Crowdsourcing – Exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum

The online version of Brooklyn Museum's 2009, crowd-curated photography exhibition 'Click!' offers the practitioner interesting insights and data into the process, making a significant contribution to the debate around knowledge and co-curation.

In his blog, James Kelly gives an overview of the process. The initial call for images within the stipulated theme 'Changing faces of Brooklyn' were accompanied by artist statements. The museum then created an online forum where anonymous participants responded to the aesthetics, photographic techniques, and relevance to the exhibition's theme. The results were used to select the images for the physical exhibition. The online gallery hosts the top 20% of 389 submissions; their size on screen corresponds to their relative reception by participants who voted. More data is given in the facts tab of the online exhibition.

However, the museum also collected data on their participant-adjudicators, where they lived and their knowledge of art and perceived expertise. The website allows you to compare images in terms of where they ranked according to the areas the voters lived or the different levels of expertise. James Surowiecki author of 'The Wisdom of Crowds' blogged "there was so much overlap in Click! between the crowd's judgment and the judgment of the experts…it suggests (though it doesn't prove) … the gap between popular and elite taste may be smaller than we think." Further bloggers commentary can be found in the blog tab such as an interesting discussion by Kevin Stayton on whether the exhibition was co-juried or co-curated arguing curation is more than selection. There is some interesting discussion on online versus physical exhibitions too which is continued by James Leggio introducing the book format of the photographs.

The associated podcast is also well worth a listen; http://www.brooklynmuseum.org/exhibitions/click/podcast.php covering a range of issues including identifying knowledge levels. It also discusses crowdsourcing in subjective fields such as art as opposed to fields where the crowd can identify a 'right answer' collectively; collective intelligence versus crowdsourcing models. The curator gives an interesting personal insight into the accessible art and the role of the art curator. They also comment on the value of the process behind the unique experiment that fulfils the Museum's mandate to engage the public.

By Sam Johnson and Tracy-Ann Smith
Collections Link Participation Reviewers
Link to this review http://www.collectionstrust.org.uk/item/1969-crowdsourcing-exhibition-at-the-brooklyn-museum

Bibliography

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Crowdsourcing in the Art Museum

This short, informal article provides a model for employing consultation as a way of teaching and shaping practice within art museums. Murawski identifies that through crowdsourcing and consultation with the public, new meanings and interpretations of art collections can be revealed.

He argues that crowdsourced ideas can also be a basis for creating change within the museum, therefore translating into substantial participation.

He begins by defining crowdsourcing as a way of allowing consumers to become potential partners in the development of new practices. He follows this with a four-part breakdown of a methodology he has previously used as a teaching tool himself; Generate some data; Crowdsource it; See what surfaces; and Act on the results.

Practitioners reading this should be aware that at times, Murawski's references to crowdsourcing can be interpreted as consultation. Murawski acknowledges that this strategy, due to its small scale, may not be strictly considered as crowdsourcing.

Murawski, writing from the perspective of an educator, focuses on crowdsourcing and consultation as a method for engaging with the experiences and insights of the art museum audience. He uses Jeff Howe's definition of crowdsourcing (in a video embedded in the article) to illustrate how technology and Web 2.0 has changed the way people engage with information digitally and physically. Several institutions that have utilised crowdsourcing are listed. The article foregrounds Brooklyn Museum's 'Click! A Crowd-Curated Exhibition' as exemplary in its innovative approach to crowdsourcing photographs online. Murawski then addresses how this practice can be used beyond curation and employed in relation to learning and teaching in museums.

By Sam Johnson
Collections Link Participation Reviewer
Link to this review http://www.collectionstrust.org.uk/item/1952-crowdsourcing-in-the-art-museum

Bibliography

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