Chapter 9
Rethinking Museum Exhibitions: Merging Physical and Digital Culture—Present to Future

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Abstract As we move into the future, more than ever, museum exhibitions will ride the wave of rapidly advancing technologies, intrinsic to development across all fields and disciplines. We are entering the next wave of the digital revolution, having traveled from the 1940s at the dawn of computing and digital communication, to the 1960s' introduction of the Internet leading to the World Wide Web in the 1990s; we arrive at the present where all media has gone digital. We take a deep breath, as we travel into new territory where digital technologies and computing intrude into real life, capable of mimicking human expression and behavior. New digital devices talk to us in human sounding voices, and robots look and act like humans. Digital has become real, as it takes on human affordances which in turn deepens our relationship with virtual life. Increasingly, we live in altered states of being as we see art through a digital lens. Creating art with our digital tools, we use artificial intelligence, machine learning, augmented and virtual reality, while our sense of self morphs and imitates digital reality. Looking into the future, exhibitions will increasingly feature digital art capable of molding digital media into real-life immersive experiences, so that digital beings will become more real. What will be the effect on the human psyche? Will we love art more causing museums to attract larger audiences. Surely, radical change is upon us, as the unstoppable force of digital progression makes its way to the heart of the museum.

9.1 Introduction

This chapter traces digital and social developments through recent exhibitions focusing on those that the authors have viewed. We present new trends in museum exhibitions and some of the challenges tied to advances in computing that are

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growing exponentially and concurrently with social activism, which taken together is driving change at an unparalleled pace. We explore exhibitions using mixed media to those that are fully digital, and show how digital art in museums, to digital media displays in public places are challenging the notion of what is art. From mixed media and 3D video animation at the Whitney to digital remix of Klimt and Michelangelo at new museum venues in Paris and the Vatican respectively, artists are creating new digital experiences, and the self, a born-digital selfie. With exhibitions expanding into new places, audiences have more choices than ever in how they wish to experience art, and with the rise of populism, the need to attract larger, more divers audiences, museums feel compelled to find new strategies to remain relevant to contemporary culture—and our research shows that museums are beginning to do just that. The results of their efforts are becoming more visible as we see exhibitions featuring women artists, artists of color, and gender diversity, while seeing digital in exhibition galleries still awaits a clarion call to fully embracing the digital world, inside and outside the museum.

9.2   Mixed Media, Archives, and Performance

The Whitney exhibition, *Transmissions* 2018, features mixed media works by Nick Mauss that encompass aspects of installation, performance, experience art and archival collections. Taking up a large gallery at the Whitney Museum, it stages and reinterprets a 30-year period of American modernist ballet by creating a mixed-media space that is at once a dance performance and an art show of 2D and 3D real and digital materials that museum visitors view. Together this forms a 360-degree dance experience that both informs and challenges assumptions about ballet while engaging and delighting the visitors. Artist, choreographer Nick Mauss talks about his work in a video produced for the exhibition and seen on the Whitney's website.

> My name is Nick Mauss. We're in rehearsal for my exhibition *Transmissions*. The exhibition is conceived in many layers – you'll see photographs, films, dancers, museum visitors, projections and sculptures – together with a group of dancers I've been collaborating with on a new sequence. The focus of the show is a moment in the history of New York where ballet and the avant-garde reacted very intensely with one another, roughly in the 1930s to 1950s. A lot of people have associations of rigidity and purity when they think about ballet, but in fact it's something that is constantly scraping against itself and breaking open and reinventing itself. Most of the works in this show are images of bodies – then there is also a few buildings, you have these shifts in scale, these kind of doll-sized objects and miniaturized skyscrapers that then stand in relation to the viewers body, the dancers body…
>
> What you'll see is a performance that doesn't really have a beginning or an end – you might arrive at a moment where the dancers are just warming up.

A database of some 826 photographs by Carl Van Vechten of star ballet dancers have been reformatted into a digital slide-show using large-scale projections with timed changes of images. This digital show is seen on the wall opposite the dance floor area making an especially effective juxtaposition of time and space. Transmission

Fig. 9.1 *Transmissions*, Gallery view of exhibition at the Whitney Museum by Nick Mauss, a multi-dimensional exploration of the American modernist ballet, 1930s to 50s featuring live performance, film projections, photography and a range of archival materials. (Photograph by Tula Giannini, May 10, 2018)

reimagines use of gallery space so that visitors are at once viewers, participants and audience of this immersive dance experience (Fig. 9.1).

