework.

Source: Li, F. (2020). The Digital Transformation of Business Models in the Creative Industries: A Holistic Framework and Emerging Trends. In: Technovation, Volumes 92–93, April–May, 102012.

A business model is evaluated by two sets of major criteria. One is financial sustainability, meaning all organisations have to make more money than they spent over time, either directly by selling products and services, or indirectly by delivering compelling values to society and persuading someone (such as public funding bodies or other sponsors) to pay for them. Even for organisations whose primarily focus is not profit making (which is particularly applicable to some creative organisations), financial returns are still needed to sustain their social and cultural objectives. So a business model is not good if it is not sustainable, and it is not new unless it creates new value adding sources, mechanisms or logics by recognising new value generating opportunities, developing new products and services, implementing new ways of producing and delivering products and services, or forming new relationships with key stakeholders.

In the creative industries, an added consideration is the need to manage the tensions between commercial values and social and cultural values. Many creative organisations are located between profit-making and not-for-profit, so their credibility with key stakeholders is often critical to their survival. A business model analysis therefore needs to identify the key stakeholders whose identity and demands may vary in time, space and sector. Other criteria, such as operational scalability, are also important for creative businesses interested in scaling up and grow, but they are not universally regarded as essential.

Financial sustainability and stakeholder credibility are closely related. The demands and expectations by key stakeholders can significantly influence the structure and goals of the business. The sources of revenue and controllable costs of the firm are influenced by the socio-cultural constraints established by these stakeholders. This is particularly relevant to the creative industries.

The digital transformation of business models in the creative industries

Over the last 30 years, the rapid development of digital technologies has facilitated significant changes in the business models across different industries. Changes in business model constructs enabled by digital technologies can be classified into three broad categories: automation, extension and transformation (AET). Automation refers to cases when a company or organisation uses digital technologies to automate or enhance existing activities and processes, such as displaying information or supporting communications. Extension illustrates cases when a firm uses digital technologies to support new ways of conducting business, which supplement, but not replace, existing activities and processes. Transformation refers to cases when digital technologies are used to enable new ways of conducting business to replace traditional ones. By combining AET with the business model constructs in Figure 1, we are able to systematically understand the digital transformation of business models in terms of what has changed, how and why.

Earning money online

To earn revenue online, we need to look at the ways that digital technologies can be used to automate, extend or transform the different constructs and relations in your business model. The secret is not only in identifying

and creating value through art and culture (which many creatives and arts professionals are very good at), but also developing effective (digital) mechanisms to identify customers (audience) and distribute the value to those who are willing and able to pay, and capture a fair slice of that value. By systematically exploring the way your organization identifies (senses), creates (produces), distributes (delivers) and captures (realizes) values, you can purposefully decide about the products or services you offer, who you offer them to, and your pricing and revenue strategy. This in turn will determine your product innovation and commercialisation capacity required, the infrastructure you need to produce and distribute the product, and how to manage your relations with customers (audience) and other stakeholders.

"The secret is not only in identifying and creating value through art and culture, but also developing effective (digital) mechanisms to identify customers and distribute the value to those who are willing and able to pay."

This simple framework can be used to make sense of a range of contemporary phenomena in the creative industries, such as exclusivity through personalisation, brand/reputation extension through association, 'pay as much as you like' pricing models, dynamic pricing or how to exploit the 'wisdom of the crowd'. For example, some recording artists increasingly give away their music for free via digital platforms, which helps create a new bond with their fans and allow the artist to make more money through live concerts, merchandises, advertising and product endorsements. Equally, digital technologies enable some of them to identify and sell different levels of personalised services to different customers, from standard music tracks online to live home concert via Zoom (or in person). Digital technologies enable these artists to efficiently manage different levels of personalised relations with their fans at different prices. In doing so the total revenues can be maximised.

Examples for new ways of making money

During my research, I have been fortunate to meet some of the most creative talents around the world. Some of them are not only successful in creating new arts and ideas, but also in experimenting with new ways of making money and engaging with their audience through digital technologies.

For example, a digital artist experimenting with different business models first opened his immersive digital studio so the audience can sit there and experience the process of his art creation as well as the finished digital art. This experience for the audience is similar to going to the theatre or cinema, and also generated modest entrance fees for the artist. The completed digital arts are then licenced to clients for a fee. Eventually, the artworks and bespoke products are sold to collectors.

By using digital channels to engage with the audience and exploiting the digital nature of his products, another artist has been able to generate additional revenues by allowing the audience to select and buy prints of not only his completed artworks, but also of specific frames of his work-in-progress. Different from limited editions of identical signed prints, this has allowed him to sell an unlimited number of 'limited edition' as each print is unique and different. In doing so, those who cannot afford his artwork can now own a signed print of "unfinished" artwork that is genuinely unique. The financial value of his creations has been maximised and engagements with audience have been strengthened and extended.

Digital technologies have also enabled product innovations and new forms of digital art. Even in traditional areas of art, one artist digitally captured the process of her art creation every day to accompany each of her oil paintings, which enables her audience to look at the different layers of the painting and the painting process, giving them a more intimate and nuanced understanding of both the art and the artistic process. When the paintings are sold, the photos and the video are offered to collectors as supplements, creating a new level of engagement and bond. Although the main product itself (oil painting) is not digitally transformed, the digitally captured process of art creation can be used to increased sales and higher prices.

It should be noted that tinkering a business model can be highly risky, and thus needs to be handled with care. During my research I have come across many organizations that have tried new business models but failed and in the worst case went bankrupt because they could not revert to the old business model.

Thriving in the post-pandemic world

Despite the huge challenges for the creative industries, digital technologies are opening up many lucrative new opportunities for product and business

model innovations. Whether you are from a digital native sector, a traditional sector that has been significantly disrupted by digital technologies, or an area where the full impact of digital technologies is still to emerge, digital technologies enable you to identify new sources of value, develop new products and services, experiment with new ways of distribution and consumption, and create new value added services to supplement traditional products. The creative industries are ideally positioned to use some of its creativities to explore new ways of value sensing, creation, distribution and capture and earn significant amount of money online. As digital technologies continue to develop rapidly, a wide range of new technologies – from AI, big data, 5G, internet of things (IoTs) and 3D printing – are emerging and waiting to be exploited, giving the creative industries new impetus to be creative. There is nothing wrong with making money if it does not compromise your artistic integrity. The time has come to use some of your creativity to capture at least some of the economic values you create.

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Li, F. (2020). Leading digital transformation: three emerging approaches for managing the transition. In: International Journal of Operations and Production Management. doi:10.1108/IJOPM-04-2020-0202.

Professor Feng Li is Chair of Information Management and Head of Technology and Innovation Management at the Business School (formerly Cass), City, University of London (UK). For three decades, he has been investigating how digital technologies can be used to facilitate strategic and organization transformation across different domains. He advises business leaders and policy makers on how to manage the transition to new technologies, business models and organizational designs; and his research has been widely reported by renowned scientific journals and the international media.

In recent months, the cultural sector has created digitals conditions overnight, of which we cannot yet fully understand how audiences perceive them, nor how they will develop. Thus, especially, but not only to monetise them, it is important to ask ourselves how digitisation influences a fundamental ambition of cultural production: audience engagement.

New Ways of Audience Engagement

By Johan Kolsteeg

Although audiences are currently especially grateful for any digital forms of arts and culture, the consequences of oversupply and simultaneous non-consideration of the interests and obstacles of the public are evident here as in the analogue cultural sector, because, in view of the large selection of opportunities, recipients with an affinity for digital media are very critical about how they spend their time, while recipients with a preference for classical formats might be sceptical about the experience itself. Realising audience engagement therefore is a central, if not the central, challenge in the development of new, digital cultural formats in order to be digitally successful, i.e. satisfying, sustainable and impactful. And only if the audience is convinced of the individual value of digital arts and culture, will they establish a connection to the respective institution and be willing to spend money on digital formats.

Audience engagement is a complex of processes and activities that leads to the transfer of the content of an, e.g., theatre performance to the living world of people. Radbourne (2013) breaks it down in a number of constituent elements, among others the shared experience, meaning making, the influence of live experience on cognitive analysis and emotional response, the interac-

tion or understanding between performers and audience, discussions after the performance, or engagement with other audience members (verbal and non-verbal).

When taking into consideration these aspects, can digitisation support audience engagement? An experiment in 2014 by the Leeds based Yorkshire Dance Company investigated this question and showed a mixture of positive and negative outcomes. The project was researched by the British scholar Ben Walmsley (2016), whose first realisation is as simple as it is logical: arts benefit from online presence the same way anything else benefits from online presence. Digital platforms are non-hierarchical, provide space for communication on personal experience among equals, in fact they have everything it takes to facilitate a democratic process of meaning making. Despite all that there are also drawbacks, equally well known as are the benefits and experienced by us all, such as a risk of superficiality and reductionism. I might add that the present discussion about (online) information manipulation in general probably does not help either in establishing reliability for the digital realm. Nevertheless, Walmsley's research shows considerable effects, among which are greater reflexivity, 'a more generative creative process, empowering less frequent attenders to engage in artistic dialogue, and changing non-attenders' perceptions of unfamiliar art forms' (p. 75). Some challenges are mentioned, among them maintaining momentum among participants and the need to be able to deal with 'asynchronous communication'.

"Digital platforms (...) have everything it takes to facilitate a democratic process of meaning making."

Engagement is not necessarily limited to situations where people experience 'the real thing', as is shown by Foreman-Wernet, Dervin and Funk (2014). Participants viewed three visual art works either live in a gallery or on an electronic device and reported that engagement 'varied not by condition of exposure [...]', but 'our informants' responses differed person to person, *based on the unique characteristics of their own lives and experiences*' (p. 116, emphasis added). This observation provokes questions about the extent to which authenticity – itself a complex construct that varies among the different arts sectors – and its perception can be constructed, as Grayson and Martinec (2004) have shown in a study comparing the authenticity experience of visitors of museums on real or fictional historical figures, Shakespeare and Sherlock Holmes.

Connecting Walmsleys and Radbournes remarks, we can assume that the quest for developing a better audience engagement may well benefit from a digital turn in art production and communication, and may trump the first hand objection that the experience of art on a digital platform cannot possibly be as engaging or 'authentic' as the live experience.

"The quest for developing a better audience engagement may well benefit from a digital turn in art production and communication."

As everywhere in the world, Dutch art organisations in all disciplines in the last month found themselves before radical choices to secure their existence in the new situation. I will discuss two examples, the exhibition (Im)Possible Bodies by curator Ine Gevers, and the production Before / After by the Noord Nederlands Toneel / Club Guy and Roni.

