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Museums on the cutting edge



By George Jacob, Museum Matters
Thursday, July 23, 2015 6:19:38 MDT PM



Philip J. Currie Dinosaur Museum

Museums are souls of civil societies and collective repositories of our discoveries, inventions and material evidence of our heritage. They are important institutions that augment our education system, advance our knowledge, celebrate our achievements and inspire minds to dream beyond the mundane.

Canada is home to some of the finest museums in the world and has pioneered new approaches to creative expression adding to visitor experiences and experiential learning over the years. With the Philip J. Currie Dinosaur Museum endorsing a unique Cultural Leadership online program scheduled for a September launch, the museum has entered the realm of the futurists.

Nouveau museums, galleries and similar destinations of non-formal learning, experimentation and visual repositories of lifestyle, are vehicles of economic regeneration and inspiration in civil societies. Often leisure destinations with interesting contemporary twists attracts not only tourists, but other investment in allied sectors and industry keen on offering the quality of life that the ambience offers.

The heritage landscape of 21st century provides significant investment opportunities and new projects that could have tremendous public interest and support. Untapped subject fields of fashion, design, music, cinema, health awareness and disease prevention, culinary arts, bio-mimicry, product design, inventions, information technology and global commerce, et al, can all be transformed into rich museum exhibit experiences with travelling avatars in circulation at international venues. Examples of such initiatives with investment opportunities, urban planning, community revitalization and econometrics of success abound in various parts of the globe. These institutions have the power to influence trends, shape policy and engage visitors in a constructive dialogue while interacting with real-time variable parameters.

The dapper doyen of urban chic, Bernard Arnault, who runs the \$39 billion empire of Louis Vuitton Moet Hennessy recently extended his brand of timeless modernity commissioning architect Frank Gehry, to float a cloud-like museum experience designed to inspire dreams. A city limping back to life after the devastating hurricane Katrina flattened New Orleans, saw its sagging spirits soar when the first public attraction opened its doors in 2008 - a museum dedicated to insects. With exhibits explaining the delicate balance between man and insects, biodiversity within insects of New Orleans to a popular café serving edible insects, the museum is extending education beyond the blackboard.

From the Cologne Chocolate Museum that celebrates the palette, the Mercedes-Benz Museum that celebrates engineering excellence, the Newseum focused on the production, broadcast and ethics of news media, the International Spy Museum that explores the clandestine world of espionage, Museum of the Mob in Las Vegas that exposes the underbelly of the mafia and organized crime behind the greatest gambling destination in the world to The Museum of Comic Strips in Belgium , that fascinates the young and old with illustrated enlarged drawings and 3-D recreations of Herge's comic strip characters.

Apart from generating direct revenues, employment, e-commerce, tourism, hotel, transportation and restaurant investments, real estate, retail and rentals, museums serve as cultural ambassadors for political, strategic and a range of community benefits. A working formula that offers a combination of tax incentives and targeted philanthropic edge at regional and national levels, can aid nations harness a significant portion of their national taxable income towards a higher societal purpose. Imagine what a fraction of the current GDP of can unleash! Such an investment in the non-profit sector of museums has the potential for strengthening our social fabric and triggering the need for infrastructural development, offering new destinations for audiences inviting them to discover, decode and dream";

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