9.2.1 Art and Archives Recreates East Village Life

The East Village of the 1970s and 1980s comes alive in MoMA's 2018 exhibition "*Club 57: Film, Performance, and Art in the East Village, 1978–1983*" which the museum describes as, "the first major exhibition to fully examine the scene-changing, interdisciplinary life of this seminal downtown New York." Drawing on the archives of Club 57, the exhibition is designed to recreate the its ambiance and milieu, so that visitors entering the galleries feel the sense at the club. The richness of the film collections on view, made possible through the digitization of film and sound recordings, are in this case and generally, invaluable as a means to recapture and document important art movements. At this exhibition, the audience has an inside view of a moment in the New York art scene and as well sheds light on the LGBT movement and digital culture.

9.2.2 Restoration on View

In 2016, in celebration of the Musée d'Orsay's 30th anniversary, the museum inaugurated a program to restore works in its collection that had not been displayed since the museum opened in 1986 as works are not generally exhibited that are fragile and damaged in ways that detract from their artistic and aesthetic value. The program's goals were to restore several large and medium sized paintings not seen before expanding the range of collections and to exhibit the restored paining to coincide with the opening of new galleries in 2018. To bring attention to this project, the museum created a restoration space on public view so that visitors could see painting restoration in process, watching conservators at work.

The conservation or restoration of museum objects generally takes place in conjunction with mounting an exhibition as museums avoid displaying works in poor condition. Thus, before works are displayed they are analyzed for condition. Allowing the public to view and understand this process, which increasingly involves digital instruments to identify which treatments will be most appropriate and allow for the least invasive techniques and ideally, are reversible. Digital techniques and principles for the conservation and preservation of digital art is addressed in depth in Chap. 11 (Fig. 9.2).

9.3 Exhibitions Across Digital Space and Time

9.3.1 Interactive Digital Art—Art and Audience Connect

The Glass Room London (https://theglassroom.org) is an innovative type of "gallery" popup exhibition space that attracted thousands of visitors to participate in an exhibition co-sponsored by Mozilla and Tactical Technology Collective focusing on individual users, the Internet and social media looking at questions of privacy and identity, posing the question:

> What is personal data in an age where data is everything but personal? The Glass Room is a space for reflection, experimentation and play that provides different ways of understanding how technologies and data are changing our lives. Here you can find content divided in the thematic exhibition areas. … The projects displayed here present more speculative and playful ways of visualizing the uses and misuses of our data. You are invited to experiment and reconsider the idea that even if we think we might have nothing to hide, we should at least understand what we're not hiding.

In the jam-packed gallery, with people waiting in line on the street, visitors participated in a wide range of activities, games and workshops that sharpened their awareness of their digital surroundings (Fig. 9.3).

Fig. 9.2 Restoration in process of a large painting by Adolf Schreyer (German, 1928–1899), Musée d'Orsay, Paris, *Charge of the Artillery of the Imperial Guard* in Traktir, Crimea, August 16, 1855. (Photograph by Tula Giannini, July 23, 2016)

9.4 Digital Installation Connects Fashion to Master Art Works

The Gucci fashion house is marketing its 2018 collection drawing inspiration from master art works through the use of "massive digital installations in stores across the world". Gucci's flagship boutique on via Montenapoleone in Milan has large digital screens in its windows designed to delight and engage passers-by as they view Gucci's remake of Ophelia by John Everett Millais (c. 1852). Other works in the remix series is the "Garden of Earthly Delights" by Hieronymus Bosch (1480–1490). Gucci describes his concept saying, "A large screen will show an animated digital illustration, as if it were an artwork in a gallery. On most windows, this impression is reinforced by the presence of a bench facing the screen on which colored velvet-covered mannequins will sit, as if looking at the art hung on a gallery wall" (Bateman 2018). The conceptual model of mixing past and present inspired by digital thinking invites new interpretations and meanings conveying new meaning and greater relevance.

