

"Presenting our Collections: Ideals, Ideas and Practice"
The Palazzo Strozzi as a laboratory for museum display

Dr. James M. BradburneDirettore Generale, Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi

CODART ZEVENTIEN
16-18 March 2014, Amsterdam

www.bradburne.org

Who is James Bradburne?

'There is no theory that is not part of an autobiography'

Paul Valéry (1924)

Graphic designer, exhibition maker, architect (1979 - 89)

Museum consultant, UNESCO, UNICEF (1989 - 1994)

Curator (inter alia) Rudolph II and Prague (1997) Belvedere

Head of Design, newMetropolis, Amsterdam (1994 - 1998)

Director General, mak.frankfurt (1999 - 2003)

Director, Next Generation foundation (2003 - 2006)

Director General, Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi, Florence

The role of the museum

"the museum has to function as an institution for the prevention of blindness in order to make works work... Works work when, by stimulating inquisitive looking, sharpening perception, raising visual intelligence, they participate in... the making and re-making of our worlds"

Nelson Goodman (1980)

The argument

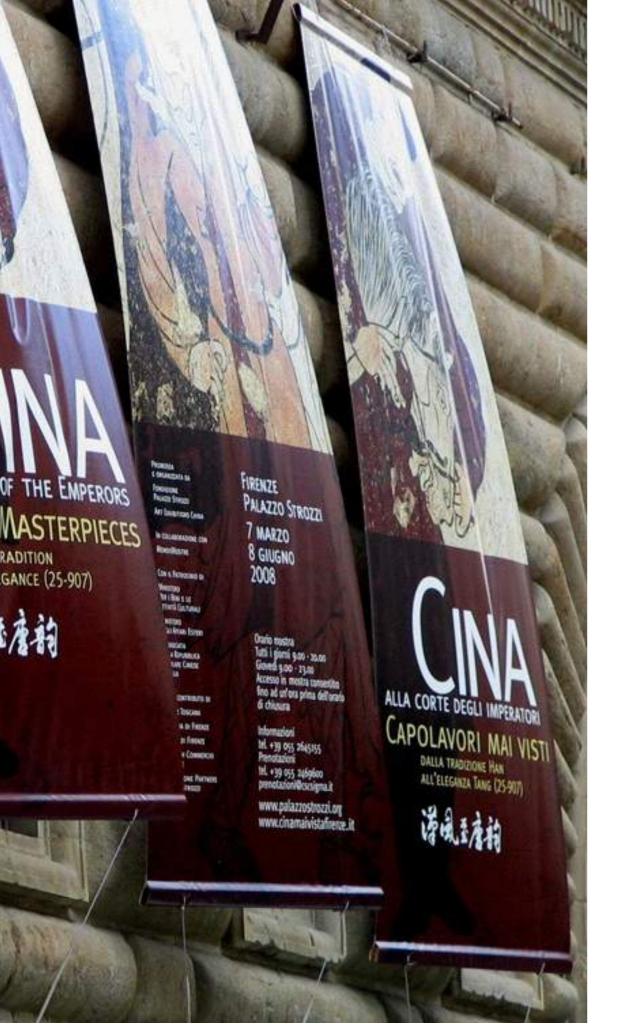
- the highest quality cultural events are planned well in advance by experienced professionals following international best practice
- exhibitions are made like films with large teams of exceptionally competent professionals
- as exhibitions should create new knowledge, curators are fundamental to the exhibition
- however, other professionals are also indispensable to ensure the maximum value is created by the whole exhibition experience
- due to its autonomous governance and public-private support, from 2006 - 2014 the Palazzo Strozzi's exhibitions have served as a laboratory for how museums can create new value with their collections



What is Palazzo Strozzi now?

- a masterpiece of Renaissance
 architecture at the heart of Florence
- Florence's largest temporary exhibition space, plus a centre for contemporary art
- an **urban 'piazza'** with cafe, shop, concerts
- the city's laboratory using every exhibition to explore how to create new value for museums with collections





Palazzo Strozzi is also...

- an experiment in innovative governance - a laboratory for best practice
- a cultural experiment with two goals I) to bring international quality cultural events to Florence and 2) to give the Palazzo back to the city as a vital cultural destination
- the governance project is about autonomy
- the cultural project is about
 'visible listening'

The Palazzo Strozzi Mission

1] to bring international cultural events to Florence (think global)

2] to open the entire Palazzo to Florence and those who love it (act local)

Why stay longer? Why come back? Why live here?







