Brooklyn Museum

The Imagination, Identity and Innovation of Brooklyn

Strategic Plan Proposal

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Abstract

In anticipation of the next year, the Brooklyn Museum looks to establish innovative and inspiring ways to create a digital relationship with its community. The Brooklyn Museum hopes to invite members of the public to create their own museum experience through a series of new digital initiatives. We acknowledge that the past year has been riddled with hardships and tragedy, and we hope to initiate our upcoming projects with the intention to inspire togetherness and healing through creativity, empathy and ingenuity. **The Imagination, Identity and Innovation of Brooklyn** strategic plan will help define the Brooklyn Museum's digital identity in the new world of digital curation and design. This plan aims to use digital strategies to not only connect with the community but showcase the community's unique and inspiring identity to the museum's broader audience. We aim to establish inherently digital ideas that are interconnected in a way that will establish a foundation on which to build new digital pursuits. The plan will incorporate four goals to accomplish our digital community building initiative. We plan to give digital access to the community through a video collective initiated and built by and for the people of Brooklyn. We will also devote our resources to uplifting digital creativity by exhibiting more digital art from locals. In conjunction with providing space for digital creation, we plan to give the community agency in our digital development and exploration and invite them to be involved in the creative of digital expansion from start to finish through the use of our mobile app and augmented Reality technologies. This plan is intentionally ambitious and wide-stretching, as each part is deeply interconnected in a way that will weave an all-encompassing digital tapestry of togetherness and creativity representative of the Brooklyn community.

1. Brooklyn Museum

The Brooklyn Museum is one of the oldest art museums in the United States and has been a staple of Brooklyn, New York since the 19th century. The museum houses over a million artworks spanning many years and cultures, welcoming hundreds of thousands of visitors every year. The values of the Brooklyn Museum are focused on bringing great art and history to the public whilst making an open and inclusive space for visitors. Over the years, the museum has curated spectacular exhibitions, developed impactful education programs (such as the Museum Apprenticeship Program) and created ongoing connections with the community. The institution is located in the Prospect Heights neighborhood of Brooklyn, home to people of all backgrounds and cultures. Brooklyn's population is over two and a half million and is made up of hundreds of different languages and ethnicities. The borough is one of the most diverse places in the world, making the Brooklyn Museum's location an indispensable part of enriching the diverse community that surrounds it. Serving the people of New York and specifically the people of Brooklyn is deeply important to the Brooklyn Museum's values. The vision statement from the museum encapsulates this, "*Where great art and courageous conversations are catalysts for a more connected, civic, and empathetic world.*" The museum maintains its mission to provide and encourage inspiration through its resources for the greater public and its local community.

2. Vision, Mision, and Values

Vision:

To connect with and encapsulate the museum's innovative and diverse community by creating a digital tapestry that is made by and for the people of Brooklyn.

Mission:

To grow the digital resources of the Brooklyn Museum by connecting with the ideas, stories and creativity of the local community.

Values:

- Inclusivity—We look to make our digital programs accessible and adaptable to all who participate.
- Empathy—We value the stories and experiences that make up the museum's community and aim to create a space with which all feel valued and heard.
- Togetherness—The museum strives to present its physical and digital space as places of convergence and expression of ideas, creativity and passions.
- Connectivity—We lead our community by establishing a strong and flexible environment for the people to connect to the art, the museum and each other.
- Innovation—We are an establishment that endeavours to work towards and accept ingenuity and progress for the betterment of our museum.
- Transparency—We establish a space where the people are able to share their opinions, emotions and criticism of what the museum's efforts are accomplishing. Establishing this space for in-depth feedback and conversation allows the community to maintain their sense of relevance and impact.

3. Goals

This plan commits the Brooklyn Museum to pursuing new goals that advance our mission:

- **COLLECTIVE:** Establishing a collective of video profiles from the local community.

- **DEVOTION:** Devoting virtual space for local digital artworks.

- **AGENCY:** Giving a community agency in developing the museum's Mobile App experience.

- **INNOVATION:** Expanding the use of AR technologies, led by the community's interests.

Strategic Approaches:

The Brooklyn Museum will utilize these approaches in the execution of our goals:

- Enrich and strengthen the **relationship** between the museum and its local community.

- Concentrate on the **audience**: give agency to the brooklyn museum community and engage with the greater public.

- Adopt **flexible** and adaptable digital programs that will help shape and evolve the museum's use of technology.

- Create an **environment** of reflection, discussion and consideration.