Fig. 9.3 Street view of the Glass Room from its Charring Cross gallery window. (Photograph by Tula Giannini, November 11, 2017)

9.4.1 From the Internet to the Museum Gallery

Although much progress has been made in bringing digital into the gallery, the relationship between museums, digital artists and the public remains a work in progress that is challenging traditional exhibition practices that hark back to traditional collection-centered principals along with the preservation and curation of digital art while at the very time digital art had entered a period of intense creativity, innovation and the rapid adoption of emerging technologies across all forms of communication, information and experience. Living within the digital ecosystem, museums are being swept into a digital tide that encompasses museum life onsite and online so that seeing and being digital in museums is shared by both artist and audience who increasingly are using digital and mixed media art to communicate their message.

9.4.2 Augmented Reality Meets MoMA's Pollack Gallery

A group of eight Internet artists working as an art collective, under the name MoMAR organized an unauthorized augmented reality (AR) show in MoMA's Jacksons Pollack gallery, called, "Hello, we're from the Internet" (DeGuerin 2018).

MoMAR created a smartphone AR application with specific images for each Pollack paintings on view in the gallery so that anyone with a smartphone could experience MoMAR's art superimposed over Pollack's paintings (Ollinger 2018). The gallery was abuzz with visitors intensely engaged in a highly animated visual experience, which provides a good example of what might be described as digital art "performances" at MoMA, where AR is used to transform the gallery experience.

> Museums have long dealt with unauthorized augmentations of their exhibitions, such as unofficial tours, but technology has opened up new possibilities for activists and art enthusiasts eager to have a part in shaping the museum-going experience. (Katz 2018)

9.4.3 Digital Remix from Klimt to Michelangelo

Digital infusion of galleries in the likes of AR, VR and IA will not doubt grow and develop creating new types of immersive and ways to communicate meaning and message of works of art, taking the concept of digitizing art into new territory, one in which masterworks are remixed and interpreted through digital media experiences. Two striking examples of recreating masterworks using digital techniques are experience by visitors at the Atelier des Lumières in Paris and the 2018 theatrical mixed reality production in Rome with *Universal Judgment: Michelangelo and the Secrets of the Sistine Chapel*.

9.4.4 A New Type of Digital Museum in Paris—Seeing Art Through Light

On April 13, 2018, Atelier des Lumières opened in Paris at 38 Rue Saint-Maur in the eleventh arrondissement featuring an inaugural exhibition on Gustav Klimt (Fig. 9.4).

As the term *lumières* suggests, the exhibition, produced by Culturespaces, a private company that manages museums and cultural heritage sites, constitutes a laser light show of grand proportions using visual space with surround sound, where visitors immerse themselves in the art of Klimt viewed as digital light renderings of his paintings (Digy 2018). Thus, through innovative digital thinking, Culturespaces has re-imagined their vision of the exhibition creating two museums referred to as

Fig. 9.4 *The Kiss*, by Gustav Klimt (1862–1918). Painted 1907–1908, this work is featured in the Klimt exhibition at the Atelier des Lumières, Paris, opened April 13, 2018, and marks 100 years since the painter's death. Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gustav_Klimt_017.jpg

"digital art centres"—the first, Carrières de Lumières in Les Baux-de-Provence, and the second, the Atelier des Lumières in Paris. Occupying a former foundry with 30,000 m^2 of gallery space, it is billed as the first Parisian museum created around digital light and music to achieve what the Atelier calls "a complete immersive experience" described as "more than a mere exhibition – it is a unique show, a feast for the senses mixing space, paintings and music."

A review of the Atelier and the exhibition by Artnet critic Kate Brown poses a key question in its title. *"Is This the Future—or the End—of Art? A Selfie-Centric Art Space Opens in Paris With a Show of Klimt Projections."* This makes connections with Culturespaces' president Bruno Monnier who "said in a statement that sensory-based, digital art experiences represent the future of art exhibitions: 'The passive observation of works of art is no longer relevant.'" (Brown 2018).