(Im)Possible bodies

Curator and artistic director Ine Gevers found herself together with artists redefining the exhibition [(Im)Possible Bodies](), which will open in the fall of 2020. The topic of the exhibition, post-humanism and questions surrounding the cyborg future of mankind, put this discussion in a particular light, since the topic itself already implied the ambition to develop new forms of engagement among visitors, and between visitors and artworks. But now, in a short time a platform for digital socialising needed to be developed and innovative elements such as augmented and virtual reality were included.

(Im)Possible Bodies, a production reflecting on societal and economic consequences of technology, representation and marginalisation of people, became dependent on the blessings of that same technology. It not only opened the possibility to get entirely lost in that world but also led to questions on what is really human, what are real human values. Is that hugging, shaking hands? What is a full human life, what is citizenship? For (Im)Possible Bodies, the defining differences between digital and physical became the fascinating idea of simultaneity of physical and digital presence of the production, and the importance of attention for one another.

1 *A making of of „Before/After"
can be watched here:* *https://
vimeo.com/415836941*

While Gevers considers it to be vital that artists engage with these discussions, some artists point out that working in a physical environment is preferable because it allows them to work in more detail. Probably also for some visitors the digital environment will not have much attraction. Works will be visible both live and online. An additional risk of the online presentation noted by Gevers is that the digital three dimensional world of virtual and augmented reality which is built around the art works may be very impressive, to the point that it undermines the attention for, and even the effect of the art works.

Before/After

Business director of the Noord Nederlands Toneel / Club Guy and Roni, Harmen van der Hoek, comments on the experiences surrounding the revamping of a complete theatre production which was set to premiere on the day of the lockdown: Before / After[1]. Just before closing the buildings the theatre group managed to realise a multicamera registration which later premiered online. A 3D platform was designed to mimic the social elements of visiting the theatre. The online performance was set at a specific time, to provide visitors with an authentic feeling of connectedness. The performance was a success, if only because 4,000 people attended the premiere over different channels, 25 percent of them international. In total 14,000 unique visitors were counted on the platform NITE Hotel.

The evaluation of the project showed that particularly the experience on one of the platforms, Zoom, triggered the feeling of togetherness. Viewers were able to watch the performance and simultaneously react among each other and even interact with the actors, who were online as well. The experience of connectedness seemed to be stronger than in a live situation,
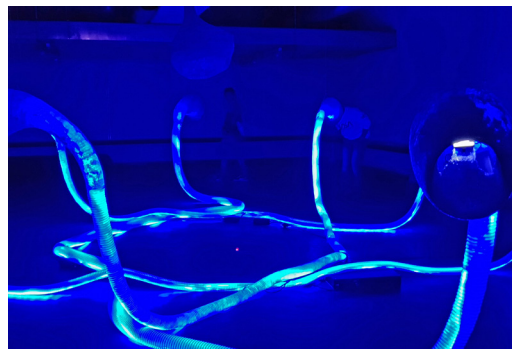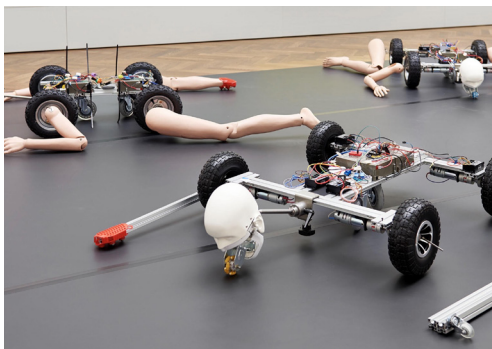
Two pieces of the (Im)Possible bodies exhibition:

Geumhyung Jeong, Homemade RC Toy, 2019 (installation at Kunsthalle Basel) (left).

Saint Machine, I, Human, 2019 (sculptur) (right).

where talks and interaction are often perceived as disturbing. After the performance the audience was able to sit in online breakdown groups and discuss the performance, often in the presence of one of the actors. During these conversations, this at least was the experience of the author of this contribution, discussions were substantive while remarkably cosy, given that one could see all attendants sitting in their own living room. Further, the 3D environment allowed visitors to go to the lobby or move to another discussion room. It was a digitised engagement with art in full swing.

The online production, while forced by unexpected circumstances, answered a longer felt need to investigate the quality of audience engagement in virtual space, as a response to the observation that entering a theatre can be too big a step for people, says Van der Hoek. The experiment was a success, not only in audience reach, but also artistically. The production was experienced as opening up to new developments that need to be embraced in order to achieve remarkable results in audience engagement. The imagination now goes to creating forms in between live, digital, and gaming, and to efforts to realise one more connection: that of offline with online audiences.

Final thoughts

The pandemic sends art online, where it is incorporated into a global network culture of creative individuals, makers and visitors alike. Before/After confirms Walmsley's and Radbourne's points on digital audience engagement and reflexivity. (Im)Possible Bodies offers a layered investigation of what digitisation means to be being human. A wealth of productions can be expected in different disciplines that can be scrutinised to better understand the strong points and possibilities, but also possible drawbacks of digital audience engagement.

"A wealth of productions can be scrutinised to better understand the strong points and possibilities, but also possible drawbacks of digital audience engagement."

Following Dewey's axiom that the value of art is found in how it connects to people's life world, perhaps we are observing how art digitally connects to the digital / creative living world that the majority of art consumers is already very much at home in. Basically, we're thrown back to rethink what

we consider the actual value of art, in a revolutionised practice of presenting, experiencing and reflecting on art. No longer 'dominant institutions and norms' decide what is valuable, to quote Manuel Castells (2017, p. 5). Instead different logics of network and value creation may gain relevance, such as the 'logic' of creativity as a way of life, or in this case, what we might call the digital networked a-synchronous sense making logic. Castells was pessimistic to say the least about how 'institutions of cultural production' could 'constrain and contradict' the 'transformation of creativity and innovation in the digital culture and in the digital economy' (p. 20), but the examples discussed above show that there is hope that this transformation in audience engagement may happen thoughtfully and ethically. Perhaps the survival of cultural institutions will not only depend on whether they find a new and creative business model in time, but also on whether they manage to make the 'digital engagement turn' in time.

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Dr. Johan Kolsteeg worked as a concert programmer and producer in the worlds of contemporary and classical music before moving to education and research at the Utrecht University of the Arts. He now works at the University of Groningen, specializing in his research interests of cultural entrepreneurship, cultural democracy and communication about art.

Fast, user-oriented product development and improvement quickly led Sydney Dance Company's Virtual Studio to financial success. Today the Virtual Studio is more than just an essential COVID19-revenue stream for the cultural business, it is the connection to a completely new audience.

Sydney Dance Company's Digital Pivot

By Caroline Spence

In 2019 Sydney Dance Company celebrated 50 years as Australia's pre-eminent contemporary dance company, creating and performing works across Australia and around the world. As 2020 began, a packed schedule was planned across the three key areas of our company's business: Australian and international performances for the permanent ensemble, training, and public dance classes. No-one foresaw that by March over 70 performances would be cancelled and rehearsals, dance classes and training suspended.

Digital transformation has been a strategic ambition of the company for a number of years with incremental developments implemented, including improved online sales pathways for performance tickets and dance classes, more content for social media and a virtual reality dance film. With public dance classes being a key business segment for over 30 years, expanding this offer through a digital platform made sense. Management had been exploring the idea but early-stage business modelling revealed that a high initial investment in technology and marketing would be required to launch a viable product. The case for investment had been made and grant funding opportunities to seed the development were being explored.

On 13 March 2020, when the worsening pandemic caused the first cancelations and the closure of the dance studios, Sydney Dance Company's Executive Director Anne Dunn sent me a short email:
"Could we find a way to deliver online classes if we had to shut the studios??"
My response? *"I was thinking the same thing. Give us two weeks."*

I was probably a bit foolhardy at that point, but a combination of my competitive nature and trust in my exceptional colleagues gave me the confidence to step on the accelerator and move things forward. At that stage we didn't have the platform, the content or the pricing model. What lay ahead was very ambitious, but our immediate focus on virtual delivery placed us a step ahead.

On 25 March 2020, just 12 days later, the first online beginner ballet class went live to ten participants. By that night 145 people from across Australia were dancing online from their living rooms, backyards and garages. Five months on there have been over 52,000 attendances in Sydney Dance Company's Virtual Studio.

The Strategy

The strategy for online dance classes was simple but not simplistic. It was important that it could be easily communicated across the organisation, that it aligned with our vision and mission and that it adhered to our brand promise. The in-studio dance class program has clear unique selling points: scale, brand reputation, variety of classes, quality of teachers, consistency, choice and reliability. Alongside these we identified elements responding to the external environment: the need for connection, community, authenticity and escapism.

Sydney Dance Company's performance of "2 One Another" © Pedro Greig (left)

Rafael Bonachela's "ab [intra]" featuring Charmene Yap and Davide Di Giovanni © Pedro Greig (right)

22

The Virtual Studio needed to be structured to meet all of this, while simultaneously functioning as a mechanism to engage our audiences, philanthropic supporters, government funding bodies and most importantly give purpose, direction and meaningful employment to the dancers, permanent and casual staff.

As a multi-layered organisation with the creation and performance of contemporary dance at its core, it was important to recognise and play to our strengths. As well as a cohort of casual dance teachers Sydney Dance Company has a permanent ensemble of 16 of Australia's best contemporary dancers, who offered instant access to exceptional talent.

From the outset, structuring the Virtual Studio, devising class content and a timetable, creating and delivering a marketing plan and securing a regular income stream was a pan-organisational effort. For a performing arts company, losing the chance to perform could have been disastrous for morale and organisational cohesion as well as having a crippling financial impact. The Virtual Studio gave everyone at Sydney Dance Company, from the dancers to the production team, the education staff to the philanthropy team, focus, purpose and connection. Its strategic impact on internal stakeholders was just as significant as the impact on the external ones; it was the glue that has held us together through COVID-19.

"The Virtual Studio gave everyone at Sydney Dance Company, from the dancers to the production team, the education staff to the philanthropy team, focus, purpose and connection."

In the first few days, the Studios team worked through a structure and a model – how could this actually work – quickly identifying that we had neither the resources nor the capacity to compete against the established high-quality pre-recorded fitness class market. We were also observant of a move away from overly produced material to highly humanised and authentic digital content. By choosing to take this path, building brand personality and connection between our dancers and customers, we aligned with public sentiment and reflected the need to retain human connection.

