Shiny and New:

Reflections on 'Resolutely Analogue? Art Museums in Digital Culture'[1]

Peter Ride

"I will buy you a new car, perfect shiny and new…I will buy you a new life"
(Cuthbert, Eklund & Montoya)

"You make me feel, shiny and new" (Madonna)

Sitting alongside the tangible material benefits of technology is the question of its effect, both definable and undefinable. What does it mean to be a recipient, a user or consumer of technology? What response does it evoke - how does it make us feel? Shiny and new, maybe, but what is it to have 'newness'? These are not arbitrary questions. The issue of 'newness' runs deep through discussions about new technologies. Concepts collide and overlap. Is newness the same as innovation? What is relevant in the new: the technology itself, our way of working with it, or its effect upon us? Can we critically address how much we are stimulated by notions of newness?

More rhetorical than the song lyrics of Everclear or Madonna, the forward paragraphs to the government's Digital Britain report in 2009 by Gordon Brown mines the value of 'newness' in terms that present a sweeping conflation of the personal and the socio-political:.'Only a Digital Britain will secure the wonders of an information revolution that could transform every part of our lives. Only a Digital Britain will enable us to demonstrate the vision and dynamism that we have to shape the future.' [2]This gives an important framing context of technological change to the discussions that took place in the Tate Encounters' *Resolutely Analogue?* research, dealing with aspiration and expectation in economic policy as well as the social. In this political soundbite, the promise of new technology is transformative and empowering: it enables us to address our potential. But in it, embracing newness is not an option - it is an imperative.

Newness, however, is only useful as a concept if taken within the broader reference of time and the nature of change, and dealing with the 'before and after'. In the discussions of *Resolutely Analogue*? the concept of time becomes the fundamental linking thread in the attempt to confront the position of the art museum and digital culture. The questions that spill

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out from come from this central seam of a 'before' that is known, if not always resolved, and an 'after' that raises uncertainties: how does the museum respond to change, generate or facilitate it? What will the impact of new forms of practice be on the gallery, on museum practice, on museum procedures? Is a 'new audience' a different audience or a known audience that is conceptualised in a new way? All these questions surfaced during the week of the *Resolutely Analogue?* research programme, and placed Tate firmly on a timeline, looking forward to a future that was being both assertively predicted and hesitantly hinted. In *Resolutely Analogue*, overwhelmingly, questions lead to further questions and become compounded.

Framed by this series of complex narratives and positions, *Resolutely Analogue?* exists as a qualitative research project to investigate the current and possible relationship of the audience with the art museum in the context on new technology. As with any research, the methodology used has direct implications on the way that findings are abstracted from the material being studied and on the way it is articulated. Aside from the formal methodological description, three key 'tag' terms could be placed on this research: conversational, reflexive and practice. These terms indicate not only how the research has been approached but the tone in which it has taken place.

> *Ross Parry: "We're having a Victorian moment. We're going to start building railway tracks but they're going to be about digital connectivity."*

> *John Stack: "There is no cynical attempt to gain content – we already have plenty of content. What we are trying to do is offer something back."*

Conversations, in the most literal form, and as indicated above, are the core material of the research project since the objective has been to construct a number of discussions between practitioners working in the arts, in museums, other organisations and in Tate itself; practitioners who are artists, curators, organisers, policy makers, technologists and educationalists. As joint investigators, Professor Andrew Dewdney and I have been questioners and respondents. As research based on ethnographic models this has a distinctly non-positivist approach, for there is no critical distance but instead it acknowledges and embraces the subjectivities of all the participants as players in the field, and the role of the investigators as subject experts in their own right. It is fundamental to this approach that the contributors were selected and addressed as practitioners rather than cultural critics or observers, and that their opinions were related to their reflections and upon their experience and expertise.

> *Matt Locke: "There are no social media experts, there are only people who have done projects and those who haven't – we are all learning."*

The key questions posed to participants were grounded in practice, asking them to explain the consequence of what they do, and the choices they make within a broader frame of reference. The intention was that they should be able to consider how their experience has contributed to their awareness, rather than asking for a theoretical or distanced critique. The distinction may seem superfluous, but in fact a strategic decision such as this deeply affects the material that results, the manner in which it is given and the way in which it must be interpreted. And as a consequence, this is then transmitted in the final choice of tone, in the mode of address used in analysing and reporting it.