3.1 COLLECTIVE: Establishing a collective of video profiles from the local community.

This program will initiate a digital collection of community member's stories. A person will be able to share a video of themselves sharing their personal journey, their relationship to their community or their experience with the Brooklyn Museum. Individuals will be encouraged to nominate a neighbor, relative, friend or any other Brooklyn resident when they reply to the thread with their video in order to keep the collection growing. This goal aims to make the digital aspects of the museum personally relevant to the individual. "Relevance is an exercise in

empathy—in understanding what matters to your intended audience, not what matters to you." (Simon, 2016, p. 42). This collection will gather the community together to establish a digital space of compassion and unity.

3.1.1 Strategy One - Website

The first strategy for this goal will be to create a section of our website where people can send in their video proposal. Once a video proposal is approved, an individual can upload a short video sharing their story. This process will allow for the museum's staff to carefully monitor what is uploaded so that the program does not become overwhelmed with irrelevant or unusable material. This will be an ongoing online collection that can eventually be transformed into a comprehensive installation in the Brooklyn Museum.

3.1.2 Strategy Two - Social media

In conjunction with the website, the museum will also allow audiences to share their stories through the museum's social media. This will be done mainly through Twitter, as it will be easy for users to reply to a thread with their videos or personal nominations. Videos collected from social media can then be incorporated into the website's ongoing collective.

3.2. DEVOTION: Devoting virtual space for local digital artworks.

With the continuing emergence of new digitally created art that is often overlooked in the art world, the Brooklyn Museum wishes to initiate a digital art collective from local artists. This will be in alliance with the video profile collective, and will be a growing and ongoing part of the museum's website. This will also be similar in function to the museum's already established virtual market, Brooklyn Pop Up, in that it will showcase local artists but exclusively showing

digital art. This goal aims to bring the spotlight to the recent expansions in creativity and artistry in the virtual realm.

3.2.1 Strategy One - Website

This strategy will highlight amateur and young artists who work in digital painting, animation and design, and will be featured directly on the museum's website. This will be another continuous installation and will display the digital artwork to their fullest quality in order to maintain their digital form and integrity. Like the video profile collective, this digital art collective will have the potential to grow into an installation at the Brooklyn Museum, where digital artworks will be displayed on screens or by projection in accordance with their artistic intention.

3.2.2 Strategy Two - Social Media

In order to further initiate a digital art collective of local artists, we plan to incorporate our social media platforms to accomplish this goal as well. Through social media platforms such as Twitter and Instagram, we will encourage local digital artists to directly message or reply to our posts reaching out to the Brooklyn community. We will also be looking to connect and review artists on platforms such as Twitch, Youtube, TikTok and Patreon where many digital artists have established virtual communities surrounding their artwork. This strategy will help reach out to online artist communities in order to give them a museum platform.

3.3. AGENCY: Giving a community agency in developing the museum's mobile app experience.

This goal will be an extension of the community collective projects by bringing the material collected into the Brooklyn Museum's Mobile app through community participation and audience agency. "When participants contribute to institutions, they want to see their work integrated in a timely, attractive, respectful way." (Simon, 2010, p. 19) We want to not only showcase individual stories and digital creativity through this plan, but we also hope to establish a space in which community members can participate in the curation and design of our digital programs. We will gather ideas from the community to incorporate an interactive and expansive mobile app feature that gives customizable tours of Brooklyn through the lens of the locals and the Brooklyn Museum.

3.3.1 Strategy One - Gather Ideas

This strategy looks into expanding the mobile app's resources in a way that brings insight and personal narratives to the museum experience by offering audio and visual features to exhibits and works of art collected from locals. The already existing ASK BM app has an

established feature where you can ask experts in real time about the works and installations in the museum. However, this extension will give visitors the option to select personal reflections and interpretations of an artwork or artist from those in the museum's community through audio recordings, personal photographs and artworks and detailed writings from locals. We will be incorporating material from our video profile collective and digital art collective into the app as well, to highlight significant figures and places within Brooklyn. Additionally we will collect data from ongoing surveys and creative feedback on our social media platforms which will help decide what will be included in the app.

3.3.2 Strategy Two - Customizable

We want this extension of the ASK BM App to not only be designed for local creatives, but we also want it to be customizable and usable for all museum visitors and app users. People will be able to choose their topics such as local history, artist highlights and cultural hubs and the app will showcase the stories, artworks and facts according to their selected interest or location. Furthermore, this feature can be used as a custom tour of Brooklyn for both locals and tourists. Like many other mobile app museum initiatives, viewers are given a "blend of the 'now' and the 'then'" from the stories of locals presented by the locals. (Schavemaker, et. all, 2011) Through customization, we hope to give the community a sense of agency in their museum experience whilst contributing to the creation of a holistic identity of Brooklyn for the greater museum audience.