Together we went through a process of divergent thinking, brainstorming all the online modes of delivery and types of platforms available. And then convergent thinking: editing down what would work for us and would allow us to compete in the market. We landed on a program of live-streamed classes, taught by our dancers and teachers. Delivering free classes was never considered. Free content would not keep people employed should the impacts of the pandemic be long-lasting.

Under this strategy and with the timeframe that we set ourselves, it was important to adopt two frameworks in which to develop the program: The Minimum Viable Product and a Continuous Learning and Improvement Model.

The Minimum Viable Product

Drawn from the "Lean Start-Up" methodology used in the tech world, the minimum viable product approach favours "*experimentation over elaborate planning, customer feedback over intuition, and iterative design over traditional 'big design up front' development*" (Blank 2013).

In such a volatile market and with many unknowns, a traditional business model, taking countless hours and resources to develop, was not going to work. Would our traditional market engage with online dance classes from home? One thing that was clear was the urgency of the situation; it was not only a necessity to make money to keep the company afloat, but it was clear that the competition would increase rapidly. Many organisations were rushing to pivot their programs online with lots of free content. To retain our current dance class customers, we had to be quick to market.

Virtual Studio Strategy Diagram (left)

Virtual Studio JFH Class with Liz Marcobello © Daniel Boud (right)

The Virtual Studio was not perfect at the beginning, but by going early to market we gained key competitive advantage. The Virtual Studio demonstrated very strong take up in the first two weeks and customer feedback was positive. Most importantly, it generated momentum within the organisation that kept us all focused and moving forward in what could have been a derailing time.

A key element of the framework is "making further small adjustments (iterations) or more substantive ones (pivots) to ideas that aren't working" (Blank 2013). For example, a program of classes for 8 to 15 year olds was launched in April. While the feedback was positive, the enrolment numbers did not reflect a strong appetite for this age group in this mode of delivery and so these classes were removed from the program.

Part of the iterative model is the use of technology, particularly the balance of investment against a need to continually adapt. The now ubiquitous ZOOM was the most cost effective and quickest way to launch and meant we could switch to a new platform should we need to without too much sunk cost.

Creating an authentic "at home" environment for the streamed classes was also important and in the first few days, Artistic Director Rafael Bonachela's office was transformed: the desk removed, a lounge-room feel created; a camera, radio mic and lights were borrowed; and a dining chair used as a ballet barre. As it became trickier for staff to travel and as the timetable expanded, the operational model was adjusted and all teachers started to deliver classes from their homes. The set up for delivery continues to be flexible; classes are now taught from the original studio in the office, teachers' and dancers' homes and an allocated space in the gym allowing dancers to move straight from rehearsal to teaching in the room next door. This flexibility has allowed the expansion of classes that can be delivered.

Sydney Dance Company works with two CRM and ticketing platforms. Both are integrated into the website and systems are in place to manage customer data. Using MINDBODY, our tool for public classes, as the booking engine for the Virtual Studio was an obvious choice. Dance class customers already had accounts and making the transition to purchasing online classes was seamless. As the Virtual Studio became more established, we took the opportunity to improve our service and value without additional investment. Classes are now recorded in ZOOM and made available through MINDBODY for 24hrs for customers to "catch-up". This has proven popular.

"Thank you for the catch-up links - they've been amazing this week. I have two small humans so mornings don't always go to plan but the catch-up links meant I could do the class later in the day. I even stopped it twice when the baby wouldn't nap!" (Participant, Sydney)

Continuous Learning and Improvement

Most importantly, for our minimum viable product model to work, we had to learn from our customers and teachers. We put frameworks in place to learn, adapt and iterate the program including evaluating the qualitative and quantitative feedback from customers and creating feedback loops for staff. Assessing this feedback regularly, we have been able to launch more classes and add different styles, improve our customer experience and technical set up. The numbers and daily enrolments, average class size, price type purchases, average weekly participation, customer postcodes and the percentage of new vs retained customers are all monitored regularly. Understanding the market and customer behaviour has resulted in refined marketing tactics, diversified product mix and attention to commercial sustainability.

"We put frameworks in place to learn, adapt and iterate the program including evaluating the qualitative and quantitative feedback from customers and creating feedback loops for staff."

As the Virtual Studio launched, customers were very patient with the product, but managing reputational risk and quality control has been an important part of improving the program and maintaining a competitive advantage. In delivering classes online we applied the same rigor as we would to any performance, so to respond to technical challenges, a new role was created, the Virtual Studio Technician (VST), allocated to every class to support both the teacher and any customers who need technical assistance. A VST report at the end of each class, adapted by our Stage Manager from his show report format, covers all elements of class delivery, teacher and customer feedback; these reports have allowed us to track and improve the customer experience.

The pedagogy also had to evolve and adapt. Online learning is different. The dancers and teachers shared their experiences of teaching in this new format. Teaching a group of 40 plus people who are all in boxes on a screen, muted, and even some with their cameras off was a real challenge and teachers reported feeling tired from exerting additional energy to offset the lack of "live" energy from online dancers. This was mitigated by encouraging participants to join the class early to chat with each other and with the teacher, supporting interpersonal connection and building the community, key to our strategy.

The Business Model

Sydney Dance Company earns almost 70% of its annual revenue, with the remainder government funding. With the closure of public classes, the cancellation of performances and a projected drop in philanthropy, any source of sustainable income would make a significant difference to ongoing solvency. The Board and Executive leadership were anxious to retain meaningful employment for the permanent dancers and staff and to re-employ as many of the casual dance teacher cohort as possible. The Australian Government's Job-Keeper scheme, introduced in May, made financial provision for employers to retain full and part-time employees and its introduction had significant influence on the Virtual Studio business model.

Set up costs were kept very low, with a small investment in a license for ZOOM and after the first few weeks, some additional camera, computer and audio equipment. By re-deploying staff from across the organisation

SATURDAY / JULY 25		
8:00 am	Yoga Open - Virtual Studio Paul Cordeiro	31/300
9:30 am	Jazz Beginner - Virtual Studio Jamie Winbank (Sub)	15/300
11:00 am	Ballet Intermediate - Virtual Studio Rhys Kosakowski	20/300
12:30 pm	Hip Hop Beginner - Virtual Studio James Deane	15/300
2:00 pm	Contemporary Beginner - Virtual S... Riley Fitzgerald	13/300
3:30 pm	JFH Beginner - Virtual Studio Michel Beirouthy	12/300
5:00 pm	Ballet Beginner - Virtual Studio Ariella Casu	25/300

MINDBODY Branded App Interface (left)

Virtual Studio Body Conditioning Classes with Jacopo Grabar © Pedro Greig (right)

(dancers, the production team, marketing and event staff) to work in the Virtual Studio, we have been able to generate revenue across this period, keep staff employed and avoid additional expenses.

Before the Virtual Studio launched there were no data or market insights to predict the level of revenue that would be generated and the challenge was to find a commercially viable model to provide sustainable delivery. We leveraged the capacity of online delivery to scale far beyond what is possible in a physical studio and acknowledged the financial challenges faced by our customers as the pandemic intensified. Pricing was therefore structured in the same way as the in-studio model, but fees were reduced by 50%. Unlike in-studio, where the most popular price-type is the 10 class flexi pack, the unlimited access weekly membership is the most popular online offer, reflecting consumer behaviour seen around subscription content platforms.

Communications and Customers

Effective communication has been key to the success of the Virtual Studio. The day after the studios closed, we briefed our design agency around the creation of a sub-brand which had to convey not only the product, but also the tenets of #sdckeepdancing, which are a connection to the dancers and an acknowledgement of an online community. The media's appetite for the Virtual Studio was huge.

Given the location of the physical studio, the Virtual Studio provides opportunity for participation nationwide and has seen us build connections with new audiences. While we initially set out to retain our in-studio customers, 61% of Virtual Studio customers are new to the business.

Company Dancer Dimitri Kleioris providing Virtual Studio Technical support (left)

Virtual Studio Logo Lockup (right)

Interestingly age demographics shifted, with slightly older customers attending classes online. Qualitative feedback shows that barriers of age and confidence had precluded attendance and that people who had previously felt intimidated to attend in person were more comfortable dancing online.

"Given the location of the physical studio, the Virtual Studio provides opportunity for participation nationwide and has seen us build connections with new audiences."

"These classes have let me participate without feeling judged. In a short period of time I have experienced an improvement in my strength and endurance and deepened my appreciation for the art of dance." (Participant, Brisbane)

"I am sixty-nine, and being able to do classes at home, without having to compare myself with younger, more flexible classmates, is a definite plus!" (Participant, Woonona)

What's Next?

At the time of writing, the Sydney Dance Company studios are currently open with capped attendance numbers. But the success of the Virtual Studio is undoubtedly heartening and core to the continuation of the company as an entity. It will continue as a hybrid model with our in-studio classes and is now completely integrated from both an operational and customer perspective. Teachers work across both programs, the customer service team supports both programs and customers can buy a new "All Access" Membership to participate in-studio and online. After the initial peak of interest, we have seen a stabilisation of sales for virtual classes. As we prepare to move back to our traditional home (Sydney's Walsh Bay Arts Precinct) in 2021, the fit-out specification has been adjusted to provide a permanent location to film virtual classes.

As performance still feels very far away, the Virtual Studio has given our dancers the extraordinary opportunity to forge broader connections to our community and demonstrate the range of their skills, which extend far beyond the stage. The whole organisation has pivoted, been re-deployed and found new focus. We have learned a lot, and continue to learn.

We have affirmed the value of our continued practice of customer centricity, active listening and communication. We have learned to be nimble and resilient in an ever-changing world.

The Virtual Studio will undergo constant review due to the necessity to adjust to this new paradigm. We celebrate that this has provided an incredible mechanism to keep our staff, our audience and our community connected. Bringing the power of participation in dance to locked-down communities across the nation has been an incredible experience.

REFERENCE

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30

"Tudo Que Coube Numa Vhs"

A Brazilian Experience in Revenue Generation with Online Performing Arts

by Amanda Dias Leite, Giordano Castro and Juliana Piesco

In which ways is it possible to ensure the presence shared between the actors and the public in digital formats? And which forms of interaction can thereby be built collectively, in mutual communication? Based on the specificities of the COVID19 circumstances, the online format "Tudo que coube numa VHS" (Everything that fits on a VHS) by Brazilian theatre group Grupo Magiluth proposes artistic strategies explores the potential of digital media for the performing arts. In the show, dramaturgy travels through multiple digital platforms and composes, to each participant, a distinct aesthetic experience in which the public is engaged as an agent. To do so, we searched for ways to spark individualized reactions, to change the dynamics of connections with the public, and to expand interaction beyond the duration of the performance.

