

The Multitude, the Catalyst, and the Cultural Lab:

Museums and Social Innovation

Since the outbreak of the democratic revolution in the Occident, museums have been erected as memorials to the bourgeoisie. By ritually displaying the treasures plundered from historical wars, travels, or expeditions in the palaces open to the public, museums were deeply believed to be able to not only nurture artists, designers, and practitioners in related fields, but also improve their competitiveness, a necessary commodity for their career development. Based on the concept of publicness rooted in the Age of Enlightenment, the prototype of public museums had undergone profound transformation in social values from multiculturalism, social justice, and the rise of public awareness to the respect for aboriginal peoples and underprivileged groups. A functional change of museums has been further driven by the paradigm shift since the turn of the 21st century. Instead of housing artifacts and incubating curators, museums have become social engagement platforms for dialogues, debates, consolation, and social justice advocacy. They reflect on issues concerning democratization and decolonization, listen to new voices, and incorporate novel perspectives. Meanwhile, they actively apply technologies to develop effective modes of reaching out to the external world, allowing their services such as collections, exhibitions, as well as learning and experiencing events of all stripes to extend all over the globe.

Museums have transformed themselves and kept pursuing innovative or optimal procedures, products or business models, so as to carry out their social and cultural missions in a more effective fashion. Nowadays, museums are expected to act as intermediary to devise and deploy creative solutions to social and environmental problems, thereby improving the human condition, achieving happiness, and accelerating social progress. The public imagination and vision of museums' role in social innovation find perfect expression in such an expectation. Falling under no competent authority of any specific organization, social innovation entails inter-sector collaboration among governments, enterprises and non-profit institutions. By reference to interdisciplinary theories and case studies around the world, this issue of the *Journal of Taipei Fine Arts Museum* seeks to explore novel approaches for museums to intervene in the society and act as a catalyst for social innovation. We look forward to receiving articles whose topics touch upon but not limited to the following themes:

1. Public Pedagogy in Museums
2. Transformation of Museums
3. Museums and Local Sustainable Development: commercial strategies of museums; restaurants and shops; the real significance of large numbers of museum visitors for local economy; the operation of ecological museums; reciprocal cultural tourism and local revitalization
4. Museums as Social Enterprises
5. Museums as a Source of Open Data