

Museum Partner Observation #1

Richard Jones

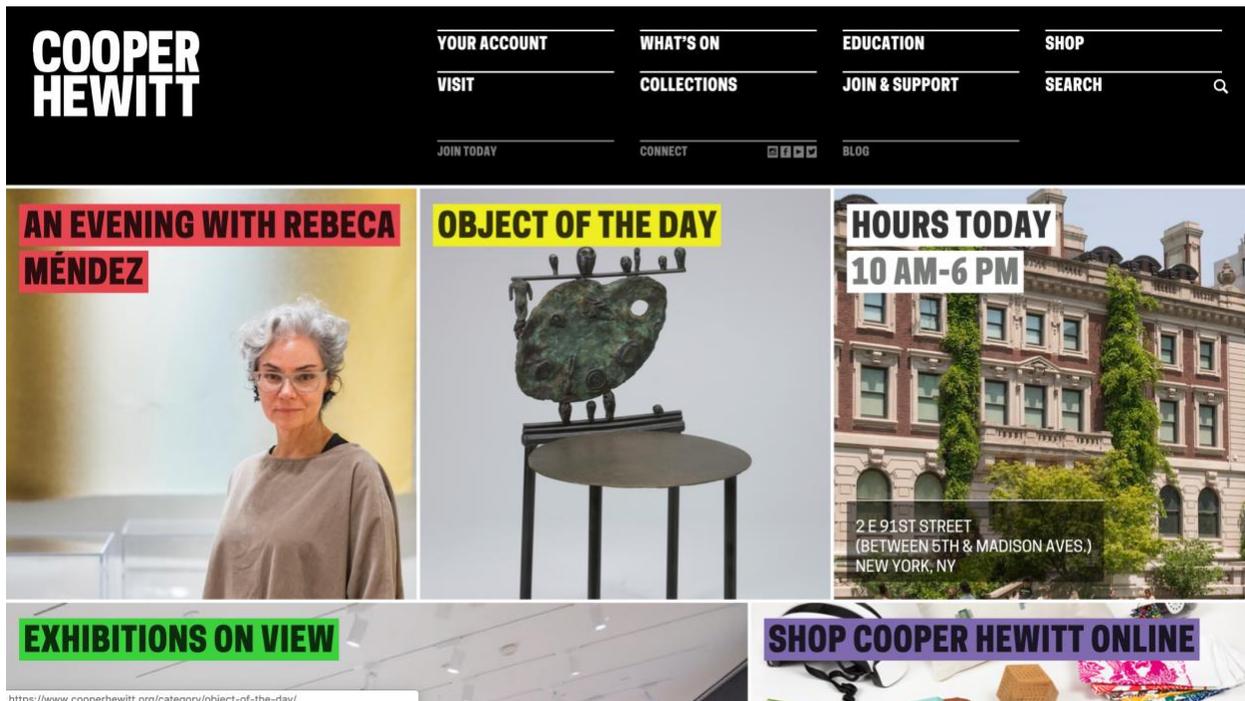
LIS258: Museum Informatics

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The Cooper Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum located on Museum Mile in Manhattan's Upper East side is a world renowned institution whose collection houses everything from jewelry to pottery to textiles. The Cooper Hewitt Museum offers several digital avenues of access to their collection a traditional website (powered by WordPress) and several social media accounts including Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook. There is also a Cooper Hewitt app related to the exhibit "The Senses: Design Beyond Vision" but the exhibit closed in 2018 and the app does not offer any interaction with the rest of the museum.

The Home web page for the Cooper Hewitt is far from the standard style of home pages for museums and cultural institutions. It evokes a light almost playful style of engagement with the varying color schemes and the misaligned grids detailing objects, events, and guest speakers.



Furthermore, the way in which users browse objects in the collection or search for specific items is again against the industry standard. Rather than being ushered towards a catalog, inventory list, or a more standardized form of collection browsing the Cooper Hewitt allows its visitors to “Explore the Collection” and once they are on the explore page they are shown a number of objects at random and given an option to search in the upper right hand corner as seen in the screenshot below.