Threads of conversation that are given in this text are indicative comments and reflections and are also a form of sporadic micro-evidence. They reflect not only the issues discussed but also how flows of conversation determine the nature of the material. Placed in this text, their purpose is to offer a dialogic narrative that runs parallel to the main discussion. Nuanced or reflective, expansive or declamatory, they attest to the value of the personal narrative in research.

> *Honor Harger: "Technology isn't relevant in itself, let alone its oldness or newness, but what you do with it. Let's concentrate on bringing in a new kind of thinking rather than think about bringing in new technologies."*

> *Sarah Cook: "Presenting new media work in a gallery may require a range of skills that the organisation does not have, not only to make the project happen but also to work with the audience."*

> *Roshini Kemapdoo: "As an artist, coming to new technology gives me new ways to think about issues of representation."*

The scope of this writing is not to summarise the views held by the panels, nor to evaluate the positions taken. Its intention is to reflect upon the way that questions are raised, how they are framed, and to consider why specific themes begin to emerge and come into focus when the relationship between the institution, technological change and the audience is addressed. Following the conversations is not a matter of distilling points of view, but instead the pathways of the conversation are followed through the threads, tracks and cracks that emerged within and between the various sessions. Throughout these threads, tracks and cracks, several themes constantly re-occur: the role of the institution and its perception of change, impact and time; the concept of the public; the nature of intellectual and creative content; the place of authority, control and expertise; the point of encounter in the gallery; the changing place or space occupied by the institution. And it has to be acknowledged that by the nature of an open and conversational method of enquiry, some issues are constantly

dodged, some questions posed but left unaddressed, and some concerns not raised at all, either consciously or unconsciously.

> *Matt Locke: "The real innovations have not come from industry but from the 'commons' – from users and their interaction with each other – and what institutions have been trying to do is to catch up."*

> *Sarah Cook: "We need to do more work to explore how technology can facilitate the museum to open itself to new artistic and curatorial practices?"*

The title *Resolutely Analogue?* is itself a provocation and one that invites a personal response to the scope of the institution. It proposes that the museum itself can be seen as an 'analogue' institution, partly in terms of the artworks that it collects and exhibits, in its use and management of space, and through the way that information and culture is represented, promoted and translated into narratives. But underlying the provocation however is something more than a clash of binary opposites - the analogue versus the digital, the physical versus the virtual. The title suggests, more metaphorically, that the institution takes an analogue approach to museum discourse: that it works in terms of the known, the contained, and the finite rather than the virtual, the networked and the unpredictable. Yet maybe the title also impishly implies that change is afoot: it suggests it is instead 'not-quite-so-resolutely' analogue.

> *Charlie Gere: "We need to ask what is the primary role of the museum, to reflect back after a decent interval or to intervene in the development of culture? For, in fact, it does both, and that while it might present itself as quantitative it is increasingly performative. It is too vast to just be reflective, it is shaping the landscape."*

However, there is an absence at the centre of the dialogue. Many of the other debates included in Tate Encounters are framed around ideas of change, innovation, 'newness' in terms of social and institutional policy and their affect upon the development of practice, politics and social relationships in the institution but we can argue that they have had a more specific set of references. Indeed other parts of the Tate Encounters research have used an historical model whereby the present is interrogated by creating a knowledge of the past to define how practices, such as education in the art museum, have grown and diversified. But in the discussion about the digital the present becomes a moment of ambiguity rather than a point of arrival and instead of reflecting on past experience, current experience is used to hypothesise where the future may lead. So in reviewing the nature and the content of the discussion there is a difficulty faced if one attempts to contain all the discussions within the same points of reference. In other situations the diversity of positions taken by a cultural commentator and arts practitioner would be an issue; however, this is a strength of the

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project's methodology. But it becomes a characteristic of such a project that there are so many ambiguities expressed by all the participants in the discussions of the 'now' as well as in the 'new'. Consequently, the questions transmute from 'where will change take us?' to 'where will we be when we get there?' and further still to 'is there ever a there?'