This begs the question, is this an art exhibition or art à la Disneyland? Described as an "Immersive Digital Exhibition," it was created by Gianfranco Iannuzzi, Renato Gatto, Massimiliano Siccardi with Luca Longobardi, a musical artist, composer of the exhibition's soundtrack drawn from compositions of Beethoven, Chopin and Wagner. A bigger than life show, it was produced using 140 light projectors that

interpret the art of Klimt taking the viewer on a chronological journey by way of his best-known paintings. Michael Couzigou, Director of the Atelier, points out, "This is an entirely different type of experience from what you would get in a museum… It provokes a strong emotional response. As such, the Atélier has great potential as an educational space. Our priority is to open culture to everyone, and digital art allows this." Couzigou has future plans for an exhibition on street art saying that "It works really well when it's projected…We want to show art that captures the attention. And street art…it doesn't leave you indifferent." (Warde-Aldam 2018).

9.4.5 *Digitizing the Sistine Chapel*

With the blessings of the Pope, a Michelangelo digital extravaganza opened in March 2018 in Rome's Auditorium Conciliazione, a large 1,763-seat theater located close to the Vatican. The multimedia production directed by Marco Balich is known for his closing ceremony spectaculars for the Olympic games in Turin and Tokyo. With the collaboration of the Vatican providing high resolution scans of the Sistine Chapel, the music of Sting, a theater group and dancers, the digital Michelangelo takes on all the bells and whistles of a Disney-like experience. Although the show riled the rather conservative art critics in Rome, Balich responded noting that the work respected the artistic and historic authenticity, and the religious values of the Vatican in a manner that met with their approval and tried to dispel their fears that people would go to the show and not the Sistine Chapel in the real. According to the *National Catholic Register*, "The show is translated into nine languages and has sold more than 100,000 tickets. An agreement with the Vatican Museums is being discussed to include a joint ticket to visit the real Sistine Chapel, which continues to welcome 6 million visitors every year"—and in this instance, the close proximity of the digital to the real would make this coupling a convenient option for visitors—but will it succeed—or will play as does a Broadway show? (Cascone 2018) (Fig. 9.5).

9.5 Museum Directors and Artists Think Digital

When Art Leaders Network met in Berlin, April featured 2018 they featured a panel of museum directors in conversation with Hilarie Sheets of the New York Times. The lively discussion between Glen Lowry, Director of MoMA, Dr. Marcus Hilgert, Director of the Berlin Museum of the Ancient Near East Museum and Gary Tinterow, Director of the Museum of Fine arts Houston, brought insights into how museums of the future are evolving. A lively discussion presented by a distinguished panel of museum directors featuring Glenn Lowry, Director of the Museum of Modern Art in New York City, who spoke convincingly about the need "to learn to think digitally … and fundamentally rethink how we think."

Fig. 9.5 *Creation of Adam*, fresco painted by Michelangelo (1475–1564), Sistine Chapel ceiling (1508–1512), The Vatican, Rome, Italy. (Photograph by Jörg Bittner Unna, 2011, Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:%27Adam%27s_Creation_Sistine_Chapel_ceiling%27_by_Michelangelo_JBU33cut.jpg)

> I would just add, I think it's more than just content, I think the real issue for all of us in the museum world is to learn to think digitally so that what we're talking about is not simply the transformation of certain kinds of stories into different formats or the use of new technologies to deliver those stories, but the fundamentally rethink how we think, to move away from the kind of analog art history that we were all taught, hierarchical, sequential, to a more networked reconsidered manner of actually presenting works of art, so that we begin to move into a realm where the way in which we look at art, the way in which we display art, actually is no longer so analog and I think one of the great advents of digital technology is that it has begun to teach us how to imagine different relationships between objects and between viewers and objects and technology is simply the glue or the conduit by which those relationships can be developed, but we have to actually start thinking about the kinds of exhibitions we're doing in new and different ways. (Art Leaders Network 2018)

As the notion of thinking and speaking digitally in multi-dimensions is emerging rapidly, and in contrast to analog or linear thinking and storytelling—our once prevalent mode of messaging, we begin to open our minds to the richness and complexity of experiencing digital life as it plays out in our mixed-media digital ecosystem. Moving seamlessly through real and virtual space and time, human communication deeply engages with a post-text culture, dominated by visual and sound media. Public expression on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram are common platforms for artistic expression reaching out to millions of subscribers so that digital expression becomes commonplace replacing written communication, as we speak to our computers, mobile phones and robots.

