

MUSEUM MEDIA METAMORPHOSIS

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ABSTRACT · Since the late XIX century, the museum faced a vivid development of new media – the invention of photography, radio, television, personal computers, internet, smartphones, to name a few. The museum not only survived each of these quantum leaps in human communication and perception, but also incorporated them via the exhibited artworks, its pedagogy, and marketing. By opening its doors to all sorts of media, exhibiting reproducible works like movies and multiples, introducing augmented reality formats, digitising myriads of stored exhibits, offering virtual visits long before pandemic times – does the museum undermine its essential values? Digital art, virtual access possibilities and new didactic means are the beginning of the latest metamorphosis in the development of the museum. Analysing these phenomena as an institutional metamorphosis reveals the characteristics of XXI century museums, their power to create new modes of approaching, perceiving, and interpreting the world, but also the threats this metamorphosis poses to the museum as a public institution.

KEYWORDS · Museum Logics, Experimental Museology, Globalization, Commons, Digital Sovereignty.

THE basic concept of museums is to publicly display works of art, historic objects, specimen, and other artefacts of the physical world in physical spaces. It seems to be fundamentally questioned with the uprise of new media and digitalisation. From the art itself to education, communication, outreach, archiving, researching, administering, exhibiting – every element of the museum appears to be affected. Categories like originality and space change their meanings. Virtuality is becoming part of the museum experience. The mediated contact with museum space and (stored) exhibits via digital photos, 3D-models, and the like, are a common aspect of the work of today's curators. Is that a threat to the institution? Are new media and the museum irreconcilable antagonists? Is the end of the museum just a matter of time? Why, on the other hand, is the museum flourishing despite all historic announcements of its death?² Why are visitors still coming to an institution that is all too often denounced as the archetype of boredom?³ How could it survive so many media inventions and innovations in the

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² Boris Groys was not the first and will not be the last that announces the death of the museum, cfr. BORIS GROYS, *Logik der Sammlung. Am Ende des musealen Zeitalters*, Wien, Hanser, 1997, pp. 21-23.

³ Already in 1887, writer and natural scientist John George Wood wrote a full article on 'The Dul-