> *Matt Locke: "Then a young woman from the audience put up her hand and asked a question: 'You all talk about a world before new technology and how it changes everything but what I want to know is, what did I miss? What did I actually miss?'"*

When Gertrude Stein said 'there is no there, there' about her childhood home she was talking about the void that is the place without the personal[3]. When Mark Pesce re-used her words to describe the internet he was describing the absence of any defined meaning, structure or boundaries in cyberspace[4]. We could re-re-appropriate the phrase to talk about the problems inherent in the way that the museum of the future, the un-resolutely analogue museum is being conceptualised: the digital in the museum is discussed in terms of questions and possibilities, challenges and uncertainties, the joy of vagaries and the anticipation that what was predicted may not happen. The 'there' of the museum has no fixed and finite 'thereness'.

> *David Garcia: "We need to look quite critically at some of the practices of new media art that lock themselves into an unreconstructed formalism and believe themselves to be part of the future but follow a self-referential discourse of the past."*

This variance seems contradictory to the notion of the museum as being both a holder of tradition and a predictable entity. The 'analogue' museum. But it also indicates the tension for the museum in understanding that if some aspects of its activities are up for re-consideration then its role as a holder of public trust, as custodian of cultural knowledge, and as having a known relationship with a public is also being impacted upon. In another context, museologist Hilde Hein describes how and why this challenge is hard for museums to address:

> The challenge that museums face in a time of transition is obscured on the one hand by theoretical rhetoric that interprets museums from a distance and ignores their concrete vulnerabilities, and on the other, by too close a focus on the immediate exigencies of circumstance, which then discourages speculative contemplation.[5]

In the discussions of the *Resolutely Analogue?* session it is evident that the museum embraces and represents a range of positions on technological change. Indeed, the overwhelming conceptual framework being employed is not just one of change but one of evolution: not arbitrary or avoidable but an aspect of progression, that this is a cultural shift as well as a technological shift. However, at this point different narratives appear inflected by, variously, a desire for continuity of practice, business interests, global competition and competitive pressures, strategies for inclusive and accessible practice, curatorial possibilities and the creative choices made by artists.

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> *Honor Harger: "it is easy to fall into the presumption that large institutions have a single approach but sometimes small and important initiatives take place because of individual actions and institutions can accommodate this."*

> *Sarah Cook: "Unless the small projects start to displace the established ways of operating the balance of power doesn't change."*

If the field of enquiry is contained around the way that the art museum evolves in relation to new technology it could be argued that the *Resolutely Analogue?* sessions demonstrated three different positions. Firstly, the museum can assert that it is 'business as usual' and that the core activities, roles and identities of the institution may be modified by technology, but it is absorbed within its core purpose and identity. A second position is that technology is only significant when the opportunities it presents coincide with other discourses that come from the evolution of broad ideological positions and which condition attitudes towards institutions of culture and heritage. These might, for example, point to the end of the authoritative position, the aura of the original or the unified voice, and point to a redefining of social democracy. A third position is that technology is a major agenda setter, that institutions are always responding to technological change and that no behaviours or roles are fixed and new. . In this last position, the museum is a flexible entity, all positions and roles are open, and it is a question of how fast the museum wishes to embrace change rather than if or when it does.

> *Ross Parry: "Museums have been very good at sitting back and waiting, biding their time, not jumping onto a technological bandwagon too early."*

> *Kelli Dipple: "We can shift in thinking of technology as a tool to technology as a medium and a socio-political context in which to make work."*

> *Graham Harwood: "I think the curators got it, and the audience we were working with, they got it, but I don't think the museum got it. Not at all."*

Arguably all three positions are reflected in the conversations that took place. But unlike much of the discourse around new media that emphasises the speed of technological innovation, and the resulting social impact, the *Resolutely Analogue?* conversations had an additional reference which was nature of the public experience.

The complexity of the relationship between the art museum and its public, and how that relationship is expressed, was also evidenced. Approaches which can be seemingly irreconcilable, encompassing the contemporary museological stance that there is an

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ideological shift from the primacy of the museum collection to the visitors' experience, as expressed for example by museologists such as Michelle Henning[6]. These sit alongside positions that the priority of the museum is to preserve the primacy of the individual's relationship with the art object, and in fact the intrinsic qualities of the art object itself, and that to prioritise a relationship with a 'general public' is, to borrow from the art critic David Batchelor, a 'date with a ghost'[7]. Both extremes are inflected within the *Resolutely Analogue?* discussions. Within this set of conflicting opinions the museum is seen to be addressing how new technological changes may affect the audience as a visitor and user and if or how the audience might in fact become not just a receiver but a key player in its digital culture.