9.6 Digital Art Experienced in 2D, 3D, Augmented and Virtual Reality

9.6.1 Contemporary Art—New Voices and New Stories

Contemporary art brings new perspectives and ways of seeing art and by extension world, giving us the opportunity to hear artists speaking about their own work. One way this is being facilitated is with video recordings made specifically for an exhibition and that can be accessed via the museum's website. The authentic voice of the artist is invaluable to visitor understanding and experience of the works on view and helps them establish personal connections. Further, museums continue to expand the range of exhibited works that can be studied online. Virtual tours of exhibition galleries also promote learning, and taking that a step further, video that provides virtual tours by artists speaking impromptu about how they create and think about their work, methods and techniques, gives visitors a framework for their onsite experience.

9.6.2 When Art Morphs into Alternative Realities—From a Fantasy World to the Art World

Vince Kadlubeck, CEO of Meow Wolf, an artist collective and for-profit production company, is the creator of the House of Eternal Return, a grand Victorian house for large-scale shows in Sante Fe, New Mexico that can be described as a Disney-like museum that serves up "a unique art experience featuring an astonishing new form of non-linear storytelling that unfolds through exploration, discovery and 21st-century interactivity" (quoted from Meow Wolf website, https://santafe.meowwolf.com/). The mention of, "non-linear storytelling" makes connection with Glen Lowry's statement quoted above contrasting thinking analog to thinking digital and juxtaposing works in unexplored ways to infuse them with fresh ideas that reveal new ways of seeing. This venue will no doubt appeal to digital natives who seek innovative ways to experience art and new art to experience. "Kadlubeck envisions a future where the lines between things like art, theme parks, role-playing games, and augmented reality will be blurred. The emerging term, he explains, is 'alternative reality'. For Meow Wolf, this will mean providing a multitude of alternative reality experiences that are, for the audience, spontaneous and unpredictable." In the words of

> Kadlubeck 'I think that Museum of Ice Cream, Meow Wolf, and immersive theater are all just precursors to what is about to really pop-off for everyone, I don't even know if it's art anymore. There's a whole way of being that's going to be shifting soon.' (Lesser 2018)

9.6.3 Artificial Intelligence

The exhibition, *Artists and Robots* at the Grand Palais, Paris, 5 April 2018–9 July 2018, is described as "an opportunity to experience works of art produced with the help of increasingly sophisticated robots. Featuring works by some forty artists, it offers a gateway to an immersive and interactive digital world – an augmented body sensory experience that subverts our notions of space and time." Covering the period 1956 to 2018, the show illuminates 60 years of artists' research that delve into creative ways to use AI applications to make programmed robotic art works across all media including photography, painting, video, installation, architecture and design (Quoted from the exhibition website, https://www.grandpalais.fr/en/event/artists-robots).

For science author, Laura Spinney, the exhibition poses the question, "can a robot create a work of visual art?" (Spinney 2018). Taking a chronological approach, the exhibition guides visitors on a journey from the 1950s to present. A 60-year period, it parallels that of the digital revolution sparked by the introduction of artificial intelligence and machine learning invented by Shannon and Turing in the 1940s, to development of the Internet and web, while the exhibition culminates with the theme, "The robot emancipates itself," a premise challenged by Spinney's question about robots and creativity (Giannini and Bowen 2017). An example of programmed process art is seen in the work of artist, Joan Fontcuberta. Using algorithms, she creates a computer-generated 3D painting from a 2D landscape painting by the French impressionist, André Derain under the title, *Orogenesis: Derain* (2004), referring to the process of mountain formation and its impact on patterns of the Earth's crust, bringing to mind Alan Turing's theory of morphogenesis in the context of chemistry, cell formation and patterns. Increasingly digital artists are channeling great artists of the past to reinvent works using new and exciting digital forms that imbue them with contemporary identities and contexts.

Digital Dimensionality and Reality by Tula Giannini

Screens are flat
not fat
A 2D experience
not much variance
Moving into another dimension
not to mention
3D—that's you and me
Step out of the screen
into space
Digital reality
alternative and augmented
not cemented
but invented
digital experience
not subversive or coercive

but a mash-up
of artificial intelligence
with machine learning
and relevance
concerning
the shape of digital culture
Art as digital sculpture
Digital life soon to be
the new reality.

