

CFP: Conference: The Art Museum in the Digital Age – 2024

Location: The Belvedere, Vienna (online)

Date: 15–19 January 2024

Submission deadline: 3 November 2023

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The Art Museum in the Digital Age – 2024

The Belvedere Research Center is pleased to announce the sixth iteration of its conference series on the digital transformation of art museums. The event will build on the success of our previous meeting, which drew more than 1,000 registrations from 56 countries across five continents. We will continue to explore core themes around the latest technological developments, including the Metaverse, Web 3, and artificial intelligence, while we also welcome contributions more closely aligned with everyday museum operations. We invite papers on the impact of digitization on essential aspects of museum work such as collection management, exhibition practices, and art education within our evolving hybrid world. We strive to maintain an open forum shaped by the issues deemed most pertinent by the international museum community. Our goal is to foster discussions that not only anticipate the future, but which also address the practical challenges museums face in today's digital landscape.

We have witnessed remarkable progress in computing power, from the availability of extensive datasets to the development of new algorithms that have led to significant breakthroughs in artificial intelligence. Transformer models (ChatGPT, DALL-E, and Midjourney) represent a pivotal shift toward generative artificial intelligence, surpassing earlier deterministic technologies. Hardware innovations, such as Apple's cutting-edge Vision Pro and Meta's Quest 3 headsets, signal the dawn of a new era of hybrid experiences that bridge the realms of virtual and physical space ("mixed reality" or "spatial computing"). As Simon Greenwold put it in his 2003 MIT theses, the concept extends far beyond its original gaming applications. He writes: "Spatial computing is human interaction with a machine in which the machine retains and manipulates referents to real objects and space."

We invite conference participants to explore the potential of digital technologies in the museum sector, focusing primarily on strengthening art and cultural institutions as hubs of knowledge exchange for the future. We seek to grapple with the pressing question of how to

shape technological progress proactively, to ensure it is applied responsibly, with concern for the ethical and societal challenges it poses. We will delve into the possibilities of virtual extensions and the Metaverse, particularly in the realms of art, education, community engagement, and cultural collaboration. We wish to do so with a critical lens, examining how these technologies can introduce new complexities and uncertainties. While they offer innovative opportunities, we must also be mindful of the ethical and societal implications and bias they bring.

Over the course of five evenings, our online conference will present interdisciplinary contributions that explore the broader themes of the Metaverse, Web 3, and artificial intelligence. While we hope discussion will be wide-ranging, our primary focus will lie in critical examinations of the following aspects:

- Defining and deconstructing the Metaverse and Web 3
- Challenges of digitization in day-to-day museum operations and possible solutions
- Unleashing the potential of artificial intelligence and machine learning
- Innovations in VR/AR/XR applications within museum settings
- The power of LOD (Linked Open Data) and DAOs (Decentralized Autonomous Organizations)
- NFTs and the evolving role of museums in the digital art market
- The intricate relationship between e-commerce and Open Access
- Exploring interactive art education, participation, and gamification
- Embracing accessibility, inclusion, and responsibility in digital initiatives
- Unlocking digitization opportunities for smaller cultural institutions
- A host of other engaging and thought-provoking discussions

We look forward to receiving your proposals in the fields of museum/ museology, art and cultural history, media studies and the digital humanities. Please send your abstracts for a 20- to 25-minute presentation in German or English (max. 250 words), including a short biography with complete contact information **as one PDF document** by 3 November 2023 to a.sommer@belvedere.at.

We are delighted that **Prof Lev Manovich** (Graduate Center, City University of New York) will be our keynote speaker.

Conference committee: Christian Huemer, Alexandra Sommer, Markus Wiesenhofer (Belvedere, Vienna), Anna Frasca-Rath (FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg), Lev Manovich (Graduate Center, City University of New York), Vince Dziekan (Monash University, Melbourne)

Conference languages: English and German

Conference partners:



All presentations will be online. The panel discussion, as well as an additional workshop for registered participants (Friday), will be held on site at the Belvedere, Vienna. Participation in the conference is free of charge.