> Damien Whitmore: "We do exhaustive research into our gallery audiences and we have a good understanding of who comes and why they come, what they spend when they are with us, where they come from, what they read, what they do, what they think of us and we also know quite a lot about who doesn't come."

Resolutely Analogue? demonstrates that the way that 'audience' is conceptualised within museum and arts discourse is always an area of great complexity. Notably at no point did Andrew and I as investigators require speakers to define or clarify the conceptual framework they were using, which was indicative of an approach that emphasises that theory is articulated in practice. Hence the terminology used encompassed 'audience' in its breadth: visitor, gallery-goer, viewer, user, recipient. All of these terms are well establish with their own historical context, but which may not be collectively compatible. But the distinctions are important, not just because they each are indicative of different historical contexts, but because they frame the expectations of the participants as they articulate what change may mean in terms of audience and the audience's relationship to the museum.

> Will Gompertz: "The point for Tate Media is that involvement with a work of art is not about a beginning, a middle and an end, it is about a journey and a relationship with a subject, and about making a contribution to it. The most exciting relationship is about looking at it and experiencing it but it is absolutely not the only relationship … But in this situation what we are doing at Tate Media is interpretative – giving people context, information, an experience that can exist without seeing the object."

Consequently audience is sometimes described in relation to the language of marketing, sometimes in terms of social engagement and sometimes as a dynamic and creative force that contributes to the culture of the institution. On one hand a dominant thread is that of the public as a consumer of the museum's resources and the museum as a content provider. From this position, the museum responds to consumer demand by providing new ways of catering for its audience, in 'traditional' forms such as tv and publishing as well as online, and

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therefore audience is able to, and intent upon, consuming its resources through a number of different channels.

> *Damien Whitmore: "The question now is what is a museum visit? Is it seeing one of our shows in another country, seeing our broadcast or coming to the gallery? In the 90s the goal was to encourage people to visit the gallery. … Now our ambition is to make our collections available around the world available at any time."*

What becomes apparent, however, is that the online audience has no obvious demographic and is hard to sample which creates a difficulty for institutions that give credence to, and need to provide, achievements and outputs. Although it may use one particular technology, the internet, to access the institution, its audience may have come through a widely divergent range of routes in. It may have initiated the connection following the menus and navigation of the museums website, it may have initiated entered on a lower level page through a search engine or it may have had the connection 'pushed' to it. Ultimately, it may demonstrate unmeasurable reasons for accessing the museums resources. It can be argued that the notion of audience demographics is unrepresentative and unhelpful, and that instead of thinking of audiences we should take a qualitative turn and instead think of spaces of engagement, and ways in which people encounter things and each other rather than who they are collectively or individually. The concept of community offers an important alternative to the notion of audience – it indicates that the audience understand themselves in relation to other people as a vast shared community rather than in relation to the institution or source of information.

> *Ross Parry: "We can't put our hands on our hearts and say we know our audience. Social media lets us off the hook, since we know statistical information but little else."*

> *Matt Locke: "Understanding different online spaces is a way of channelling the rules of engagement in decommissioned public space"*

> *Graham Harwood: "It's all about the power of the network. Being connected gives people power and allows them to make choices."*

The plurality of these points demonstrate the problems of conceptualising the new audience, but they also demonstrate the difficulty for the museum to integrate the discussion of audience into the ideas of changed roles and ideological positions of public space, social democracy and agency. These are embedded within the question of what the museum means by 'its public' or 'the public'; notions which have been an important aspect of the historical and contemporary role of the museum, and in reflecting its place within civil society. Therefore, as the notions of society might change due to technological innovation it is

therefore important for the museum to constantly interrogate how 'the public' is articulated. The questions it is being led to ask about the new audience are questions which are valid in all aspects of its operation.

> *Matt Locke: "The major shift brought about by technology is not one of choice and access – it is in permission to be part of the public realm. The lock of permission that controls who can move from being a receiver to transmitter has been broken."*

> *Ross Parry: "We don't take that big step back and ask what is meant by 'public' and 'society' and how they fit together. We are so used to using industry shorthand that we don't trouble ourselves to ask the philosophic questions."*

Although we can argue that each institution has conditions so specific that notions of social contract cannot be generalised, there are also paradigms that determine how the notions of public and institution are played out. Glenn Lowry in his article on the deontological approach to art museums argues that the notion of 'public trust' – being placed in public trust as well as holding things in public trust – is core to the ethical role of the museum and that this is lived out in a constant dialogue between the institution and society[8].