The creation of "Tudo que coube numa VHS" was motivated by the adverse moment we faced during the first month of social distancing, aggravated by the Brazilian government's lack of policies for aiding the artistic sector. In that context, we examined different possible strategies for income generation, such as crowdfunding, advance ticket sales, and others. None of them, however, seemed to be a reliable option to guarantee the sustainability of the organization throughout the unpredictable months to come. The group then decided that the most effective solution would be the creation of a new show, designed especially for a context of social isolation.

In the play, the participants are led along a path during which they become accomplices to the memories of a fictional character, built around the recollection of a romantic relationship. The action is carried through a series of virtual platforms of communication and entertainment and composes individual experiences that transport to a new level the connection between the actor and the public.

31

Previous Context

On January 13th, 2020, we inaugurated Espaço Cultural Casarão Magiluth, a new cultural center in the city of Recife, Pernambuco, Brazil. To do so, we applied a large amount of resources and took on several risks – especially considering the adverse circumstances for developing artistic enterprises in the local context, such as the exiguity of public financing for arts and culture in Brazil. The response of the local audience was very positive, which maintained a solid influx of public throughout that period. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, however, the center had to be temporarily closed and performances cancelled. We found ourselves in a very difficult position, as the expenses still kept coming, but most of the planned income was suspended. In this context, it was imperative to find new ways to promote the financial sustainability of our nonprofit organization, which at the time couldn't count on any kind of public funding. That was when we decided to create a new show, based on the specificities of this moment of social distancing.

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At this point, nonetheless the financial difficulties, it was necessary to take into consideration some specificities of the way we usually relate to our audience. Historically, our plays have been developed based on close interaction with the spectators, as a consequence of an approach that places the encounter between the actors and the public in the center of the artistic experience. Even during the creative processes, the exchanges with the audience are a fundamental feature of our work and take place as a series of open rehearsals which allows us to develop the plays based on different ways of relating to the spectators – who are both witness and component of the performances.

Each of our plays has specific ways of engaging the public, either in terms of space, action, text, or image composition. In "Aquilo que o meu olhar guardou para você" (What my gaze has kept for you), for instance, the action takes place in an empty and limited stage at first. Gradually – through textual fragments, image projections, and other effects – allusions to the city in which the venue is located start to arise, in sequences that aim to compose the theatrical scenery through the memories of each spectator

and her/his relation to the city. Later, the whole audience is dislocated to the stage, forming a metaphoric crowd, which is one of the approaches the play uses to raise questions regarding the concept of anonymity.

"Even during the creative processes, the exchanges with the audience are a fundamental feature of our work."

„Luiz Lua Gonzaga", on the other hand, uses the memories of the spectators to compose its theatrical atmosphere. The action revolves around a community's preparations for the return of a man who long ago left his small hometown. In this play, the sharing of common local traditions operates as a means of connecting with the memories of each member of the audience, alluding to characteristic elements of the music, cooking tradition, and habits present in northeastern Brazilian culture.

Finally, in "Dinamarca", the public joins the cast in a party that portrays in an ironic light the way the economic elites behave towards social inequality and violence, particularly in countries that went through colonization. At first, the audience is welcomed to the venue through the stage, which resembles a dancefloor, and each spectator receives a small champagne glass, while lighting and soundtrack evoke a state of excitement and celebration. The general atmosphere, however, progressively becomes uncomfortable, as the party reveals the acid, bitter and bloody shades of the members of the hosting family.

Once the isolation caused by social distancing was set in, it brought up new questions: how would it be possible to maintain this form of relationship with the spectators? How could we continue producing works without losing our essence?

The Creative Process

To ensure the company's subsistence, it was necessary to reshape our usual artistic methods and practices in a way that met the restrictions imposed by the pandemic. We then initiated a creative process that revolved around two major concerns: the possibility of designing a work of performing art that created an experience fitting the group's previous works, and the explora-

tion of more innovative approaches on the usages of technology, such as live streaming and social media.

In regards to the last topic, it is important to mention that in the last years and especially during the first months of the pandemic, most performing arts experiments developed in Brazil (and worldwide) were centered on trying to recreate the experience of watching a performance at the theatre, be it through the use of live streams, or the streaming of previously recorded plays. In this stage, the media at hand were used to emulate the "live" experience instead of being considered as vehicles in their own right and with great impact on the viewer's experience. In other words, they were not yet used to their full potential. Despite an initial surge, these attempts progressively lost popularity as quarantine progressed.

It therefore seemed necessary to us to create an experience that merged seamlessly the content of the play with the used media. Each form of communication has its specific language, symbols, and etiquette, and all this could be incorporated into the dramaturgy to create an immersive digital narrative. Especially when people are reliant on these media to stay in touch with the world around them, using them seamlessly would only add to the appeal of our work.

One of the first steps was to trace which media would be used. Here, we had to take into consideration the potential of the chosen media in developing the fictional story, as well as how easily they could be handled by potential viewers. Although it might seem like a minor issue, the simplicity of navigating a platform is essential for the experience, as it allows the viewer to be immersed in the story, and not occupied with technical qualms.

„Dinamarca" by Grupo Magiluth © Danilo Galvão) (left)

Audience's perspective of a balcony scene in „Apenas o Fim do Mundo", performed on Sesc Avenida Paulista's 13th and 14th floorst © Cacá Bernardes

34

Based on these criteria, the final choice was to use the following platforms: phone call; Whatsapp, currently the most popular messaging platform in Brazil; Instagram, a rapid-growing social media among Brazilians; You-Tube; and e-mail. During the initial stages of the creative process, other platforms and forms of media were considered, such as Google Street view, but scrapped for fear of overwhelming less tech-savvy members of the public and restricting the experience to a specific group.

"we had to take into consideration the potential of the cho-sen media in developing the fictional story, as well as how easily they could be handled by potential viewers"

The playwright work was intrinsically intertwined with this choice of platforms; as stated, each is charged with its particular language and symbols. So we had to mobilize each media in favor of the story being told, and mutually, to carefully craft each fragment of the story for that specific platform.

After the structure was traced, the next stage consisted of creating the multimedia material that would be used – photos, audio tracks, and videos. The main challenge here was finding the balance to dote the material with an aura of "homemade" and to merge it into the immersive experience (for instance, to make it look like an actual photo a regular user would post to their social media feed).

Another important issue to tackle was the administrative structure behind the experience. Social distancing established the need to innovate the work itself, and it also called for new ways of organizing the backend of the performance, from the selling of tickets and contacting the public to providing performers with enough structure to work. The fact that the show was an individual, one-on-one experience (in which each performer would guide a single person of the audience at a time) proved to also be a trial, as it would demand a highly organized booking system.

The final stages of the creative process consisted of the equivalent to rehearsals but adapted to the remote manner of guiding the audience: each member of the cast had to try some test runs of the material, understanding the ways of engaging the audience from afar and keeping a consistent flow to the experiment.

35

The Final Material to Remotely Engage the Audience

The use of online platforms and digital resources led to a work that made use of multimedia to lead the spectator through fragments of a story, as if he or she could navigate among shatters of memories of the characters and follow the development of the plot through text messages, old social media posts, audios, and videos.

There was special care to ensure that the media would appeal to multiple senses and create a feeling of immersion. It was also essential to create a flow of materials that called on different senses at each time, to maintain them all active and aware. For instance, next to an „8D recording" – an auditive illusion that sound is moving around one's head at different distances – the participant would receive a series of images, songs they had to play on Spotify, and emails. With such resources we recreated, in a context of social distancing, the feeling of close contact between the actors and the audience.

Even in theaters the decrease of the human attention span impacts the level of engagement of the audience in performances. Therefore, it is even more challenging to keep them engaged in a play that takes place on their smartphone and computer, considering the constant stimuli, from push notifications to tweets and ads. Therefore, fragments that required active participation of the audience members – even if only to click links, read messages or play songs – were used to maintain them immerse in the narrative. Aside from that, the experiment made it indispensable for the performers to adapt their skills of dealing with the audience to this digital media.

"The use of digital platforms created an unforeseen consequence of audience engagement that was quite interesting: a new space of direct participation."

The performances

This remote engagement also offers a new array of possible obstacles, and these were slowly met during the first season of the show. First of all, engaging remotely is prone to all sorts of technical mishaps, from sudden internet disconnection mid-performance to eventual hardships using

a platform. The performers needed to learn how to quickly assist the audience members whenever any of these situations would arise and lead them back into the experience as seamlessly as possible.

On the other hand, the use of digital platforms created an unforeseen consequence of audience engagement that was quite interesting: a new space of direct participation. Unlike the stage, the digital platforms and media are virtual environments that continue existing and are still accessible to the audience after the session is over. In other words, the first season of the show generated an influx of content created by the public in response to the performance, from comments to videos, that many described as being "part of the experience".
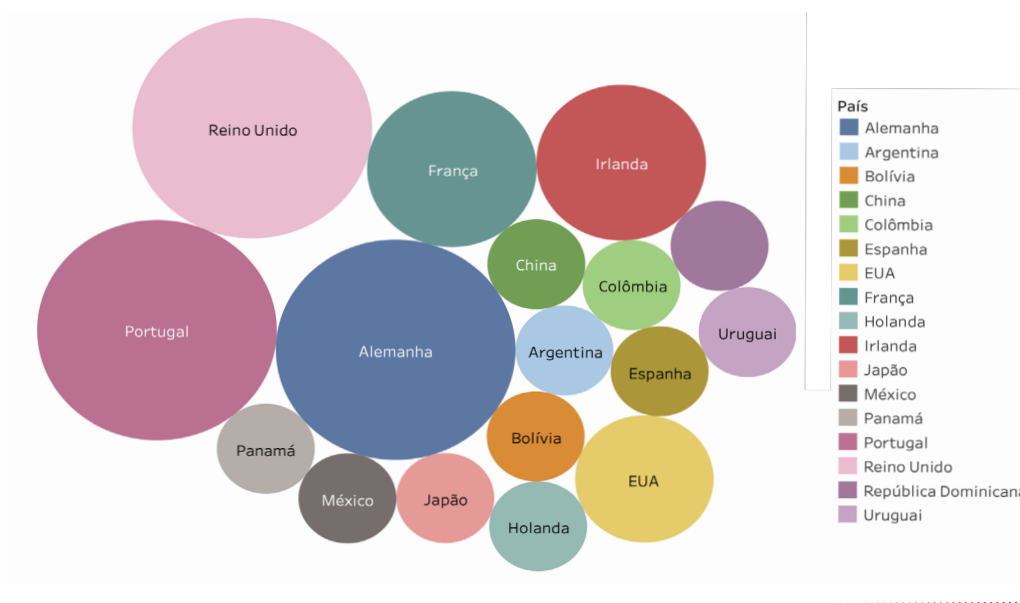
The play has reached countries on several continents and with different languages. Quantitative distribution.