CENTRE FOR CONTEMPORY CULTURE STROZZINA CHINA CHINA CHINA !!! 2008



CENTRE FOR CONTEMPORY CULTURE STROZZINA VIRTUAL IDENTITIES, MANIPULATING REALITY



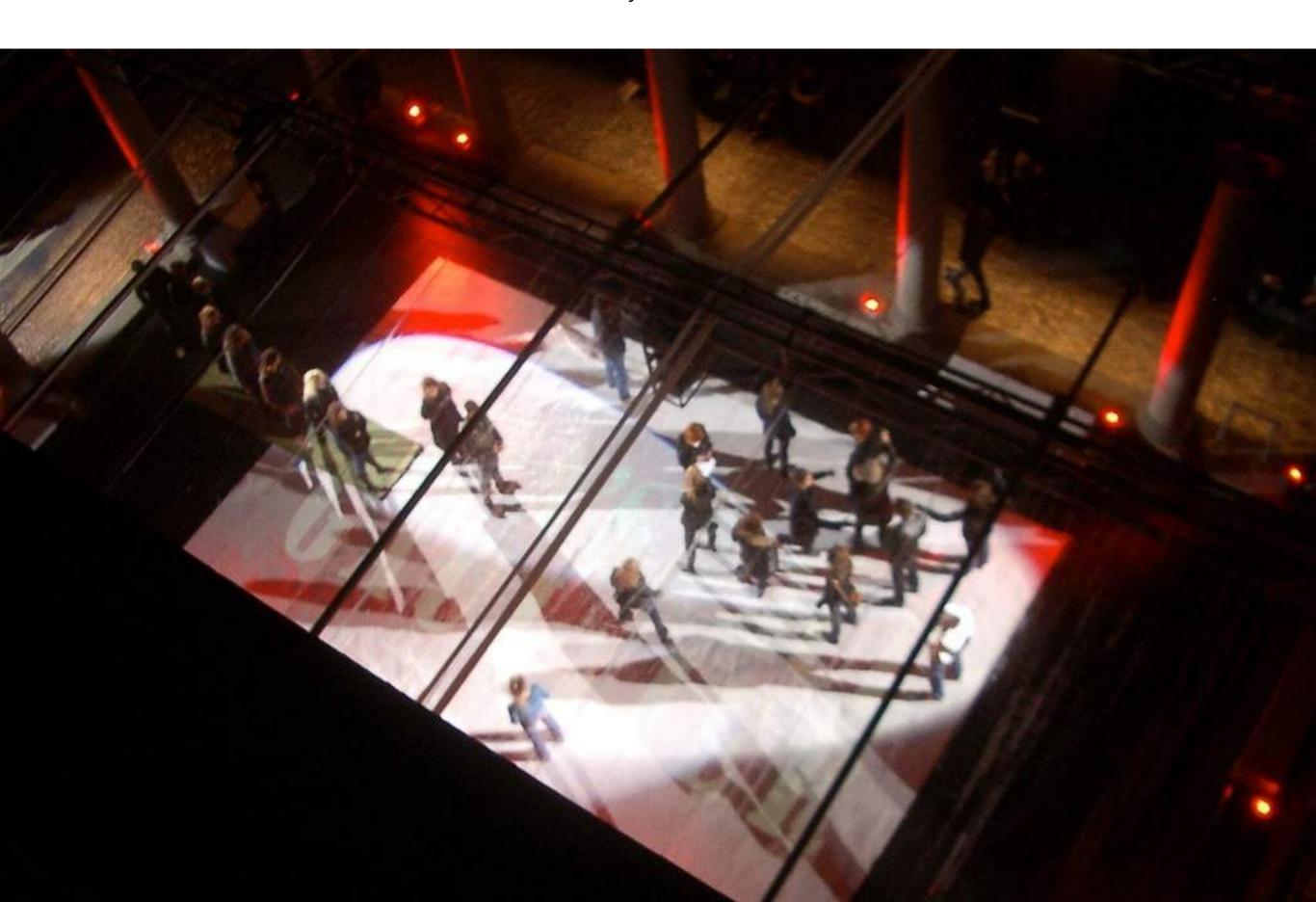
CENTRE FOR CONTEMPORY CULTURE STROZZINA DECLINING DEMOCRACY



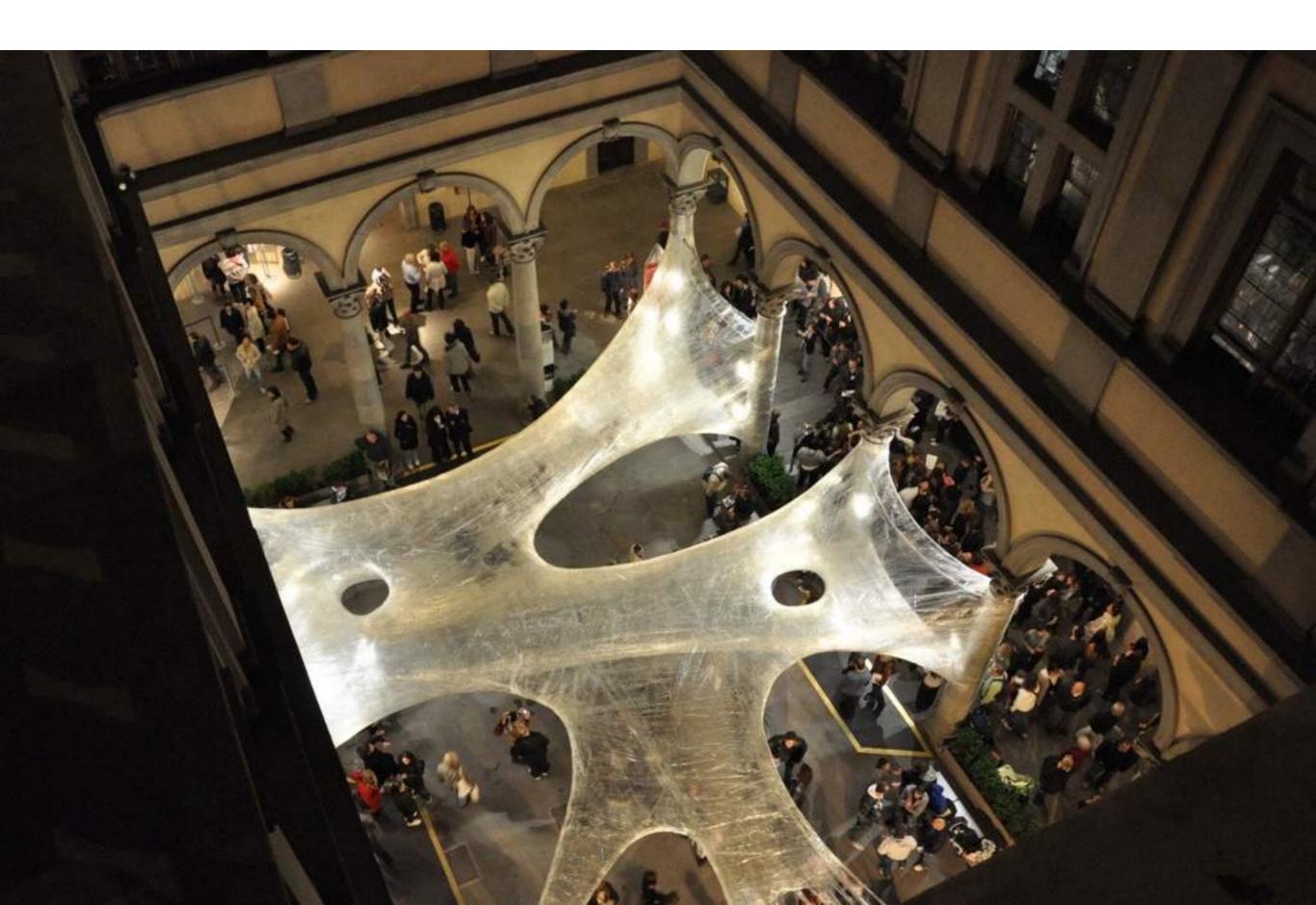
CENTRE FOR CONTEMPORY CULTURE STROZZINA FRANCIS BACON 2012



