

Where Can I Find More Fab Info to Share, Edit, or Read Aloud to My Co-Workers?

A Bibliography:

<http://bit.ly/experimentalbibliography>

The Manifesto:

<http://bit.ly/elasticmanifesto>

The Manual:

<http://bit.ly/elasticmanual>

Join us:

<https://www.facebook.com/ExperimentalMuseumProjects>

This document was developed by the following to support experimental work in museums as part of a panel at #aam2012:

Maria Mortati

Independent Exhibit Developer, Founder, San Francisco Mobile Museum

Sarah Schultz

Director of Education and Curator of Public Practice, Walker Art Center

Susan Diachisin

Kelli and Allen Questrom Director of the Center for Creative Connections, Dallas Museum of Art

Stephanie Parrish

Associate Director of Education and Public Programs, Portland Art Museum

The team presentation can be found at: <http://www.slideshare.net/mortati>

Started, April 29, 12. Please add and share.

An Elastic Manifesto for Museums & Artists

(if they feel like reading it)

Otherwise Known As: Why Do Experimental Work

It will expand your role in the community: The work is more social and each project appeals to different audiences. It relies on networks inside and outside the museum to function and therefore has a greater reach.

It will make you better at your job.

It pushes all departments: it innovates all areas of the museum, by engaging them in the art-making.

It is the closest thing so far to working in line with how artists create.

You are furthering a conversation with contemporary work: these projects directly engage with new art forms.

Artists are manipulating the system and that is good.

It's the work of today. It can integrate with all the tools and systems we have at hand.

Just make it happen.



An Elastic Manual for Experimental Museum Projects

1. THE BIG PICTURE

Take the long view. In many respects, artists are a powerful catalyst or change agent for the institution. It takes time to understand the different ways they work, integrate it into your systems and get buy in for it. Be patient.

You are a Change Manager. Every step of the way you have to balance the integrity of the project with harnessing buy-in. The project will not fit into the standard operating systems. Get over that.

Demand respect for the project and players. Make sure the project and the artist get equal attention within your institution. **Just because it's not organized by the curator, doesn't mean your artists are substandard.** The project itself is the shining star and the players have to be acknowledged.

Process comes before product – this is about process the product is undetermined. **You cannot see the value of the whole project until it's over.**

I don't think ideas are very valuable in themselves. It's only in the doing of the idea that you learn anything, or anything interesting happens.

- Mark Allen, Machine Project Hammer Report

2. WHAT YOU'LL NEED TO DO

Be prepared to give up total control. Once you commit to the project, know that in order to accomplish it you cannot have total control. You have to trust that it will work out to the best of ability and circumstances. It's ok to fail, too, if you think about that in the beginning.

Embrace different ways of working like improvisation, humor, serendipity and generosity. These skills will help you manage unexpected and exciting surprises and outcomes.

Document the project for your own proof—from your perspective (of course include the artist and the audience). You can use it as supporting documentation when you need funding or want to do another one.

Your presence is important during the project. Not only do social art forms stress sociability, togetherness, and the formation of different kinds of relationships, but experimental projects call for on-the-spot change and nimbleness. You may need to be there not only to participate, but to support

4. LOOKING OUT AT THE LARGER TEAM

Create a network of institutional support. Develop an orientation that transparently explains the nature of the project for staff and audience. To that end, articulate guidelines and channels of communication.

Prepare participants for a different museum experience: “This is not going to look like the regular galleries” or “this performance is experimental in that it may not be what you are used to seeing”.

Delegate roles to those involved. You need to intermedicate the process and communications between the museum staff and the artist. You are the most informed, don't wait for people to take action or ask the right questions. Tell the exhibitions staff the schedule will not be a good fit.

The artists often know what to say or how to manage. Let them lead.

Stay focused on the reason you are doing the project. Don't lose the reason you are doing the project by getting caught up in the logistics—which can get in the way and weaken the experience. Plan the concept and educational outcomes with the artist, before involving the logistical staff, so you can come back to them when things are getting murky.

Debrief with internal stakeholders and artists afterward. This is an important part of both evaluating and documenting your work.