The first season of the show was produced independently and initially would span from May 7th to May 23rd, 2020. The tickets were sold for R$20; usually, for an analogue performance, ticket prices would be around R$30-40. Due to the eager reception from the public, we opened extra sessions and finally extended its period up until June 21st. Despite the massive growth in available sessions, all tickets sold out before the end of May, creating a waiting list of over 2.000 potential viewers, awaiting in case any of cancelations.

The show itself, with a total of 1.605 performances throughout the first season, had a very wide reach. Domestically, it had spectators in 25 of

37

Brazil's 27 states, reaching over 185 cities nationwide. Internationally, there were viewers in 19 different countries, prompting extra sessions at different times to let audiences in dramatically different time zones attend, such as China and Japan. During the first season, "Tudo que coube numa VHS" has only been performed in Portuguese, but soon additional English and the Spanish versions will be available.

Countries from which partici-pants watched the play

Perspectives for Future Development

One of the main questions raised around "Tudo que coube numa VHS" has certainly also been posed to other groups and companies regarding their recent productions and we believe it can only be fully answered in the future. Can the work we are currently developing be considered the-atre? Even if it cannot, it is indubitably – due to our previous experience, constitution, and practices – a theater-based online performing arts ex-periment. The principles of theatrical composition regarding the design, balance, and configuration of elements such as space, action, text, light, and sound remain present but now transposed to a different reality of execution. At this point, we are searching for ways to expand the limits of what would traditionally be seen as a theatrical scene, to compose drama-turgical atmospheres that take place through a series of digital platforms. Also, during the creation and development of „Tudo que coube numa

VHS", we could map out even deeper possibilities of the usage of digital platforms, especially regarding direct interaction with the audience and the use of their public profiles on social media to personalize each experience. We examine both of these aspects for use in a new project, in which we wish to delve deeper into the full potentiality of these media to create multi-sensorial and immersive performances that – instead of trying to emulate the venture of physically going to the theatre – actually recreate new forms of aesthetic experience, transposing the theatrical pact to a different reality of execution and instituting new ways of presence, independently of physical closeness.

New fields of artistic experimentation have been opened up and their exploration can certainly bring us new perspectives and features for the next productions. Although the creation of "Tudo que coube numa VHS" was motivated by a very specific context, the play will surely become part of our repertoire. It is too early to state with certainty in which ways this digital experience might affect our future work. But it is has surely opened new possibilities in regard to both media and interaction with the audience, which are yet to be further investigated. We are eager to see these new possibilities in action.

Grupo Magiluth was founded in 2004, in the Federal University of Pernambuco, and has recently been pointed by the press and critics as one of the most relevant theatre companies in Brazil. Its work is based on continuous aesthetic research and independent artistic experimentation.

A film festival goes online

When DOK.fest München came to your home

By Daniel Sponsel

In recent years, DOK.fest München (Munich) has seen an enormous audience growth that goes far beyond the usual potential of documentary films in cinemas. With its 34th edition in 2019, it reached a new record of 54,500 visitors. There are two reasons for this: On the one hand, DOK.fest München offers all the amenities of a festival event, a carefully curated and exclusive film program with series, competitions and awards, accompanied by film talks with guests from all over the world. On the other hand, it succeeds in attracting diverse target groups by means of high commitment and individual approach.

The DOK.fest München took place for the first time in 1985 and is now the largest documentary film festival in Germany, with considerable international renown. It is sponsored by the City of Munich and the Free State of Bavaria and supported by numerous sponsors and partners from the film and media industry. Twelve year-round and up to 47 temporary employees organize the festival, which, in addition to the film program (approx. 150 international documentary films), also offers the DOK.forum, a highly frequented industry platform, and DOK.education, a comprehensive educational program for children and young people. As a cultural festival, it deliberately appeals to a broad audience in terms of topics and age spectrum, because documentary films are perfectly qualified to tell narrative-sensual intercultural stories.

Like many other cultural events, DOK.fest München 2020 could not be held regularly at the familiar venues due to the measures taken to contain the corona virus. As one of the first festivals ever, we therefore ventured the step into the internet with an online edition at very short notice, without any noteworthy preparation time. This is a highly competitive market due to the growing number and increasing competition of streaming services, and as a new provider we could only lose. Now the high level of interest

proves to us that the market is open for these special and outstanding films. Almost 76,000 viewers have seen the 121 films of DOK.fest München @ home online.

The show must go on?

The Berlinale 2020 had just come to an end, when the cultural sector suddenly realized that this would be the last major event for an indefinite period of time. At that point, we still had eight weeks until the opening of our festival and were thus on the home stretch of its realization: the film selection was complete, ready for presentation on the big screen. Now, film has the advantage over other cultural genres that it is an audiovisual art that we are all used to receive or consume from home. So what could be more obvious than what was already dominating the discussion in the industry: the way to the internet. Because, according to our conviction and the approach of the new project, this would at least make the curated films available to the potential audience.

A film festival online – is that even possible?

A festival feeling is created by many people meeting in a movie theater with the films on the big screen and by the conversations with the makers afterwards. DOK.fest München was not able to offer both in its online edition. So how could the step to go online as a festival be justified at all? In the course of a weekend in mid-March, we worked out our preamble for the online edition: Similar to the analogue version, all competitions and series should take place, according to the state of planning. In addition, we also thought about film talks that we had never been able to conduct on location

One of the posters for the DOK. fest München @ home edition 2020 (left)

DOKfest 2020 digital cinema: Impressions of a festival visitor © Janne Sebening (right)

in this way before: In video conferences, partly live, partly pre-recorded, our presenters were not only supposed to talk to the creators. We also wanted to involve team members and the protagonists in the discussions – almost emission-free, more inclusive and sustainable in every sense. For this purpose, a TV studio was set up at short notice – all actions with which we broke new ground, but which are also conceivable in the future. But at that time, we had not talked to the rights holders, nor to the patrons, sponsors, prize donors or partners.

The spontaneous openness for the idea of an online edition, which was brought to us by almost all sides, surprised us at first and in retrospect reveals the solidarity with which the cultural sector faced this crisis. The rights holders of the films already confirmed for the festival were highly interested in participating and curious about what an online edition of our festival would mean for the presentation of their films. At this time, 154 films had been confirmed and negotiated. 121 of them were also confirmed for the online edition. One aspect of our strategy was to increase the revenue share for the creators. Our approach: The film artists who create these works with a high degree of commitment are at the end of a fragile exploitation chain. Film art must have its price, even in an online distribution. Regular screening fees for all films should therefore also be obligatory online.
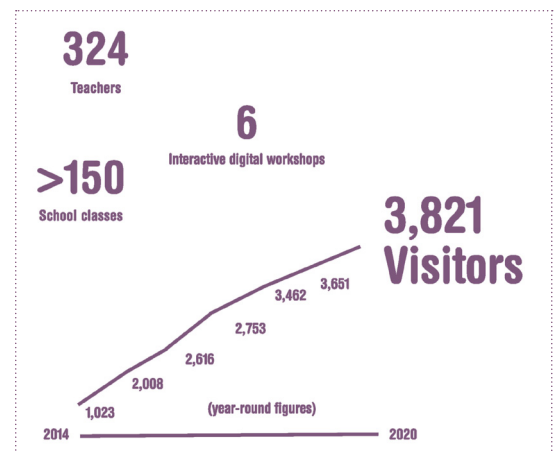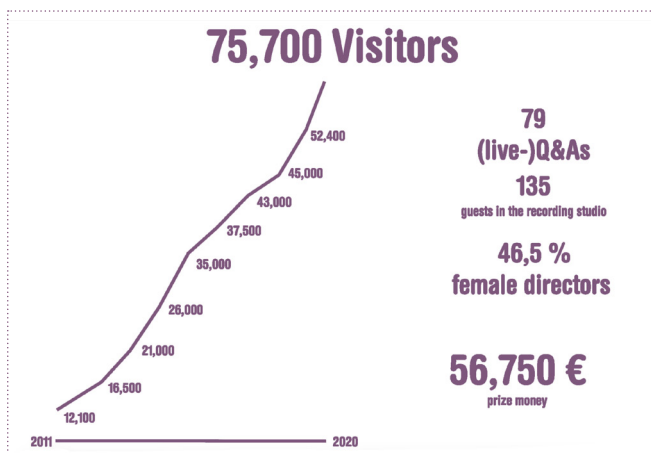
"One aspect of our strategy was to increase the revenue share for the creators."

Currently, numerous cultural organizations and film festivals are reacting to the COVID19-related restrictions with well-intentioned digital offers – free of charge. A questionable signal, even or especially in this time. Because after the lifting of the restrictions, film culture will continue to be seen on the internet, just as it was before. But by putting films online without restrictions, we are further forcing the actual birth defect of the internet: the apparently copyright-free and thus free-of-charge world of digital content. This is why the films of DOK.fest München were only available in its online edition with a ticket or festival pass. All ticket prices were set lower than the regular cinema entrance fee, but significantly higher than those offered by competitors from Silicon Valley. In addition, we offered an extra ticket with a solidarity fee for our partner cinemas. The high number