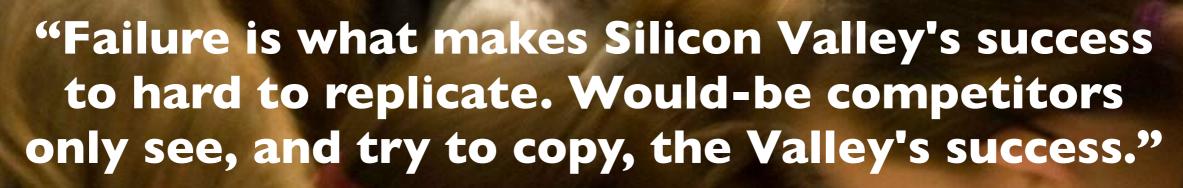
PALAZZO STROZZI COURTYARD JEAN PAUL GAULTIER FASHION SHOW



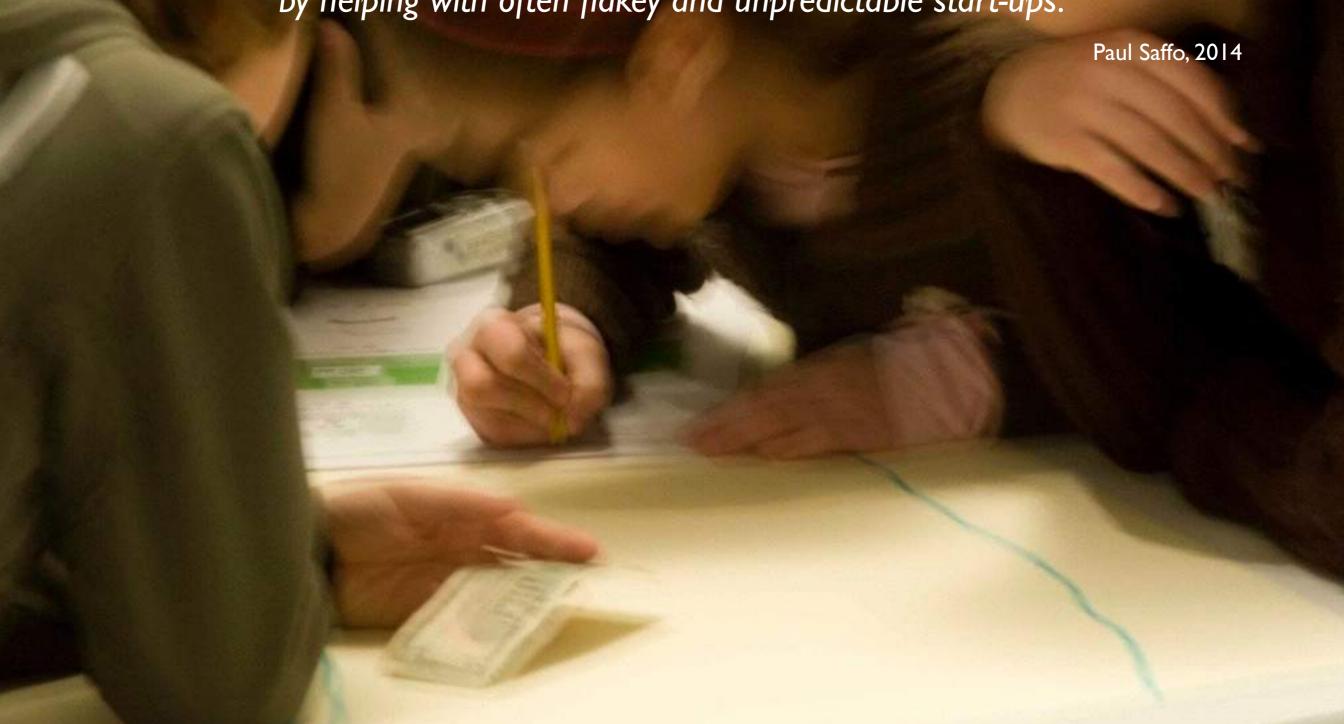
PALAZZO STROZZI COURTYARD INSTALLATION NUMEN/FOR USE







[...] to succeed you need an ecology of fearless players [...] unafraid to risk all by helping with often flakey and unpredictable start-ups.



Why we make exhibitions

The Palazzo Strozzi creates all its own exhibitions. The three criteria the Palazzo Strozzi uses to decide what exhibitions it puts in its programme:

- 1) to create new knowledge
- 2) to restore works of art
- 3) to transform visitors

The goal is not to create 'blockbusters', but to cover 25-35% of the exhibition's costs with earned revenue (ticket sales, catalogue royalties, events etc.)

If the exhibition does not fulfil these three basic criteria, it is not considered for the programme

Other factors include alternating between Florence's heritage and material not in the city's collections; cultural diplomacy; collaboration

This means ...

- 1) using world-class curators to create new knowledge
- 2) restoring art works to justify temporary exhibitions
- 3) **Transforming visitors** by having a coherent educational strategy
- which we call visible listening





The goal of a museum installation

- I) to encourage visitors to look longer
- 2) to create the context in which to see more

The goal of all museum installations is to enhance visitor engagement with the objects in the museum's care





The research agenda at Palazzo Strozzi

The goal of all the Palazzo Strozzi's experiments is to increase engagement with the works of art - in terms of time spent with the works in the exhibition, discussions about them and further activities afterward outside the exhibition

How can we achieve greater engagement?

- I. by making exhibitions more accessible
- 2. by including new voices in the exhibition
- 3. by enhancing affective learning
- 4. by including new audiences
- 5. by changing 'user-languages'

The label: the heart of the museum mission

"An efficient educational museum may be described as a collection of labels, each illustrated by a well-selected specimen."

George Brown-Goode, 1888



A label is the sum of all the intentional acts on the part of the museum to create meaning

I. Opening our collections - how can we make exhibitions accessible?





VALERIO BELLI (VICENZA 1468 C.-1546) MEDICI CASKET

right-ja engraved rack crystal backed with other loof global other and enamel. Forence, Palasso PRS, Muses drigh Argenti

Are cash was a gift from Commet ute to Francisis i of Valent to mark Caterina del Maderin marcage to the sovereign's accord chief, the dude of Orleans and future forg hases it of france. The available was held in discussion or Orlandor 1925. The solvetile cash neturned to frances as part of the decay of Orlandor of Language. Caterina's granding place, who was not to find remain of landor or 1985.

GASPARO MISERONI (MILAN 1518-73) CUP OF DIANE DE POITIERS

Women in Power (fall 2008)

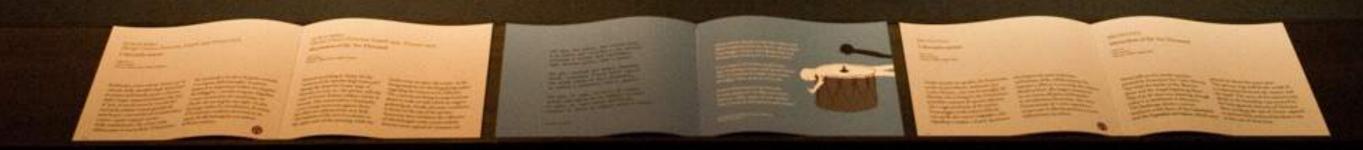
C. 1550, rock crystal, enamelled and

Bronzino

(fall 2010)









Art & Illusions

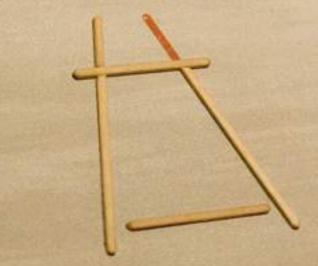
(fall 2009)

Freccia di Müller-Lyer, 1889.

Müller-Lyer arrows, 1889.

Illusione di Ponzo, 1913.

Ponzo illusion, 1913.



oggetti appaiono più piccoli quanto più savo
lontani da noi, e quando l'oggetto è datato di
continuità, come i binari del treno o la focciata di un
edificio, le linee parallele convergono verso un "punto
di fuga" all'orizzonte. Da Brunelleschi in poi, gii arres
usano la conoscenza del tatto che certe lorme seni
usano la conoscenza del tatto che certe lorme seni
allontanarsi per creare l'illusione dello spazio nei
La nostra conoscenza di questo comportamenti
creare illusioni davvero stupetacenti. Alcune
illusioni funzionano anche a occhi chiusi, si
forme con le tue dita. Quale è la linea pi



From: Elizabeth DeRosa <derosa.ej@gmail.com>

Subject: Complimenti

Date: 13 March 2014 12:27:47 CET To: j.bradburne@palazzostrozzi.org

Cc: Elizabeth DeRosa <derosa.ej@gmail.com>

Dear Dr. Bradburne,

I am an American art historian and live part of every year in Rome. Yesterday my husband and I made our annual excursion to Florence specifically to see the exhibition at the Palazzo Strozzi. I am writing to congratulate you and your staff on your ambitious and stimulating exhibition topics and presentation of the material over the past several years. Yesterday at the Pontormo/ Rosso exhibition I especially enjoyed the clear outline of your adventurous exhibition goals and the large and legible labels placed at good viewing height. I have seldom experienced such a well thought-out and beautifully presented show.

Thank you to you and to your staff. I think that you are setting new standards for what an exhibition can and should be.