9.6.4   A 3D Video Animation by Olivares at the Whitney, a Teddy Bear in Conversation with the Audience

The 3D video animation, Moléculas, a 2017 work created by Juan Antonio Olivares, a young Puerto Rican artist, born 1988, was on view at the Kaufman Gallery, the featured work of the Olivares exhibition at the Whitney Museum during spring 2018. The video, made using the animation software Cinema 4D, brings a stuffed teddy bear to life as a reincarnation of his beloved father. Casting overtones of a Disney-like character, the teddy bear speaks in his father's voice, which the artist digitally captured during an interview. The work's predominately black and white palette punctuated with splashes of color used for heightened emotion, reflect the somber mood of the approaching moment of this father's death. The Moléculas exhibition on the Whitney's website presents an audio recording of Olivares speaking about the making of the video in which reveals his thinking on why he chose 3D digital animation to represent his artistic vision.

> I was interested in animation in this way and delving so deeply into it was because of that freedom that I felt in the digital space of these programs you don't have material constraints you just basically have your imagination and your commitment to realizing that side of your imagination I also really like that everything in its usual space or an animation space is intentional…
>
> I felt that the story was basically asking for how much more imaginative approach to images from me I thought the story was asking of me to delve deeper into making these images from a somewhat more visceral place and animation was the way to create that for me.

Using 3D animation allows the audience to enter into video space, a place Olivares digitally replicates, taking inspiration from a Le Corbusier image of an apartment by which he captures a moment in time at once past and present, as the teddy bear speaks personally to the audience and himself.

9.7 Alternative Spaces

9.7.1 Turning Times Square into a Digital Art Exhibition Space

Since 2012, Times Square Arts has presented *Midnight Moment* billed as "the world's largest, longest-running digital art exhibition, synchronized on electronic billboards throughout Times Square nightly from 11:57 pm to midnight. Presented by the Times Square Advertising Coalition… it has an estimated annual viewership of 2.5 million."

The Times Square Streaming Museum (http://streamingmuseum.org), a networked museum, produces and presents contemporary-themed exhibitions of international multi-media arts, innovative ideas and related programs to a global audience via mobile devices, a network of big screens worldwide, and at cultural and public centers. Since its launch on January 29, 2008, exhibitions have been viewed on big screens in over 55 cities on seven continents. Programs are generated in collaboration with a variety of cultural and educational organizations, prominent and emerging visual and performing artists, curators, and visionaries across fields.

The digital artwork of Carla Gannis (see also Chap. 19), *Portraits in Landscape* was showcased for Midnight Moment during August 2018, creating fantastical moving portraits that reach back to the painting of Giuseppe Arcimboldo, a 16th-century mannerist painter unique for creating portraits formed from collages of fruits, vegetables, fish, animals and books. Gannis then travels through time and space to connect with the groundbreaking work of Ada Lovelace, the 18th-century female computer scientist, returning to 21st-century digital life as Ava. Gannis writes, "Times Square's history and present are saturated with technology and communication. We see it in the spectacular electronic billboards that compose our digital landscape, and in the hands of the millions of people who make it the second-most Instagrammed place in the world." (Times Square Arts 2018). "Carla Gannis is an artist who is thinking deeply and playfully about the relationship between our smartphone culture and our nature. Exhibiting this work as a part of Midnight Moment closes the loop between the people on our plazas and our unique environment." (Times Square Arts 2018).

Writing about her art, Gannis explains her thinking and process wrought from digital art and life using 3D models, avatars and selfies, while referencing 16th-century painting. Here, we gleam the artist's perspectives firsthand.

> *Portraits in Landscape*, a single-channel video from my "After Arcimboldo" series, is a continuation of my focus on combining eccentric art-historical references with visual smartphone language. Through this process I reflect on the constructions and perceptions of identity in contemporary culture. Unlike the subjects of Arcimboldo's paintings, the portraits in this series are not of aristocrats and wealthy patrons. Instead they began as 3D models, the avatars of our age, that I digitally shaped into selfie poses. I then overlaid the models with hundreds of emoji, similar to Arcimboldo's process of using everyday objects to sculpt uncanny human likenesses. Bringing the portraits to life in a hyper landscape teeming with "digital nature" expresses my fascination with how virtual and physical embodiments intersect in our networked communication age. (Times Square Arts 2018) (Fig. 9.6)

Fig. 9.6 *Portraits in Landscape* by Carla Gannis, on view for *Midnight Moment*, Times Square, August 2018. (Photograph by Carla Gannis, with artist's permission)

9.7.2 New York Street and Stores Become a Gallery Experience

Virtual Reality (VR) can turn any place into a personal gallery experience since it exists in digital space (see Fig. 9.8), while digital display screens can transform public spaces into gallery-like space (see Fig. 9.8) (Fig. 9.7).