of visitors (51%) who opted for this increased ticket price confirms that we are on the right track and that people are willing to pay money for relevant content on the internet.
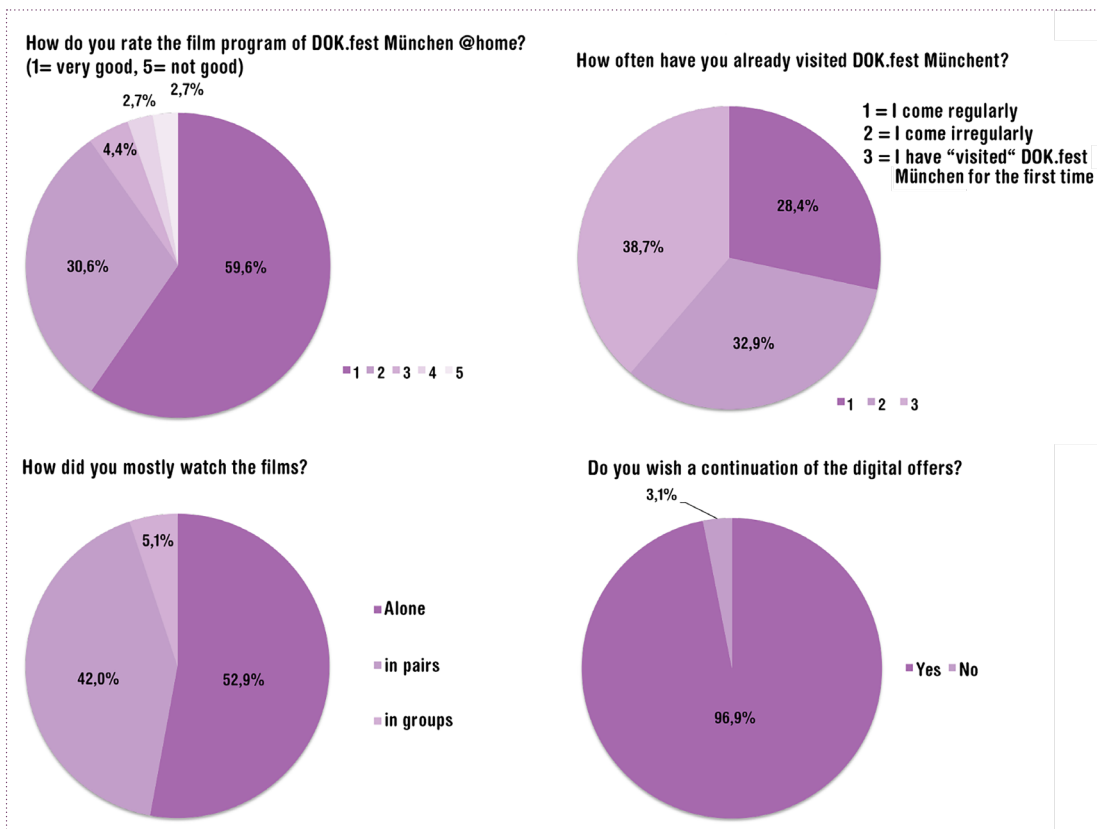
Brave new world?

The lockdown also proved to be a serious cut for the planning of the on-line edition. The team was only able to operate from their home offices and had to reorganize and coordinate spontaneously. The digitalization of our working world, which had been in the air for a long time and will certainly be continued in the future, was pushed further. A completely new task was the technical implementation of the streaming including the planning, organization and realization of a pay wall and evaluation. With Kulturserver in Berlin we found a partner with many years of experience in this area.

75,700 Visitors

52,400
45,000
43,000
37,500
35,000
26,000
21,000
16,500
12,100
2011   2020

79
(live-)Q&As
135
guests in the recording studio

46,5 %
female directors

56,750 €
prize money

324
Teachers

6
Interactive digital workshops

>150
School classes

3,821
Visitors

3,651
3,462
2,753
2,616
2,008
1,023   (year-round figures)
2014   2020

Especially the setup of the pay wall and the counting of the streaming data seem to be standardized digital processes from the outside, but require more intensive preparation and support than we had expected. Although every one-way ticket sold is easy to register online, our festival also offered a festival pass. Since for festivals not only the number of tickets sold but also the number of actual viewers is a relevant factor, we needed our own counting system. In comparison to regular cinema attendance, online shows a more experimental behaviour of the audience. With a festival pass I can take a quick look at numerous films before I decide on one. That's why we didn't count the clicks, but the viewers who had seen at least half of a

film. The minimum amount of data with the highest possible data protection was important to us. We recorded a total of over 200,000 visitors to our film pages, 75,700 of whom watched at least one of the films according to the above-mentioned standards - an increase of 41% compared to the last presence edition in 2019.

How do you rate the film program of DOK.fest München @home? (1= very good, 5= not good)

- 2,7%
- 2,7%
- 2,7%
- 4,4%
- 30,6%
- 59,6%

■ 1 ■ 2 ■ 3 ■ 4 ■ 5

How often have you already visited DOK.fest Münchent?

1 = I come regularly
2 = I come irregularly
3 = I have "visited" DOK.fest München for the first time

- 28,4%
- 38,7%
- 32,9%

■ 1 ■ 2 ■ 3

How did you mostly watch the films?

- 5,1%
- 42,0%
- 52,9%

■ Alone
■ in pairs
■ in groups

Do you wish a continuation of the digital offers?

- 3,1%
- 96,9%

■ Yes ■ No

Results of a survey among the digital visitors of DOK.fest München 2020 @ home

What goes on in the foyer of digital cinema?

If there is no physical presence at the online edition of the festival and thus no direct contact with the audience, how can we still guarantee exchange and festival atmosphere? Solving this task was a central prerequisite for making our decision to take the step into the internet plausible. First of all, our website, which we redefined as the festival center in this context, now had to meet higher standards in terms of clarity, visuality, information transfer and service friendliness. Fortunately, this part of the work was still manageable even in the narrow time window remaining to us and has also provided valuable experience for future editions of DOK.fest München. At

the same time, we offered a hotline service via all communication channels including website, social media, newsletter, mail and telephone, which was actively used. This made it possible to exchange information and learn a lot about the wishes and needs of our audience. The press conference, the opening event and the award ceremony also played a special role in the entire online presence. We definitely wanted to use these events to create a festival atmosphere beyond the film program. We staged the opening with the support of an experienced TV team as a film clip. The presenter interacted with the guests via video feeds in the empty hall of the Deutsches Theater, where the regular opening would have taken place. The numerous empty chairs offered a symbolic impression of the consequences that the Corona requirements have for cultural events.

New digital territory

The internet offers a festival numerous opportunities to position itself extensively in the truest sense of the word. Now the temptation is great to use it in the way it is intended: as an opportunity to operate worldwide. However, this option may sometimes not be in the interest of a festival that is anchored in time and place, because geoblocking and the time limit are the livelihoods of many players in any kind of online exploitation of films. The online edition of DOK.fest München was therefore only accessible throughout Germany and limited to a period of 18 days. This was a very important measure to keep further distribution options open for the films.

"it was all the more astonishing that we were able to increase the number of visitors without any additional funds"

All previous surveys on the behavior of cineastes and film lovers suggest that the use of online offers and visits to the cinema are not exclusive, but in part mutually dependent. A joint appearance increases attention and thus reach and the possibilities to attract more and also completely new audiences. While the majority of the audiences for the DOK.fest have so far been Munich residents, the online edition suddenly allowed us to operate nationwide. This is a challenge of its own, not least for the festival's communication, which already represents a relevant cost factor in regular editions. Therefore, it was all the more astonishing that we were able to increase the number of visitors without any additional funds in this area. With a 38%

share of new visitors from all over Germany, we have already attracted far-reaching attention in this first edition. We were certainly able to reach a whole new audience, which would not have made the step into the cinema for a documentary film until now.

Cinema on demand

We have to assume that we as a society cannot simply return to the original mode after this crisis. It is too substantial for that; the needs in our affluent society are too pronounced and diverse. This is especially true for major events and certainly also for the cinema, which not only has to be able to withstand coexistence with the internet, but has to demand it as a complement. So far, cinema has been defined by its large dark space and specific social interaction as well as by its curated program. The cinema sector, with its irreplaceable qualities, now must work on all levels for the exploitation of documentary films – the additional „digital screen" is therefore the next compelling step towards the preservation of our film culture, even if it cannot serve the spatial habits online in particular.

Some festivals have now had to venture into the internet and are discovering the opportunities it offers. In the near future, film festivals will be able to get involved in the exploitation chain with even more activities, including additional online offerings. But the distribution of documentaries is a fragile building, both nationally and internationally, from which one should not pull out a stone without consequences. First and foremost festivals bear a responsibility towards the creators of each individual film, towards the industry and other festivals worldwide. The temporary gold-rush mood of individual festivals should therefore not tempt us to hasty fantasies of

Africa Day panel discussion with film-makers Maia Lekow & Christopher King, Teboho Edkins and Tiny Mungwe during DOK. fest München @home edition 2020 (left)

Shooting of the DOK. education documentary film school (right)

expansion. If the dust is slowly settling after the end of the restrictions under COVID-19, it is important to measure the strategies against one's own principles and goals and act accordingly.

"the additional „digital screen" is the next compelling step towards the preservation of our film culture"

What remains?

A critical experience we were able to make in the short time available: Our digital world is far from being as advanced as we all think. At the same time, we have had the positive outcome that our culturally interested audience has been very active in taking advantage of the digital services offered by DOK.fest München, both in terms of commitment and money. This gives hope for the future of cinema – a cinema with additional digital options.

Daniel Sponsel studied Photography and Film. He has worked as a director and cinematographer on many documentary films. He now lectures at various universities and has written several publications on the Theory and Practice of Documentary Film. Since 2009 he is the director of the International Documentary Film Festival DOK.fest München.

Bringing Heritage Institutions to the Digital World

The National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library's online cooking courses

By Teresa Stenstrup

The National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library (NCSML) in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, is no stranger to disasters. When COVID-19 caused wide spread closures this past March, I was therefore fully confident that we would be able to respond and find our way again. Like all other cultural organizations, we had to identify how we would still operate and fulfill our mission without being open, and then after reopening with social distancing. Less than two months after reopening, the NCSML, and the City of Cedar Rapids, was hit by a derecho, a windstorm comparable to a category 3 or 4 inland hurricane. This caused widespread damage, power outages, and another closure. This was again an unplanned setback, but it did not keep us down for long.

A storied background

The NCSML's preserves, presents, and transcends Czech and Slovak history and culture through active engagement to reach cross-cultural audiences locally, nationally, and internationally. Through public programs, educational projects, and exhibits, the NCSML wants to create experiences that promote an understanding of our connection to the world and to each other. Deeply committed to the preservation of its cultural roots and heritage, we explore ways to contribute to the dialogue on contemporary issues. These include the strengthening of civil society, democratic principles, and human rights, all of which have shaped the Czech and Slovak experience and are representative of individual contributions of all who came to America in search of a better life to escape political or economic limitations.

Founded as the Czech Fine Arts Foundation by a group of second and third-generation descendants of Czech immigrants, we began as a one-room Czech textiles display in 1974 and grew into a National institution in 1995. An epic flood besieged the NCSML campus in 2008, creating more than $11 million in damage and harming the collections and six museum-owned structures.

In an effort to protect the building from future flooding and to retain it for its original purpose, the board and staff pursued the idea of moving the physical structure (all 1500 tons of it) from its location near the Cedar River to a new destination 480 feet away. After four years of operating from interim locations, the newly elevated and expanded museum and library opened its doors in July 2012.