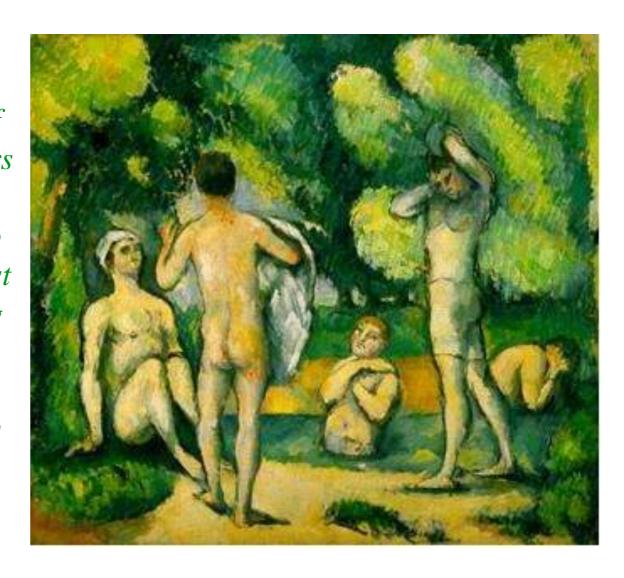
Best regards,

Elizabeth DeRosa, Ph.D.



Why other voices?

There were three paintings of Bathers in the Fabbri beautiful shades of green so that even if we spend collection painted between the end of the 1870s and hours looking at this work we shall never get tired of 1885 literias sond of Oézanne's favourite subject athers treated in more than 140 water colours, drawings and along except one of them (on the right) who seems to oil paintings. He showed an early interest in nude first studie into the figures eviene far ire moved from d being an outsider at first then entering their circle. anatomical precision: they were distorted and denicted swith thick i brush strokes iand strongly hink this Construction of the constr dry off quickly. I think this is a depressing painting worked on setting his nudes in landscapes. because most of the people are frowning.





SOZZANI Today the materials are essential. There are some very talented textile makers that work on the material and propose it to the designers. Then there are some designers who love the relationship with the material and ask textile makers to create new ones. The textile maker's job is making fabrics, but for the most designers it's just a tiny niche.

Today the poorest material can be ennobled, something that was once unimaginable. It was once the processing that changed the material; today it's the mixture that changes it. So the value of the material has changed. Today materials can be poorer yet reinterpreted, remixed and revived.

MARZOTTO I come from a family of textile producers, so I can see how fast things are changing. People have changed lifestyles; for instance they don't want things that wrinkle. I think that the search for new materials is first born as a necessity, and only then widened to include materials that hadn't previously existed in fashion. I believe that in the future materials will be driven less by fashion and more by technology.

ControModa

(fall 2007)

Remarkable advancements in textile **technology** have altered or diminished the authority of traditional construction techniques. Heat, instead of labor-intensive hand-pleating techniques, was used on thermoplastic fibers to create pleats, gathers, and tucks; new technology thus encouraged a radical expansion of the vocabulary of form and the design of the garment as a whole.

Some designers explored **new approaches** to traditional methods of construction, reinterpreting time-honored techniques such as lace making. By featuring synthetic ornamentation, by combining incongruous materials, or by integrating traditional materials and practices with innovative ideas, designers assaulted conventional notions of luxury and elegance. The dictates of what was "suitable" or "appropriate" were sabotaged.

New textiles for fashion and interiors include three-dimensional structures designed by computer with sculpted surfaces that replace the traditional techniques of embroidery and beading. Topographical surfaces are achieved with such processes as chemical blistering, spatters and laminates of metallic particles, heat molding and treating, and various complex novelty weaves. With rapidly evolving technology, the potential for textile development will continue to change the look and perception of fashion.

CASADIO I'm convinced that fashion has to innovate in materials in order to innovate in form. Today you can make even the difficult things with fewer layers, fewer darts, fewer seams — as there are new materials that can guarantee those kinds of sculptured effects.

BRUBACH As in architecture, new materials in fashion have introduced all kinds of new possibilities and it has been wonderful to witness those possibilities, not just new raw materials but in terms of what forms they can take. Some designers have blazed trails and are so far out there that it's going to take everyone else years to catch up.

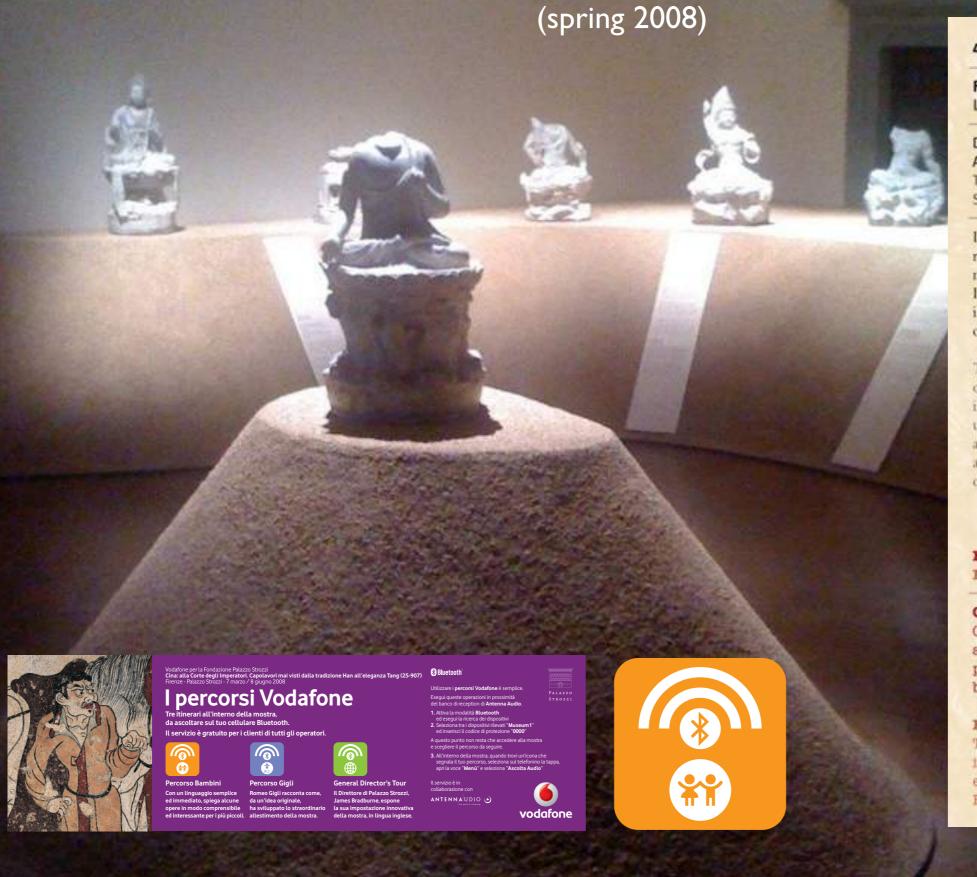
MENKES I must say I wish it were true that designers were exploring extraordinary methods of construction and embellishment, but I feel rather the opposite. Sometimes I feel if I see another Swarovsky crystal I'm going to scream. There are certainly things that could be done, but we as consumers are quite conventional. I'd certainly like to see even more experimentation with materials.