9.7.3 From the Street to the Gallery—Welcoming Smartphone Data for Exhibition Planning

Museums once reluctant to allow Wi-Fi and cellphones in galleries, now welcome this digital intrusion as it can provide useful data for gauging audience behavior. For example, by gathering data on Wi-Fi use in galleries, the Chicago Art Institute was able to more customize its exhibition programming. The data revealed that offering small scale exhibitions over a short time period not only increased visitor numbers significantly and but also showed that overall, visitors spent more gallery time at new installations. Jacqueline Terrassa, woman's board endowed chair of learning and public engagement noted that the Institute is "focused on building something new for you to do each time you walk through the doors of the Art Institute," adding that, "It's a whole experience of engagement, interpretations and education – a menu of experiences." (Bertagnoli 2018). This also speaks to visitor expectations for things new to discover and explore and providing this more dynamic environment mounting small rotating exhibitions à la gallery style. This also creates opportunities for digital art exhibitions and the in-gallery use of virtual and augmented reality, interactive active art, robotic art, and other emerging technologies used for art and visitor experience (Fig. 9.9).

Fig. 9.7 Street view of a Virtual Reality (VR) demonstration at the Microsoft store on 5th avenue, New York. On the left is a large digital media screen. From the store front window, passers-by can see a three-story digital display. The VR experience is gradually coming to a museum near you—"Discover a new way to go beyond." (Photograph by Tula Giannini, March 24, 2017)

Going to Exhibitions by Tula Giannini

Going to exhibitions
immersed in a super-reality
three dimensionality
At once real and virtual
Traveling through time and space
from past to present
speeding into the future
On a V&A ocean liner
from New York to London
to hear Opera and Pink Floyd

Fig. 9.8 Digital media display installation at Macy's 34th St., New York City. The height of the digital light columns changes every few seconds, sometimes also having fashion images. Digital media displays are interwoven throughout Macy's ground floor with entrance on 6th avenue and 7th avenue. Visitors/customers respond to these as though they were in a museum—viewing and capturing displays with their smartphones. Incorporating digital into the customer experience seems to be creating a festive mood for buying. (Photograph by Tula Giannini, February 27, 2018)

Seeing Picasso and
Modigliani at the Tate
Can't wait for
Paris and Miro
Don't know
what's next.
Exhibitions permeate
visions and views
Seeing art
on streets and walls,
in parks and stores
Can't stop seeing
Digital screens
Streaming images and stories
Living in art
Is living life
and its glories.

Fig. 9.9 *Galleries, Musée*—Pompidou Center, Paris. Lights, action, crowds of people going to exhibitions. (Photograph by Tula Giannini, November 16, 2017)

9.8   Conclusion

With the proliferation of digital media displays and installations embedded in everyday places, people are experiencing gallery-like environments as if department stores and other public spaces were imitating museums as life imitates art. Life in the fast lane of digital culture immerses people in visual environments soaked in digital color, sound and moving images. Increasingly these are mirrored in the real space of city streets and places, that are connected to the shared platforms of our digital ecosystem to which museums too are connected.

Museums need not only acknowledge these connections but use them to advantage for building communities and social networks with the goal of reaching-out to broader more diverse audiences, exchanging information and increasing awareness of exhibitions and the activities surrounding them. Pursing these goals, museums will be able to touch the inner being of visitors in inspiring and life-changing ways. Already, museums have exited the elitist models of the past, and have entered into the realm of digital culture—now it is a question of how to create exhibitions, that whether historical or contemporary, see through the digital lens of the 21st-century to fully engage and find commonalities with their audiences and ways for them to participate as partners in a shared cultural enterprise (Fig. 9.10).

Fig. 9.10 "*Explore art from the Tate collection – touch any moving word or image on the screen to begin.*" From children to teenagers and adults, this digital interactive display screen attracts crowds of visitors who learn about the collections. (Photograph by Tula Giannini, March 19, 2018)

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