The current museum includes 10,000 square feet of exhibition and gallery spaces, a 52-seat theater, a restored immigrant house, a museum store, offices, classroom and program spaces, and a library that holds primary source materials and publications to support the mission of the museum. The museum's overall collection contains more than 40,000 objects. The museum's strategic plan for 2015-2020 set forth goals in five priority areas: celebrating Czech and Slovak history and culture, connecting to stories of freedom and human dignity, becoming embedded in the Cedar Rapids community, engaging families, and enhancing operational and business performance.

The NCSML was designated a Smithsonian Affiliate in 2018, joining a national network of museums, educational institutions and cultural organizations in sharing the resources of the Smithsonian Institution. Governed by a 26-member board of trustees and a 14-member National Advisory Council,

The NCSML © ArtisticAbode/ Wikimedia Commons – CC BY-SA 3.0 (left)

Permanent exhibit of the NCSML: he 1800s Home of the Sleger family after they emigrated from Bohemia to the United States © NCSML (right)

the NCSML has a staff of 18 full-time and 10 part-time employees. In 2019, just under half of our revenue came from contributions, gifts and grants. The other half from the endowment, event rentals, museum store and admissions and programs.

Adapting existing formats to new technology

In 2020, revenue became even more important in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic in order to continue to carry out our mission, which is quite difficult when you aren't open to the public. Each department has worked to find ways we could increase our income and carry out our jobs. Because my job is public programs, I had to rethink and redesign every plan I had for 2020.

The NCSML has offered in person cooking classes as part of our Immigrant Foodways series for years. While we were closed, we identified which existing programs we could ideally offer in a digital format. I'll admit, a cooking class didn't seem like the easiest fit for many reasons. Our paid in-person classes offer the opportunity to learn how to make something live. We provide the ingredients and the preparation space, participants do not have to worry about grocery shopping or cleaning up a mess. I worried that the virtual experience would be so completely different than the in-person experience. While I was not wrong that it was different, I was happily surprised that the experience was still a positive one.

"While I was not wrong that it was different, I was happily surprised that the digital experience was still a positive one."

We are lucky to have a culinary school-trained chef in Cedar Rapids. Chef Tom Slepička hails from Brno, Czech Republic, and has been cooking since a young age. He teaches in-person classes with us at the NCSML, and at other educational and cultural institutions in the Cedar Rapids area. He was the first person I contacted with the idea of some sort of virtual cooking offering. I was thinking of a pre-recorded video demonstration that we could digitally share, but Chef Tom suggested we try and do a live cooking class, similar to what we would offer if we were at the NCSML. While I still had my reservations about how we could do this, I took a leap of faith.

50

The first field trials

We began with a five-part series focusing on Classic and Modern Czech & Slovak Cuisine. These classes ran for seven weeks during the months of May, June, and July 2020. Chef Tom chose the dishes he wanted to teach participants to make and participants could sign up for the entire series or one individual class. Classes occurred on Wednesday evenings or Saturday afternoons, and were accessible over Zoom. By this point, we had some experience offering virtual programs, but I still had to learn the ins and outs of the Zoom platform to ensure I could effectively run each class. Thankfully, we already had an online registration system in place, which we use for both paid and unpaid programs. Participants registered ahead of time and then received an ingredient list and instructions one week before each class. This allowed them to purchase any necessary ingredients and prepare anything needed ahead of time. For example, our first class was mushroom sauce with dumplings. The dumplings needed time to rise before they were cooked.

We have always charged a fee for our Immigrant Foodways cooking classes. This fee contributed to the cost of ingredients, the instructor's time, and use of space. While our virtual offering would not include any provided ingredients or use of space on our end, we would be asking the instructor to give more of his time than he traditionally would. Even as a nonprofit, we know the value of properly compensating any instructors, artists, and performers we have at the NCSML. This is not different for virtual offerings. This priority of properly compensating someone for their work coupled with the priority to increase revenue for the NCSML led to our chosen ticket price of $20 for members and $25 for non-members per class. This series was underwritten by a sponsor, which allowed us to offer an affordable ticket
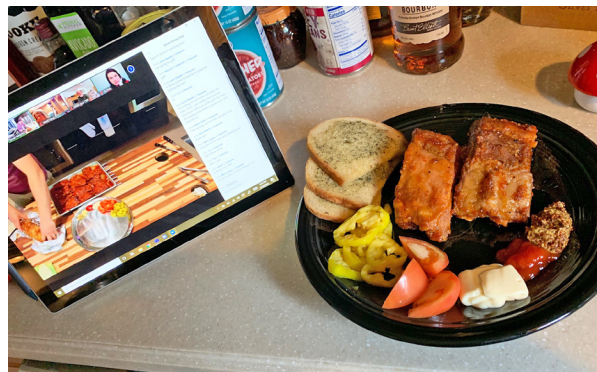
Dumplings with Sauerkraut, made by class attendee, Lucia Soltis (left)

Czech BBQ (right)

both © NCSML

price and still net revenue. Even still, I was worried that this fee would be a deterrent to any participants, who may not see the need to compensate our instructor nor the need for a cultural institution to earn revenue during a global pandemic that is affecting everyone.

"Even as a nonprofit, we know the value of properly com-pensating any instructors, artists, and performers. This is not different for virtual offerings."

To my relief, as soon as we shared information about the virtual series, ticket purchases began. We had 13 people sign up for the entire series (we offered a discount for signing up for all five) and quickly sold out of all of the classes. We limited the class size to 20 people because we wanted to be sure to still offer the same experience of interacting with the chef without too many people trying to ask questions. Even though classes were online, we still wanted them to be an intimate experience. The response far exceed-ed my expectations, with people contacting me asking to get on a wait list in case we had any cancellations.

In addition to the paid class format, we also offered discounted bundles of products from our Museum Store, which participants did purchase. We also incurred monetary donations from class attendees, who gave additional do-nations while they were registering. Both of these added more opportunity for streams of revenue related to the virtual series. Even with having to pur-chase their own ingredients and cook in their homes, participants wanted to take part in our classes regardless of a fee involved.

A new kind of experience

After the first class, I felt confident that we could offer a singular experience even if it was online. Chef Tom teaches from his home, not in a museum kitchen or classroom. Until it happened, I didn't realize the value in this per-sonal touch. People appreciated seeing a chef's own kitchen and being able to cook along with him from their own homes. I think it removed a barrier that can happen with in-person instruction. It personalized the experience, creating a comfort level that may not usually be there. Participants told me how nice it was to connect with Chef Tom, myself and others, especially during a time of social distancing. We were in our respective homes, yet it

felt like we were all together. This was only possible because I was in attendance, helping to moderate and communicating with Chef Tom any questions that arose. Having someone else there, allowed the Chef to focus on teaching the participants and not all of the background details.

As a National Museum & Library, we have an audience that spans the United States. Virtual programs like this one have allowed us to engage with our out-of-state audience in a way we haven't done before. I say audience because it goes beyond our membership. Our attendance for all of the cooking classes was split 50/50 between members and non-members. Similarly, our first class had half of the attendees from the Cedar Rapids metro area and the other half from Colorado, Illinois, Minnesota, Missouri, Texas, Washington, West Virginia, and Wisconsin. Both splits between member and non-member and home location would not usually happen with an in-person program.

Since the shutdown, we have offered a variety of other unpaid and paid digital programs for specific visitor groups, such as students or people with handicaps. We also offered a free film screening for families at the local Baseball Stadium and handed out free STEAM Robotics Kits to all children, since we couldn't have our Free Family Day this past summer. Most recently we had an art performance in our outdoor amphitheater and sold cookies from a local store to raise funds for our work with at risk high school students.

Some of the digital programs have been new ideas and others, like the cooking classes, have been adapted. We have had free webinars comparing the effects of COVID-19 in different sectors in the United States, Czech Republic and Slovakia. We've offered free workshops on Czech contemporary and

Czech Soups (left)

Mushroom Sauce (right)

both © NCSML

53

historical art, dance and activism. We began offering online Czech and Slovak language courses, both of which include a fee for participation. We've also had our first socially distant book signing, which included purchasing special packages from our Museum Store and then attending a virtual presentation followed by a drive up book signing by a local author.

We plan to continue offering a mix of socially distant appropriate in person events and exclusively online events this fall. This mix will continue after the pandemic, and we hope to be able to connect with people all over the world with our virtual programs. My goal would be for any in person program to be also be offered virtually. Pre-pandemic we livestreamed some lectures, but going forward, I hope to always stream any lecture, performance (when possible), class and workshop. How each program is streamed or digitally shared will vary by its type, but I'm confident it will only make our programs more accessible.

"we hope to be able to connect with people all over the world with our virtual programs"

We are now in our second cooking series with Chef Tom with five new dishes. Twenty-five attendees from the first series signed up for the second, either opting for the entire series or individual classes. Twenty people signed up for the entire series this time, a 65% increase from the previous series. To accommodate the demand, we increased the maximum attendance to thirty people. This has not changed the intimate nature of the classes.

Conclusion

COVID-19, and natural disasters, mean all of us have to be malleable in what we do at cultural institutions. When it comes to offering virtual programs, you have to be willing to go out of your comfort zone and try. I would recommend being honest and up front with your participants, letting them know this is new for you, just as it is new for them. Asking for patience and grace is an important thing to do from the beginning, along with acknowledging there will probably be some technical difficulties. This is something that holds true for in-person programs as well. The more you do anything, the easier it becomes.

54

Besides having to personally learn how to operate a Zoom call with 20 to 30 people facilitating their questions for the chef, I did have to work through technical issues mostly in the first classes, which was to be expected. For example, the participants and I could not hear the Chef very well because there was feedback noise, probably because of the Chef's microphones. Additionally, I had to research how Zoom looked at different platforms because we had people using different types of PCs and mobile devices. Once I was able to share where the options were on any platform, I could fully help participants. Having someone in a role like mine in each class was important for them. This way we could work through their technical issue over the chat and wouldn't have to disturb Chef Tom or the other attendees.

"When it comes to offering virtual programs, you have to be willing to go out of your comfort zone and try."

At the end of each class, I have the participants share what they made. It is always interesting to see how similar or different each person's dish looks, and to hear his or her comments on the cooking process. It also allows Chef Tom to see the fruit of his instructional labor. At each class there is at least one person who apologizes and says they can't show their dish off because they or their partner already ate it.