> *Graham Harwood: "What we really wanted to do was intervene. It doesn't matter if the work is invisible in the gallery if it is about agency, networks and community."*

As already indicated, one of the recurrent tensions in *Resolutely Analogue?* is the difference between the concept of the audience of recipients and the community of users. In the former, the institution provides content for the public and in the latter the public provides experience for the institution. Also in the former, the institution gathers and offers its cultural capital - expertise, knowledge and precision – and provides a point for communication to take place. In the latter, the network is the key resource, and it brings to the institutions its myriad connections, and generates content both intellectual and social, and it enables the institution to release itself from its geography.

> *Ross Parry: "We used to build websites that reflected the structure of our organisations and think that people came to us, but they don't. Our data goes to where they are, their schoolroom, their bus, or their bedroom. Their experience is localised, and personalised. And they may never know where the thing they are reading, or looking at originally came from."*

Lowry's concept of public trust could be expanded to a further level. The relationship between community of users and institution could be seen as a further negotiation of public trust. The point where communication takes place becomes diffused and not controlled by, or moving

between, different forms of authority. The trust extends to a multifarious relationship, based not on the vesting of authority that grants legitimacy on the one hand and access on the other but instead on a constant exchange of interests.

> *Kelli Dipple: "We can shift in thinking of technology as a tool to thinking of technology as a medium and a socio-political context in which to make work."*

Notably, however, the *Resolutely Analogue?* sessions demonstrated one of the difficulties in discussing the relationship between the museum and the public in that inevitable distinctions are made between a 'known' audience and a 'changing' audience but it is to articulate what their engagement means. Yet what also often takes place in discussion is a subtle shift away from an attempt to define engagement to a description of the mode of connection or the activity they cary out: online or offline; researcher or casual visitor; data gatherer or game player.

> *John Stack: "Participation is not about just functionality, it is about ethos."*

> *Graham Harwood: "You design media architectures for the users not for the institution."*

This problem typifies the problems and challenges for the institution in articulating how it is affected by the changes to the nature and potential of it audience, for there is no potential for a unified shift in approach but instead there may be many paradigms that need to be considered. Significantly the reference points shift from the collective to the singular, from 'audience' to 'user'. At the same time, also, although some traditional quantitative methods of reading and measuring the audience may not be appropriate, the relationship becomes more complex since the audience is actively engaged with the institution while online, and there are multiple ways to gain feedback. Although the very nature of the engagement may be hard to decipher, the presence of the user leaves a trace of data that can enable the institution to glean and deduce deep and rich information about behaviours and preferences. Though conversations may stress the need for the institution to create an environment that facilitates the community interaction, providing tools and services, the institution can equally think of itself as creating a structure that acquires a residue for cultural, creative or commercial reasons.

> *Matt Locke: "The crucial question is how do you create content that people want to be part of, to transmit, to parody to play with."*

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James Davis: "In creating an interactive website you are creating tools and services, not information. So you have to ask what people want."

The residue need not be thought of as data for exploitation, but as content, and not as the dormant trails but instead as ongoing or evolving entities. But consequently, all content can be seen as information that in its own way has authority and reflects agency or power that is not necessarily in accordance with the institutional or curatorial voice. Content providers, therefore can offer another level of knowledge and expertise that pushes at the boundaries of the cultural institution as a definer and controller of information. In this context the institution can find itself having to facilitate a multifarious identity that questions the very notion of a unified position or a cultural authority.

John Stack: "The 'voice' of the website will be less about the Tate. Instead, there will be many voices."

Will Gompertz: "People come to us because of our expertise and proven authority and so it is important that we are able to maintain standards."

The above paragraphs have almost exclusively referenced the online experience, which is indicative of the content of the *Resolutely Analogue?* sessions, but it also reflects the huge emphasis placed on the internet as the space that redefines relationships between users and objects. The development of Web2 concentrated the conversation on social networking and the shift in the web from being a space of information to being a space of connection. The tenor of much of conversation about the relationship of the institution to its public is set by the discourse around social networking and online engagement.