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At the Court of the Emperors



44

FIORE DI LOTO LOTUS OFFERING

Dinastia Tang (618-907), 874 circa Argento

Tang dynasty (618-907), c. 874 Silver

Il fiore fa parte di una coppia offerta alla reliquia del Buddha, collocata nella sala più nascosta del reliquiario sotterraneo di Famen. Il loto, simbolo di purezza, è associato agli insegnamenti del Buddha, e spesso veniva offerto dai fedeli.

This magnificent flower is one of a pair, offered to the Buddha's relic and placed in the innermost chamber of the Famensi underground reliquary. The lotus, usually associated to the teachings of the Buddha, is a symbol of purity and was therefore often offered by his followers.

FIORE DI LOTO LOTUS OFFERING



Che profumo pensi che abbia?

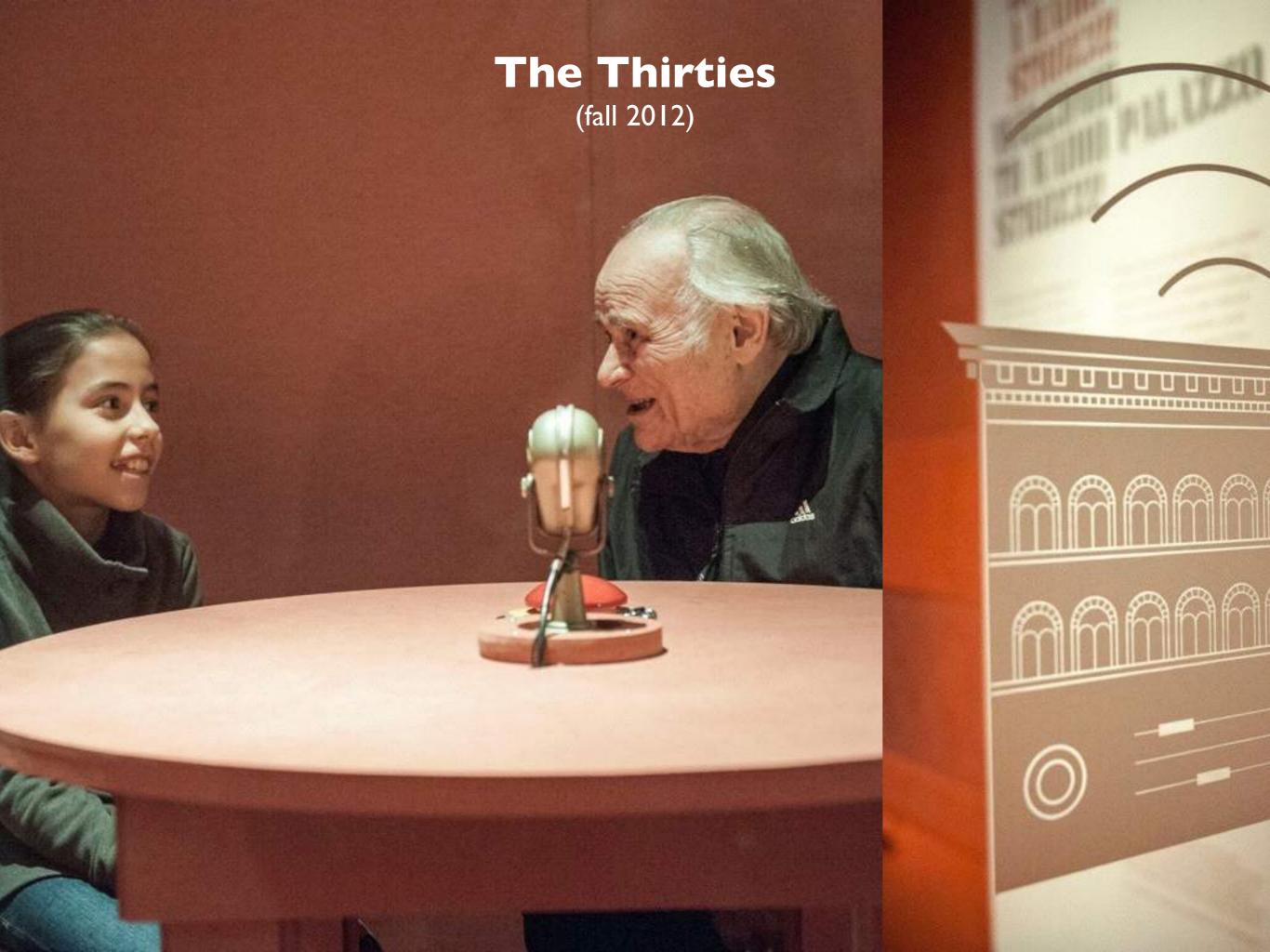
Gli imperatori Tang amavano i fiori, anche di metallo! Ritenuto uno dei fiori più eleganti, il loto è anche un simbolo buddhista della purezza.

How do you think this flower smells?

The Tang Emperors loved flowers - even in metal! In addition to being very elegant, the lotus is also a fundamental Buddhist symbol representing purity.