The Cooper Hewitt’s website uses its lack of conventionality to promote its unique design focus. From the visual representation of the home page to the exploratory nature of the collection’s presentation the Cooper Hewitt reinforces its unique identity in the field.

The Cooper Hewitt's social media accounts do a great job of reinforcing the core material on the websites home page while retaining their own unique identity. On the website's collections page visitors have the option to view their Object of the Day which showcases an item from the collection chosen by the curatorial staff. This item is often reflected on Cooper Hewitt's twitter page along with other useful information such as the opening of events or guest speakers. It is clear that the Cooper Hewitt makes use of Twitter as a news source as well as a supplement to their site.



Figure 1-Cooper Hewitt Twitter Page

The Cooper Hewitt's Instagram page is used in a completely different, yet equally effective manner. Cooper Hewitt has played on Instagram's gridded view in a similar way that they do on their home page by displaying colorful and vibrant objects from their collection. It is clear that Instagram is less of a news source and more of a digital exhibition space.

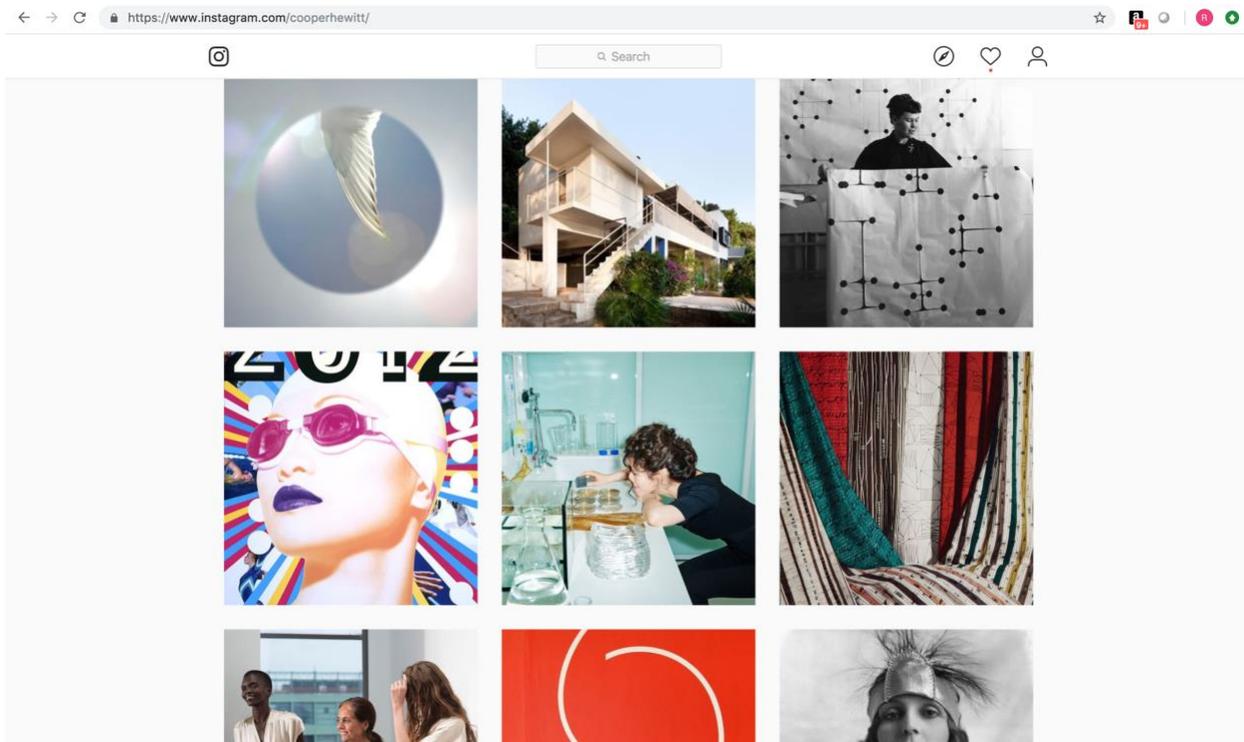
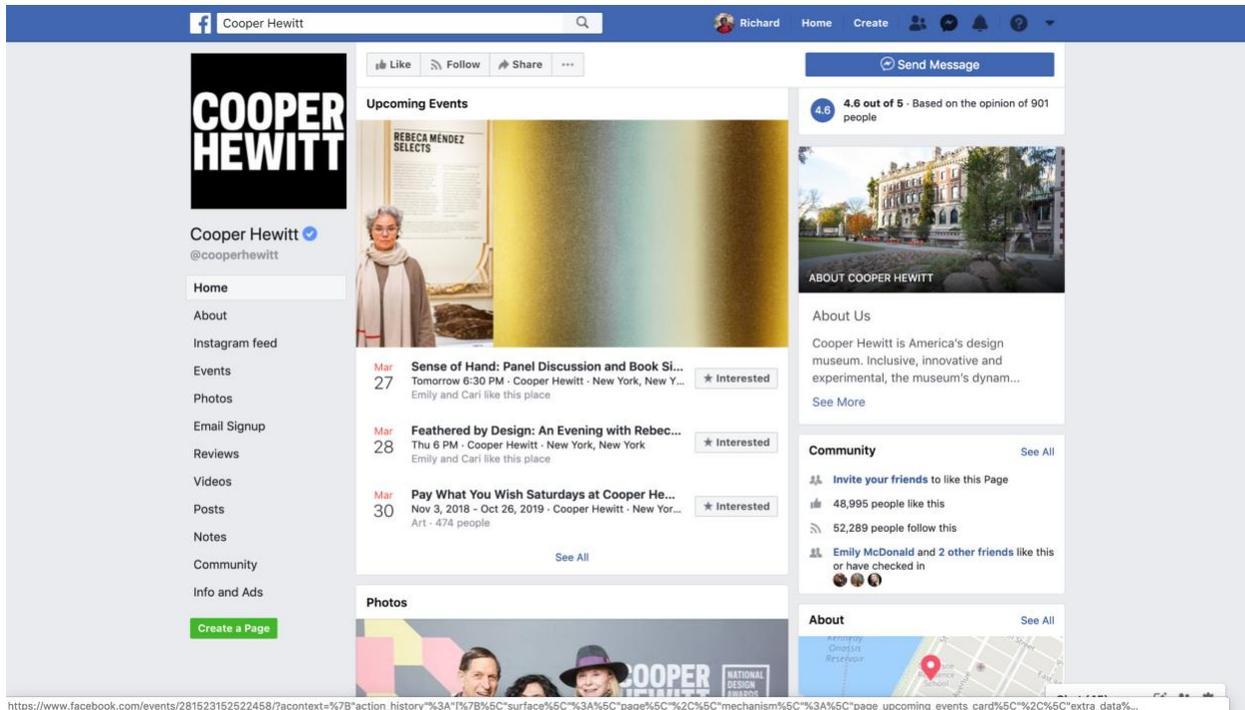


Figure 2-Cooper Hewitt Instagram Page

Finally, Cooper Hewitt’s Facebook fills their last social media gap by providing their patrons with an opportunity to feel connected to the museum and to others who share similar interests. It is clear that the Cooper Hewitt strategically designed their use of each platform to benefit from what that platform is best at (i.e. Twitter as a news source, Instagram as an exhibition space, and Facebook as a communal space).



https://www.facebook.com/events/281523152522458/?acontext=%7B%22action_history%3A%7B%5C%22surface%5C%3A%5C%22page%5C%2C%5C%22mechanism%5C%3A%5C%22page_upcoming_events_card%5C%2C%5C%22extra_data%5C%22%7D%7D%7D

Figure 3-Cooper Hewitt Facebook Page

The Cooper Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum does an amazing job of “pushing the envelope” in digital museum design. It uses sharp, evocative design and imagery across all of its platforms reinforcing the museum’s core concepts while recognizing the strengths of each social media platform it uses. It also provides a refreshing take on the style of museum websites by encouraging exploration and discovery over targeted, methodical practice which again reinforces the museums core focus of design and creation while simultaneously creating an atmosphere welcoming to designers and creators.