Sarah Cook: "What matters is that there are places for us to encounter art. It doesn't matter if they are art galleries or not."

Kelli Dipple: "It is necessary that museums invest in the process of dialogue. Beyond the technological hype and technological utopias who has the right to speak and what do they want to hear?"

In these discussions, therefore, the space of the venue itself and the experience of its audience in the physical space gained less attention. And yet it can be said that many of the cultural shifts that play upon the relationship of the online public and the art object have direct ramifications upon the gallery experience. The debates about issues around the ordering of knowledge, the modes of address and interaction in the gallery space are inflected by the possibility of changed expectation. So a key issue is whether new forms of engagement can occur in the gallery space inspired and facilitated by technology. For if the prime relationship

may no longer be about visiting the space but about the relationship to content it also holds that content operates on many levels. In such a model, institutions are structures within which information moves and can be extracted or experienced.

> *James Davis: "It leads to an ontological debate. If we allow ourselves to say that the reproduction online or in other media maybe have as much value as an original artwork we allow that audience to change on a fundamental level."*

> *Sarah Cook: "The institution provides the context for the art being shown but it also needs to indicate to the audiences the rules for the space and the mode of interaction."*

Although the analogue museum presents the impression of a contained and authoritative institution it can also be argued that the contemporary museum can be poly-vocal, represent various notions of authority and authorship, embrace multiple subjectivities and present itself as a forum for exchange. Therefore in many ways it can embrace an increased interest in social, non-heirarchical engagement and public participation; it can accommodate linking the tangible gallery space to the virtual. The institution can use social networking to be a metaphor as well as an aspect of the web.

> *Ross Parry: "The notion of the museum has extended. Museums have always evolved and changed their shape. Maybe the museum of the future will be as much online as it is 'on-site'. It's just 'on'."*

> *Charlie Gere: "Can Tate think of itself as a node on a network?"*

However, at the same time there is also potential for the museum to re-assert itself as a new form of venue. Through the use of new technology in an era in which it can be agued that 'brand' is of greater significance than buildings, what the institution provides is not content but excellence, and that this is the common thread across all of its forms, outlets and provisions. From gallery text to hand-held device, the content can be variable but the authority remains intact. In this situation, the curatorial role of the museum includes operating as an editor of content - filtering, sifting and contextualising. This model of expanded presence can obviously offer the public the possibility of new forms of engagement without radically re-appraising the rules and relationships.

> *John Stack: "In five years time I believe that online moderation will be a significant job. We don't do that at the moment."*

> *Roshini Kempadoo: "New media offers the artist the opportunity to constantly engage with the work and this changes the relationship between the maker and the viewer."*

However, the inclusion of other voices or presences can also usher in alternative strategies. The concept of audience as participant enables the audience to have an extended relationship to the work, to be part of contemporary art events and to play a role in animating historical ones. It also creates the space for voices to be heard, inside and outside the institution, personalising the experience of the gallery.

> *Graham Harwood: "What we wanted to do was take a historical exhibit and place it in a modern context. We try to open up the space for other people to be involved."*

Ultimately, we need to ask where does discussion take us? Can dialogue with practitioners give us a new way to conceptualise the audience and the institution, or to help frame questions? By following the threads, cracks and tracks of conversation can we better understand the diversity of approaches and positions?

Resolutely Analogue? offers no definitive conclusion of course, since it is not constructed with this in mind; however, it does make clear how complex the discussion is when the subject in question is the art museum. In comparison, discussions about contemporary art practice and contemporary art space, be it a venue or a less structured space, have another layer of complexities and offer different considerations but they do not have to account for the art collection, and the responsibility, legacy and continuity of it, that locates the art museum in a particular relationship to the public. Likewise, the historic, science or ethnographic museum presents its own debates but has a different set of considerations from the art museum when it comes to the ordering of knowledge, where aesthetic as well as cultural values are invested in the artefact. Consequently, discussion about the art museum may deal expansively with knowledge, information, and social engagement, for which culture is a reference point, but it constantly returns to and pivots around the relationship of the audience and the art work - to the point of encounter. In other contexts the question can be proposed that if a cultural experience is no longer primarily an encounter with an object where does it happen? – for hypothetically it can happen anywhere. But in the context of the art museum the existence of the artefact as the key reference point remains significant.