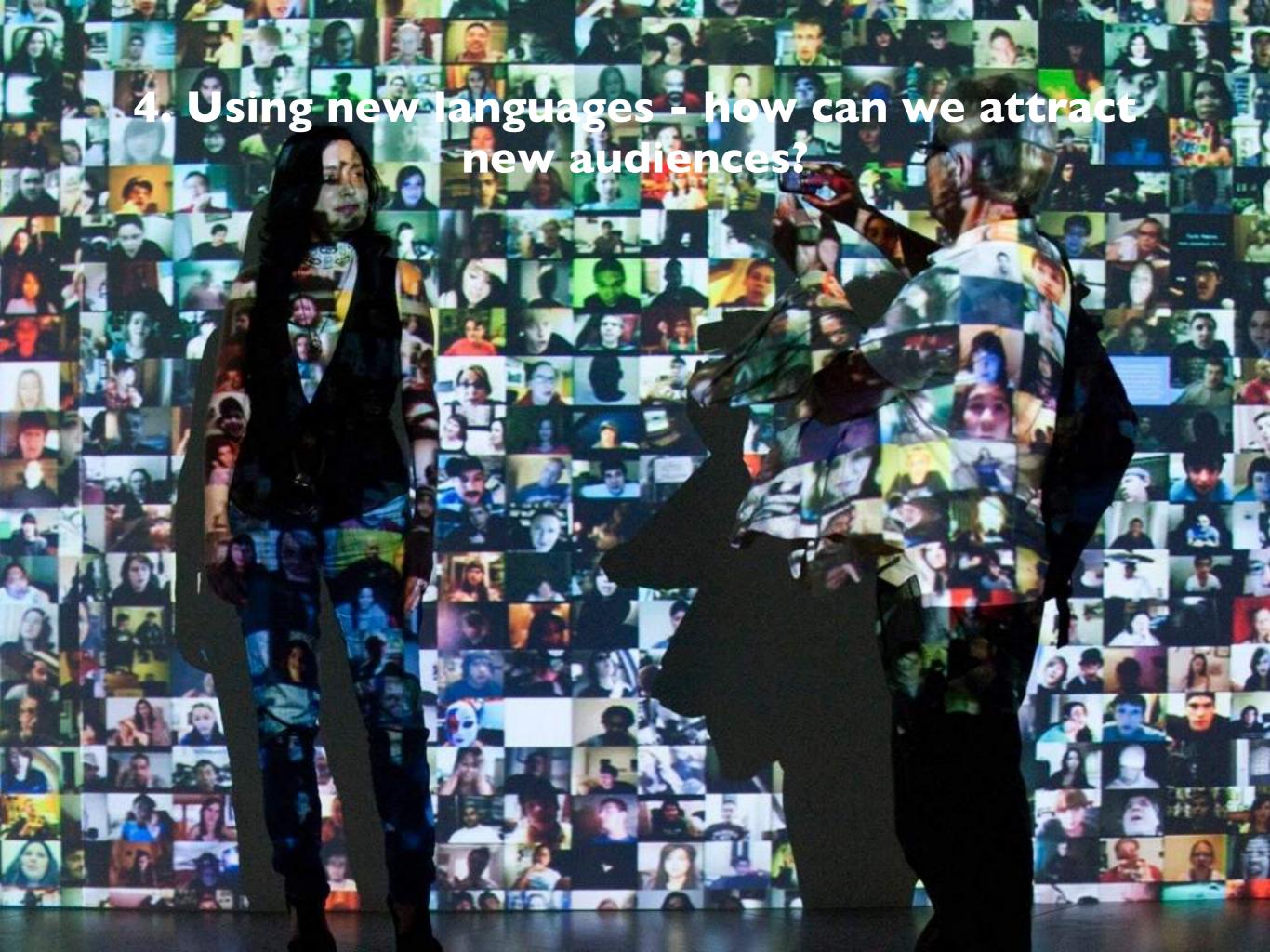




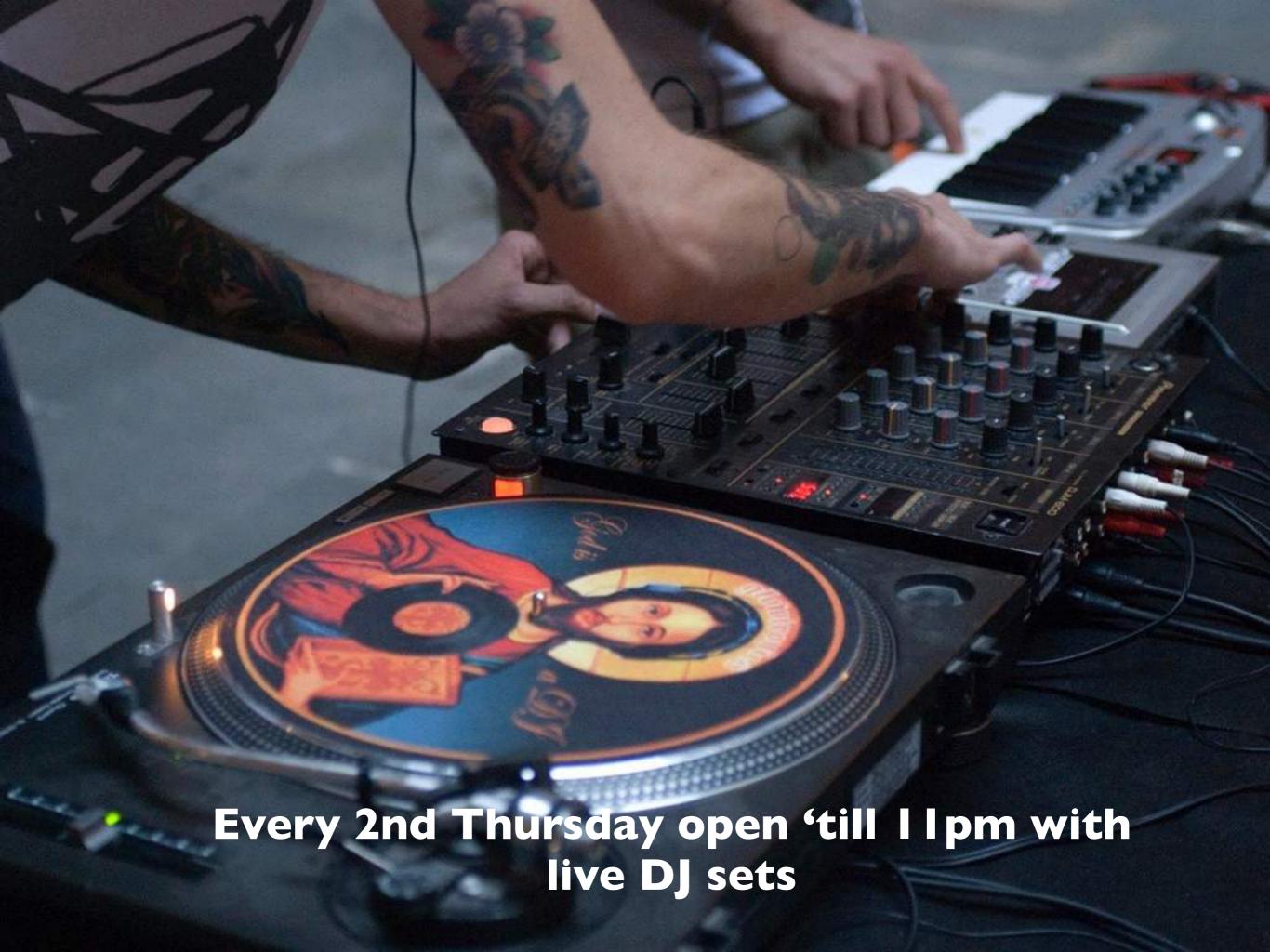




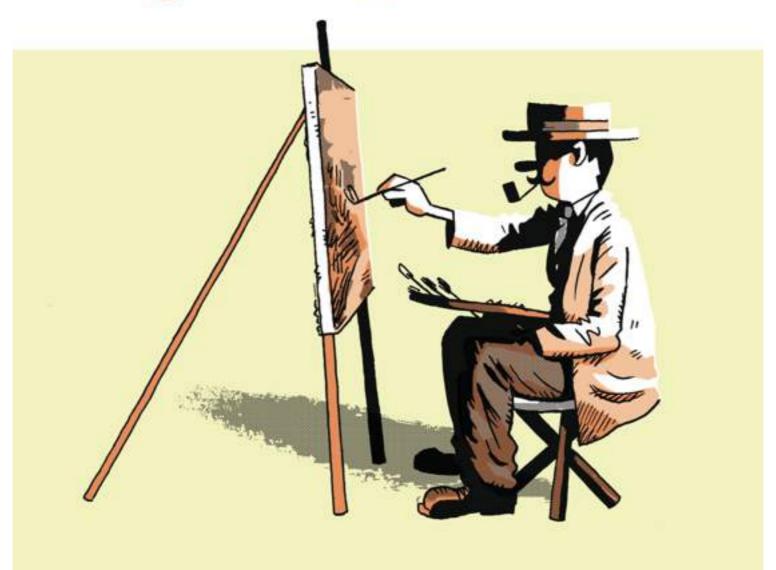










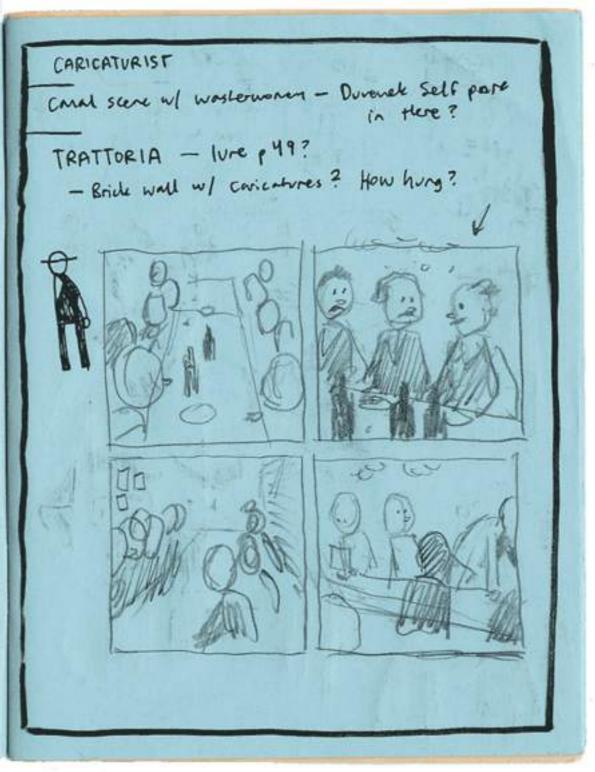




Americans in Florence

(spring/summer 2012)

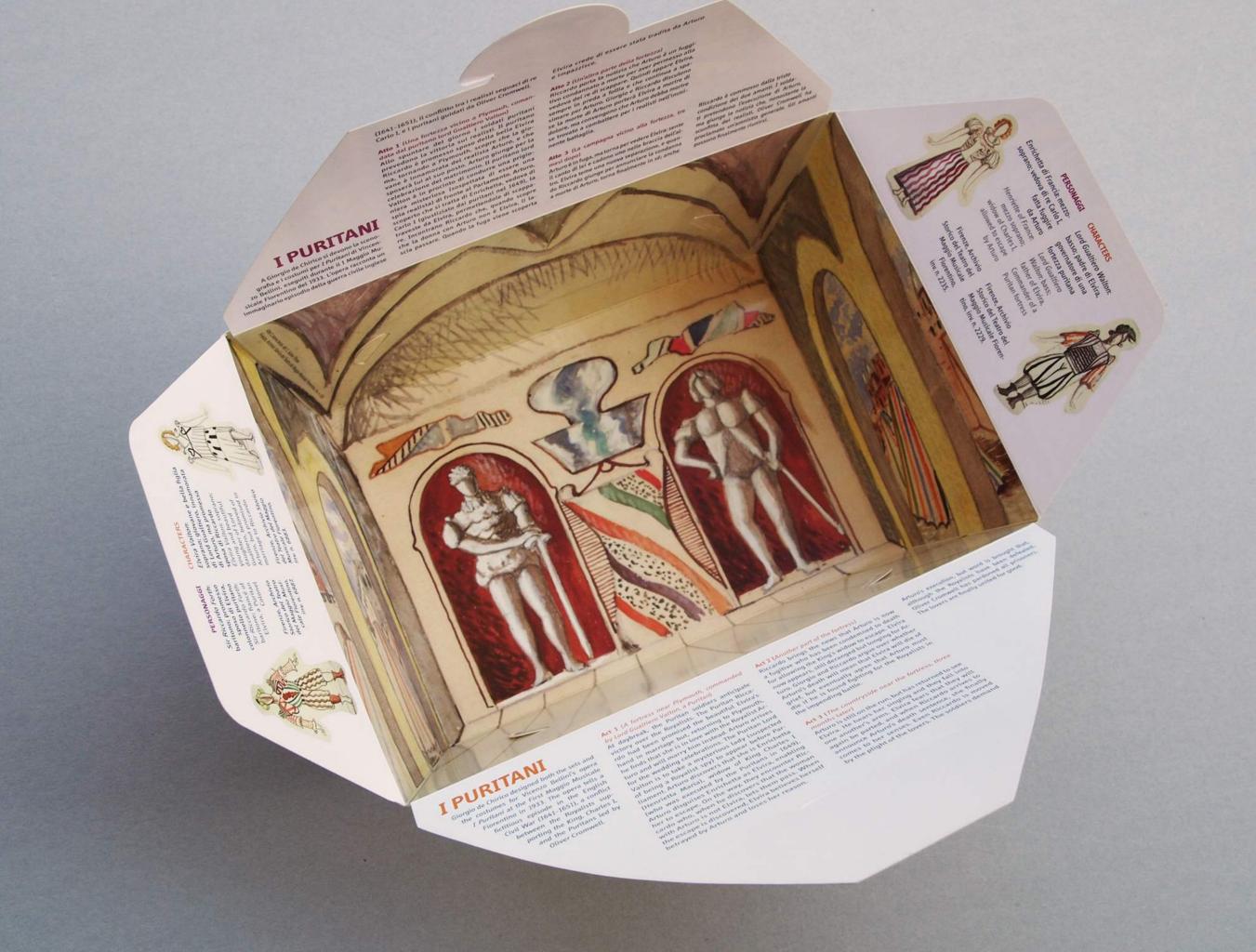




Americans in Florence

(spring/summer 2012)















What is a 'user language'?

What is a user-language? Simply an invitation to the reader to take on a rôle - listener, observer, detective. The difference between this:

"Glass - born of fire and sand [...]"

and this:

"One of these glasses is a fake"

- Textual authority
- Observation
- Variables
- Problems
- Games



Changing user-language can result in large changes of behavior

Interactivity is in the mind, not the hands











User-language of games

Money & Beauty

(fall 2011)