To be able to offer this singular experience while earning revenue for my institution has been a pleasure. My only regret is that I didn't cook along with the rest of them.
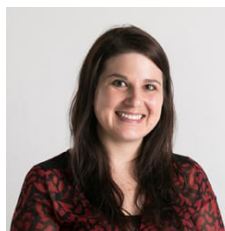
***Teresa Stenstrup** is the Director of Outreach & Innovation at the National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library. She oversees all aspects of public programs and education for people of all ages. During her tenure, she has focused on increasing attendance and engagement with new initiatives including the podcast series, Czech Us Out, and by establishing and growing community partnerships. In 2019, she was selected as a Smithsonian Visiting Professional.*

Marketing online and streams

What we can and must do to weather the storm

By Mathijs Bouwman

COVID has hit the cultural sector hard. And as long as it takes, we have to weather the storm. This article is an attempt to reflect on the crisis from the perspective of the platform "Peppered", a European platform that is used in multiple countries by dozens of cultural institutions for their online presence. We take a look at how theaters and concert halls have responded to the crisis, and how they try to turn the tide by using streaming to turn threats into opportunities, even with a long-term perspective.

The relationship between the venue and the audience

Before COVID, the customer journey was a fairly straightforward curve, culminating in a performance or concert attendance. Everything before and after that climax – pre-event e-mails, after care – served that main component. Cultural professionals who wrapped their head around it, surely have realized that streaming is something they can do to fill the COVID-19 as well as the digital gap. And they surely have recognized that the customer journey towards a streaming event is just as straightforward as to any other kind of performance.

If we look at the situation in the Netherlands today (September 2020), we see that there is really no other option than to look at that scenario instead of waiting for the events to come back. Even if cultural visits will be possible again, it does not seem obvious that things will automatically get going again or that the expectations and interest of the audience will be like they used to.

How are the theaters reacting to this situation?

We write this article from the Netherlands, where arts institutions are currently (beginning of September) open again and – for just a small part of normal capacity – are allowed to receive visitors. Although this may seem

like good news at first glance, things probably are not getting back to normal, but for some former and also some new parts of the audience digital formats are here to stay and will be a permanent part of cultural offerings.

Our platform serves dozens of users in several countries. And indeed we can say that we encounter both possible reactions. Waiting for the storm to pass, or come to grips with it. Fortunately, we can say that the second reaction has now largely the upper hand. Resilient and maneuverable – with the indispensable help from the government – everything is done to navigate in the dark.

"for some former and also some new parts of the audience digital formats are here to stay and will be a permanent part of cultural offerings"

In order to find the most powerful solutions for the future, we as a platform as well as cultural organizations first need to know which undercurrents still matter, and to what extent and direction they have changed. Therefore, we analyze behavior regarding ticket sales, and then look at how we can respond to this from a platform perspective.

Ticket sales and customer needs analyzed

We analyzed the relationship between audience and venue, in a brainstorm together with a number of theaters. It showed that some existing (or altered) needs of the customers cannot be fulfilled in the way you used to. We can think of:

- Many visitors have a need to plan their cultural visit well in advance;
- There was always, certainly during the presale, a (much) greater willingness to buy more performances at the same time;
- People have a strong need for performances and concerts;
- There is a need to „do good". Regular visitors know that the theater is in dire straits, and are happy to contribute to its recovery;
- People need a sense of safety and security. Besides health issues (is it safe for me to go to the theater?), this is also about more practical issues (can I get my money back if I have to cancel?).

One of the big newspapers of the Netherlands also notes an important factor. (Fellow) visitors themselves are essential for the cultural experience.

"The experience of art is often wrongly regarded as an individual experience, but the social aspect is, according to art lovers, very important. And precisely that aspect is now under pressure due to the security measures."

"Yes, we are still together in the hall, but with a much smaller group and spread over a larger area. As a result, the sensation of togetherness is less. It is a shared feeling, and that feeling is less if we keep a distance in a half-full room."

Approaches for the new normal

From our platform we started working with the above ‚new facts'. What solutions can we come up with? How can we cope with the decline, and create new ways of audience development and involvement? Additional ways of earning money? In the brainstorming sessions we had with the users, we soon came across techniques like streaming. The simple thought was: if we can sell the performances online, we will have a solution for the gap.

"How can we cope with the decline, and create new ways of audience development and involvement?"

Although everyone liked the idea of „semi live streaming", with some audience in the room, and the rest at home, critical comments were quickly made. „What does it cost?" "Is it a temporary thing or something sustainable?" and „we can never offer the experience we have in the theater…"

But streaming is not a stand-alone solution. The meta-issue is about maintaining, strengthening and – if possible – expanding your relationship, taking into account the new habits, behaviors, fears, dreams, practical facts and barriers to visit culture. Next to the current security reasons, there are also aspects such as people not being able to travel to your destination for multiple reasons (time, costs, disability and so on). Additionally, with sustainability and reducing flights becoming an increasing important topic, bridging distances and making cultural institutions and formats available independent of place will become even more decisive for the long-term success.

Thus, even more than pre COVID, it's about profiling your customer base. What type of visitors can you distinguish, who is willing to come to the theater, who wants to pay for a stream, and who is wealthy enough to support the theater? Especially regarding online formats, the willingness to pay, as the articles in this issue show, by now depends on the special features and benefits of digital formats and on customer loyalty. Online streams can be a gear in that engine, and can keep things going, but the elements around it have become even more significant.

Every relevant and possible moment to stay in touch with the (former) visitor, your website, the emails you send, everything must be dedicated to the retention and, where possible, migration of the customer in the customer pyramid. You do this by speaking to everyone personally about their need for culture, their potential to become even more involved, their response to security measures, etc.

"Especially regarding online formats, the willingness to pay by now depends on the special features and benefits of digital formats and on customer loyalty."

More than ever, the customer's characteristics, needs and behavior will differ. Therefore, use online techniques, which enable you to actually distinguish between individuals at this level of detail. Do not bother people with strong security measures if they do not need it. Others might feel reassured when they read about the extensive corona measures in your venue.

Some tips and tricks

The way in which theaters have been creating strategic new digital functions and functionalities in the last years and months is impressive. We will discuss a few tips, resulting from the brainstorm and experience in the Netherlands and Belgium.

In general, it is all about finding the right mix of micro-campaigns and marketing strategies. Even now, or especially now, there is enough momentum to deepen the relationship and to pioneer with new, online marketing techniques. Memberships and donations have rocketed during the crisis,

people are more willing than ever to strengthen the relationship in order to weather the storm, together.

As mentioned, streaming must be one of the instruments, as part of a rich set of new techniques, new ways of communication, that appeal to the visitor on a personal level. And if we want to start with streaming, let's get it right in the first place. We share some insights from our experiences here:

- Stick to your own domain as much as possible. A stream on YouTube or Facebook, especially if it is publicly accessible, feels much less "credible" than a stream from the domain of your own website;
- Provide exclusivity. People like to pay for a ticket for a stream, but here again the rule applies: make sure that it is not accessible everywhere, via links of forwarded pages, to be seen by everyone;
- Make it personal and let it mimic a real experience as much as possible. This doesn't or even shouldn't be exactly the same like a visit to your institution, but an experience on its own. Theaters in the Netherlands not only stream what's happening on stage, but start beforehand, in the foyer, take the online viewer on a tour to dressing rooms and backstage, etc.

As stated earlier, streams alone will not be the solution. Consider using other online techniques that make the visitor's experience as personal as possible and respond to (temporarily) altered needs and habits. Some examples:

- Personal content: Websites are perfectly capable of doing 1-on-1 marketing, nowadays. Micro targeting has proven to be able to boost conversion enormously. The website acts differently for each individual based on their profile, interests, historical purchases, or whatever form of segmentation you choose. Especially now that the visitor's intention to buy is under pressure, you want to offer the best possible experience, and websites can do that like no other.
- In addition to the above, think about responding individually to people. Give personal advice about everyone's visit. Personal content can ensure that you do not overwhelm anyone with exorbitant information.
- Add 'Fun-shopping' elements: Presale is all about fun, the pleasure of looking forward, of seeing new things, of booking nights out with family and friends. Therefore, fully commit to this „urge and need

to collect". Remove all barriers to buy extra items, reward people for creating bundles / flexible subscriptions, let people easily invite and / or bring others for shows, etc. Create the best (mobile first) online experience, let customers browse and mark the preferred events for buying later. All the data that you collect, your email/follow up marketing, will make the difference afterwards.

- Multichannel: The online channel offers many opportunities for (targeted) multichannel marketing. Do you kick off the presale with a (segmented) printed mini-brochure? Do you approach loyal visitors differently from „inactive" visitors via email? Do you know which people have already visited your website, which pages they have seen, and remind them with a friendly email that converts after all? Think about personalizing the homepage with a special offer, the 'next best step' for the person involved.

The granularity of your campaign has no limits. Websites today are capable of automatically recognizing and offering many of these micro-segments, once you configured them. This way, it will not only boost your audience development, it might even take a lot less work than you probably expect.

Moonshot

With some or all of the marketing tactics mentioned above, we can try to overcome. What if we think beyond? It seems that the time is right for some changes, that can turn out to be a blessing in the long run as well.

- It's a great time for fundraising funnels. People see their favorite venue in danger. Make it personal here, again. Don't overthrow people with requests to donate. But welcome every new visitor, and offer them an accessible stepping stone to become a friend. Once they are friends, thank them generously through personal messages, and inform them about the next step, such as becoming an ambassador, etc.
- Respond to visitors' need for flexibility. Make sure there is no barrier to buying tickets now and enjoying them later. Think of special crisis-resistant pricing mechanisms. A strip card, flexible bundles, etc.

61

Recap

Streaming in its best form is something that can grow into an online revenue model. A stream cannot replace the feeling of a performance. But it can be an additional way to generate extra income or PR. In the Netherlands we know of some good examples of theaters that run profitable streams, for example in nursing homes.

The crisis – a dark time in this era for cultural institutions – certainly offers bright spots: The agility of cultural institutions is impressive, and the need for culture seems to have grown in people's minds. Should COVID-19 ever disappear completely, habits won't just come back. The time of "planning a year and a half in advance and putting that in a brochure" suddenly seems very far away. But it's no problem when those habits won't return completely. Due to the crisis, the sector has also proven that digital resources can give a huge boost to the deepening of the relationship with your audience.

Streams, 1-on-1 marketing, and other online marketing techniques can be used to fully capture the function of what a venue must be in these times. The correct mix of digital instruments, can result in the ability to create a deeper bond with the audience, coupled with greater resilience, flexibility and (financial) health of the theaters.

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63