> *David Garcia: "The idea that perpetual change is the only radical option is something that we have to reconsider, maybe we can conceive of radical institutions and academies that can be responsive to the logic and needs of networks without repudiating the artefact."*

> *Charlie Gere: "What distinguishes new media is its temporality, its speed and rhythm, that it is accelerated maybe beyond the point of contemplation whereas the object endures."*

The discussion that emanates from large institutions often indicates that such irreconcilable differences are well established; navigating through them and not allowing the tensions they create to destabilise the institution is one of the internal priorities of an institution. In this situation it becomes a flawed strategy to set up a binary opposition between the 'resolutely analogue museum' versus the' digitally nuanced museum'. Or between focussing on the object as the key point of the art experience versus focussing on the audience engagement as being a determining aspect of the forward thinking musuem. Indeed, the key change in the museum that may be most useful to have identified is not a change in the way that the institution employs technology to give access to its resources, nor in the way the audiences use and conceptualise the cultural value of those resources. Instead, it may be to think how the institution changes in its approach to change itself. If it maintains a position of irreconcilable differences or if it finds an approach to negotiate them.

Within the threads, cracks and tracks however, one point softly emerges and re-emerges. That while the shiny and new-ness of technology always draws attention, and the potential for new forms of engagement captivates artists, curators, practitioners and professionals at all levels, the real subject of the conversation is not new technology, nor is it the art object - it is the public. Not public as a social or political construct but as individuals with subtle subjectivities.

> *James Davis: "We have to remember that we are dealing with people who are complicated and delicate and interesting things – we need to deliver to people."*

> *Andrew Dewdney: "I think its time to make a start…"*

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'Resolutely Analogue? Art Museums in Digital Culture' took place during 2-6 March 2009 and included the following list of participants with titles from this time:

Anna Colin, Exhibitions curator, Gasworks
Sarah Cook: curator, writer, Research Fellow at the University of Sunderland
James Davis, Online Collection Editor, Tate Online
Andrew Dewdney: Research Professor at London South Bank University and the Principal Investigator and Director of Tate Encounters
Kelli Dipple, Curator of Intermedia Art, Tate
David Garcia, Dean of Chelsea College of Art & Design
Marc Garret: Net and new media artist
Charlie Gere, writer, Director of Research at the Institute for Cultural Research, University of Lancaster and Chair of Computers and the History of Art (CHArt)

Will Gompertz: Head of Media, Tate
Honor Harger, Artist and curator
Graham Harwood: artist
Roshini Kemapdoo: artist and Reader in Media Practice at University of East London
Matt Locke: Commissioning Editor for Education and New Media at Channel 4
Ross Parry: Senior Lecturer in Digital Heritage, University of Leicester; and Chair of Museums Computer Group
Peter Ride: Principal Research Fellow at the University of Westminster
John Stack: Head of Tate Online
Gary Stewart: multimedia producer and Head of Multimedia at Iniva
Damien Whitmore: Director of Public Affairs, Victoria and Albert Museum

(NB some quotations given in the text have been edited for brevity and clarity.)

Notes:

[1] 'Resolutely Analogue? Art Museums in Digital Culture' was a week long programme of panel discussions and presentations as part of the Tate Encounters 'Research in Procee' programme that took place in 2009. See http://process.tateencounters.org/?cat=4

[2] Rt. Hon. Gordon Brown, MP, in 'Executive Summary', *Digital Britain Final Report*, Dept of Culture Media and Sport & Dept of Business Innovation and Skills, June 2009, p 7.

[3] Gertrude Stein, Everybody's Autobiography (1937) Ch. 4

[4] Mark Pesce, 'Ontos, Eros, Noos, Logos', Keynote conference presentation at *Sixth International Symposium on Electronic Art ISEA '95 Montreal*, 21 September 1995 published at: http://hyperreal.org/~mpesce/iseakey.html

[5] Hilde S. Hein, *The Museum in Transition*, Smithsonian Institute Press, 2000, p. ix

[6] Michelle Henning, *Museums, Media and Cultural Theory*, Open University Press, 2005, p.91

[7] David Batchelor, 'Unpopular Culture' *Frieze*, January 1995

[8] Glenn D. Lowry, 'A Deontological Approach to Art Musuems and the Public Trust' in James Cuneo (ed) *Whose Muse- Art Museums and the Public Trust*, Princeton University Press, 2004

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