3.4. INNOVATION: Expanding the use of AR technologies, led by the community's interests.

Inspired by Black Learning Achievement and Mental Health's new app, 'History Bites,' which "presents statues of individuals of African descent in real-life settings through the use of modern technology," (Charr, 2020), the second part of the museum's app expansion will contain

an augmented Reality feature that people can use outside of the museum. By expanding the mobile app outside of the museum walls, this strategy aims to connect with the community for inspiration and a more intimate learning experience. This part of the app will also be usable outside of the museum and the features will work in many of the featured locations around Brooklyn.

3.4.1 Strategy One - Participation

The use of AR will be used as an education tool to engage with public catering to their interests. Like the other digital initiatives in this plan, we will reach out to the public to curate and develop what AR experiences they wish to see featured in the app. "Programmes that promote hands-on participatory use of cultural objects aim to build appreciation, creative confidence and the creation of new ideas." (Neely, 2016). AR can feel physically hands-on while still existing in the virtual realm and therefore is a very engaging educational tool. With the Brooklyn Museum's recent exhibition, The Queen and Crown, it is evident that virtual AR experiences focused on the public's interests are both impactful and exciting for the museum's audience. We aim to bring that same level of detail to this expansion of the app.

3.4.2 Strategy Two - Customizable

Significant Brooklyn places, moments in history and historical figures will be collected from the community and then transformed into an AR statue or monument that will be seen on screen through the app for the user to learn about in more detail. Like the other strategies in this plan, it will be customizable and can work in relation to the community guided tour by selection of interests and destinations. Examples of what the AR features include: life size models of old businesses that have long since been demolished, local figures that helped shape Brooklyn's history, and digital art that encapsulates a place or culture within the Brooklyn landscape.

Through AR, we will be putting agency and innovation into the hands of the Brooklyn community using the museum's many digital resources.

4.Measuring Success/ Risks

Establishing consistent and detailed analysis of our digital programs is crucial to ensuring its success. We will look at Key performance indicators (KPIs) for each of the focus areas of the strategic plan. These are likely to include:

- Content: Website and social media engagement, increased app use, Repeat visits and app/website dwell time.
- Community: Numbers of posts and comments, app users, and sharing on social media platforms.
- Organisational change: staff survey data, staff engagement on social media, milestones for technical development, and establishment of new processes.

With every new program, there are risks to be considered. We understand that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic will affect not only the budget and costs of the program, but the public's engagement capabilities with the museum. That is why we hope that the establishment of innately digital programs will build a strong virtual foundation that bridges the community within their homes to the brooklyn museum without taking advantage of them during extenuating circumstances.

5. Timeline

This plan consists of ongoing projects that will be established in the coming year. We understand the development and collection of material, data, and resources will take time, research and patience. The Brooklyn museum aims to dedicate consistent effort to efficiently establish our new projects in next coming year so that their principles can permeate the museum's technological advancements and create adaptable foundations for future digital endeavors.

6. Roles/Responsibility/Resources

- Through an extensive process of consultation across the organisation, the digital team will ensure that the full potential for these digital projects is expressed in divisional strategies and can be realised in our programming. New leadership structures will be introduced to make sure our digital ambitions match our available resources and abilities. We want to ensure that our approach is not only innovative but sustainable so that it may provide the groundwork for future technological endeavors.

- We will take on the responsibility of developing, facilitating and adjusting every part of our digital pursuits. The Brooklyn Museum will continue our pledge of transparency and open conversation so that we can maintain our mission to uphold audience agency and creation.

- We are looking to companies and establishments that are an indispensable part of Brooklyn to invest in their community and hope that we can find partnerships through the development of this plan.

7. Communicating the plan

The Brooklyn Museum will communicate the progress and efforts of this plan with its staff, board and community with as much transparency and openness as possible. This plan requires dedicated leadership, resources and engagement from the organization and the museum understands that this will require free and ongoing conversation and growth. As part of our established values within the museum and this plan, we ensure that feedback and continuous development will be critical to maintaining these new and innovative projects. The museum will hold ourselves accountable for its communication and transparency with the community and our staff.

8. Conclusion

We believe that **The Imagination, Identity and Innovation of Brooklyn** strategic plan will give way to an exciting and expansive world of digital curation made by and for the people of Brooklyn. We hope that we can weave an ever-changing and inclusive tapestry of ideas, culture and community spirit through our digital endeavors. By developing programs like these, the Brooklyn Museum can establish intrinsically digital pursuits that remain human at their core.

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