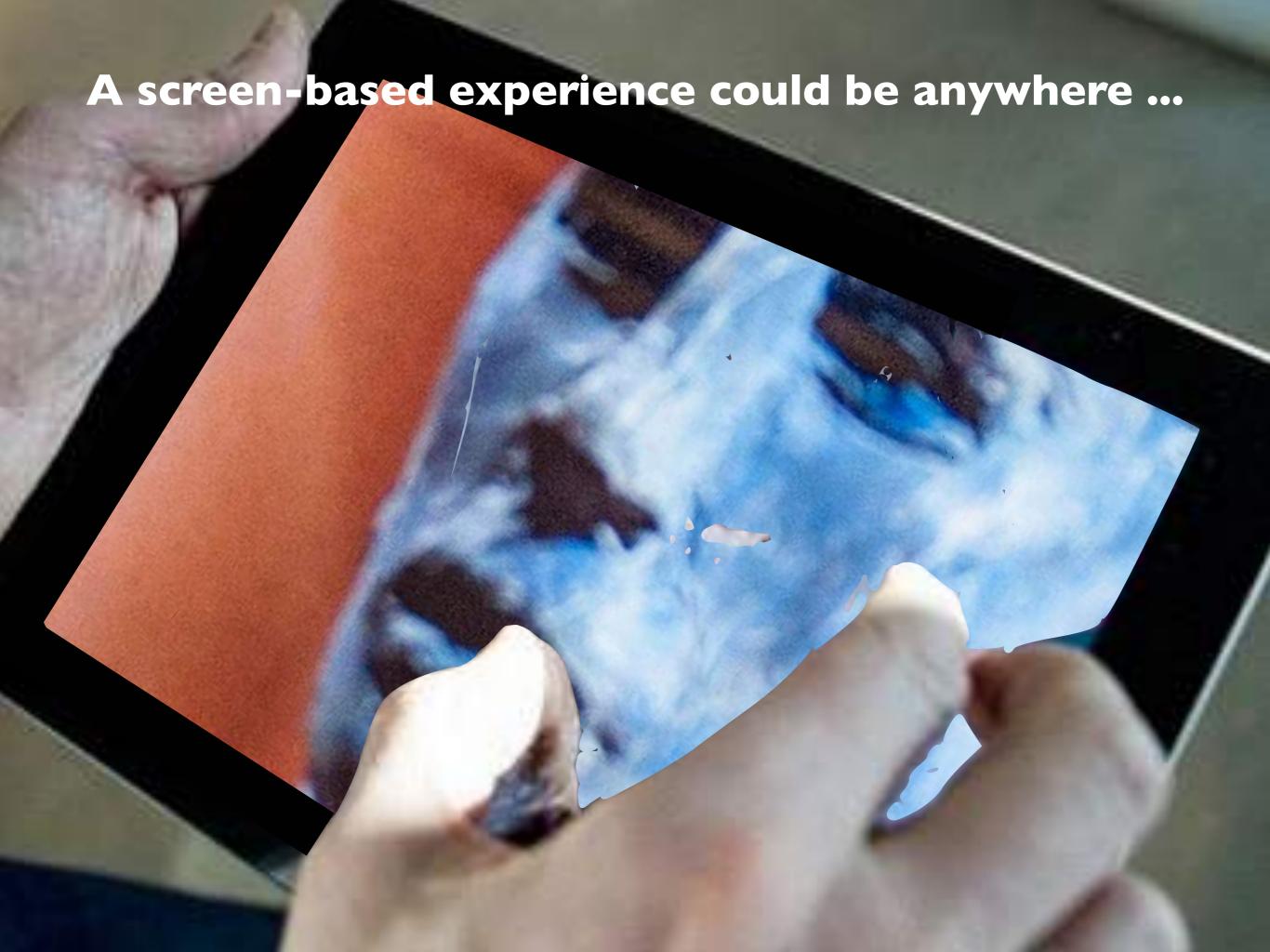














Exhibitions 2014



SPRING

[8 March -]

Pontormo & Rosso Fiorentino



SUMMER

[- 27 July]

Pontormo & Rosso Fiorentino



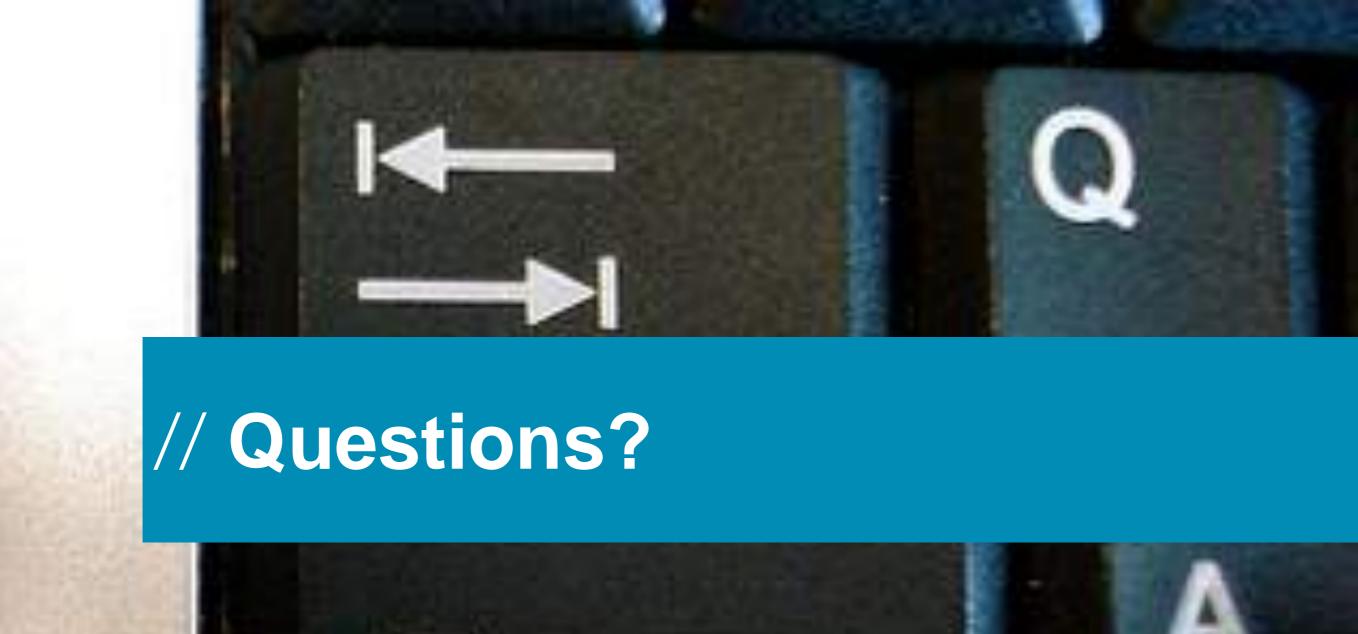
AUTUMN

[19 Sept - 25 Jan 2015]

Picasso and Spanish Modernity

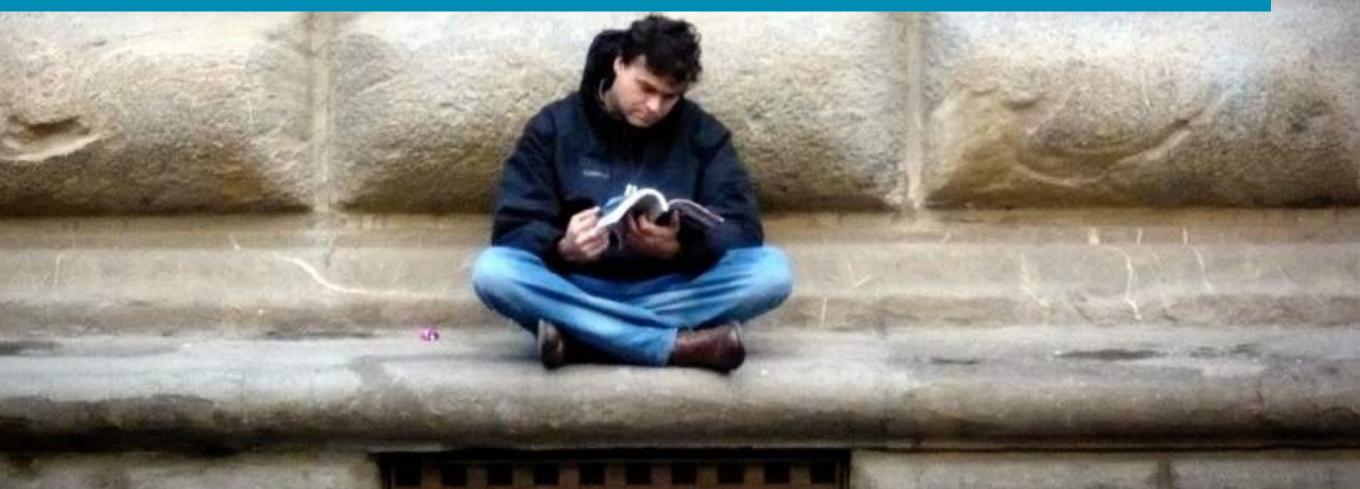














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