

HPM 2022 Proposal

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Turning Away From The Crowds: Transitory Space as Aesthetic Inquiry

For the past six years, I've been turning my camera(phone) against the masses, documenting and interpreting what most people pass through without ever truly noticing – transitory spaces. I've been fascinated with these “architectures of nowhere”, spaces designed as a temporal experience, to shuffle people from one end to the other. Yet, through lingering (and sometimes blocking the flow of traffic), I've come to appreciate the aesthetic beauty and levels of design that are required by contemporary pedestrian flow.

Parallel to this, I've long maintained a fascination with the Google Art Project, and related “museum-at-home” projects. The platform has made it possible to truly experience works that were previously inaccessible, or see them in new ways (a particular fascination is viewing Chris Ofili's *No Woman No Cry* as it glows in the dark every night to an empty museum). Countering this notion of *everywhere viewership* spurring from the institutional digitalization of collections, has (re-) emerged the *cultural traveler*, a self-described stereotype of arts patron who visits museums not to contemplate the works, but to document and broadcast their location and viewings through their cameraphones for the world to see. While these innovative technologies and cultural shifts have allowed us to experience works in new ways and visit all the biennales we can't afford to fly to, I can't help but question: “*what am I missing when I view work in this context*”? By not engaging with the museum as a physical entity, *what is lost in our quest to appear “cultured”*?

In 2018, as part of an effort to re-engage my representational photographic practice, I created *@museumstairwells*, an Instagram handle dedicated to documenting the museum experience in a manner that disengages from the artworks themselves, and focuses on the architecture of the building, especially its transitory spaces and places where the casual visitor isn't meant to linger.

By capturing and documenting these spaces within museums, museums, and related cultural institutions, I'm asking the museumgoer to slow down and appreciate their surroundings. The true experience of visiting a museum cannot be distilled into a 140-character tweet or single image, but by utilizing those same platforms in publishing images that are completely devoid of museums' collections, it is my goal not to add noise into the already-crowded ecosystem of digital images, but to provide context and diversity into the visual lexicon of the (virtual) 21st century museum visit.

Due to COVID and the necessities of my institutional position, this account has laid dormant since the early days of worldwide lockdown, but as I plan to re-launch this account in the coming weeks (Winter 2021-22), this paper will address not just the work that's been created and prior public/institutional reactions, but also the greater necessity for the continuation of this project in a post-pandemic world, where travel is limited and public spaces are increasingly harder to linger within.