

Will Virtual Exhibitions Remain After Covid 19 Ends?

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The Covid 19 crisis has inevitably affected the way individuals work, as it affects many physical and social aspects of people's lives. Many businesses have decided to continue their work from home. Since workers could not perform physically, this circumstance forced people who have denied emerging with the technologies to learn and adapt to the internet. Likewise, scientific studies continued thanks to several video combination software such as Zoom, Google Meet, and Microsoft Teams. However, this paper is not concerned with how these online studies are carried out; it looks for how the studies are presented. Outcomes of studies' can now be presented to the public through online exhibitions. Much software with different scopes offers museums, individual researchers, and independent designers options to exhibit their work in the online realm. This research focuses on the benefits and drawbacks of virtual exhibitions comparing with physical ones and examines the data to determine that it will still be an option for exhibit works after a pandemic or not.

Introduction

Before the Covid-19 crisis, people were already using technology effectively, and companies were making an effort to digitalize some of daily human activities and routines. However, the unexpected crisis has caused significant changes in individuals' lives. Scientific studies had to keep up with this change. Universities, summer schools, and workshops completed their studies online. The fact that these organizations are accessible via the internet paved the way for more diverse working groups in the workshops and researches. However, there was no proper environment for holding conferences or opening exhibitions to share the completed work with other students, researchers, and the public since many states required restrictions to go outside to prevent their citizens from being in crowded environments. Exhibitions were essential, especially for the scientists, artists, and designers discovering and creating visual materials. At this point, online exhibition platforms were seen as a solution to the problem. These platforms might be open to the public, accessible, and easy to use like Art steps, Art.spaces, Google slides, or paid programs such as Matterport and Rendering.co which universities and other professional institutions usually prefer since they have a more professional look.

Virtual vs. Physical Exhibition

Virtual exhibitions entered people's lives as a necessity; nonetheless, they had benefits over physical exhibitions. For instance, ISAR 2020 summer school, which were in danger of almost being canceled

due to Covid19 in 2020 summer; however, were later decided to be held online, completed its survey and design work with an exhibition (shown in fig. 1), apart from the presentation the students and instructors made at the end of the summer school. Since all the findings obtained after the workshop were recorded in the digital environment, preparing the virtual exhibition was much easier than preparing a physical one. Also, the online exhibition of the summer school, which had twenty-seven participants, including the instructors and students, was viewed two thousand and forty-five times. If a physical exhibition had been decided to be made, summer school's students from three different continents (Europe, Asia, and Australia) would probably not have had the opportunity to participate in the exhibition that occurred a couple of weeks after the summer school. However, the physical space that people perceive also shaping the virtual space that people want to see. (2011, as cited in Hoffman, 2021) The designers and software developers of virtual museums and exhibitions tend to imitate the conventional museum concept on the internet rather than benefiting from the limitlessness of the virtual world. Space is defined by boundaries, objects' positions, and the layout of the exhibition; therefore, visitors identify the exhibition as a three-dimensional experience. (Kim, 2018) As shown in figure.2, one of the popular exhibition platforms, Artspace, aims to create a closed space illusion with architectural features such as walls, columns, and floorings. Also, the customization options in these websites are limited. Features such as playing music that the host can easily ask for in a physical exhibition cannot be done on these websites. Besides, these websites try to create a human interaction experience by showing people visiting the exhibition as human silhouettes. Despite that effort, the lack of human interaction is one of the prominent reasons people look forward to returning to physical exhibitions. According to a survey about Covid 19's impact on the exhibition industry held by a research company known as GRS (GRS 2021), the respondents believe that online exhibitions will not be permanent and will be replaced by hybrid exhibitions as the covid 19 crisis is over. (Shown in fig.3) However, it is clear that people still want virtual exhibitions to happen but not as a replacement of physical museums.

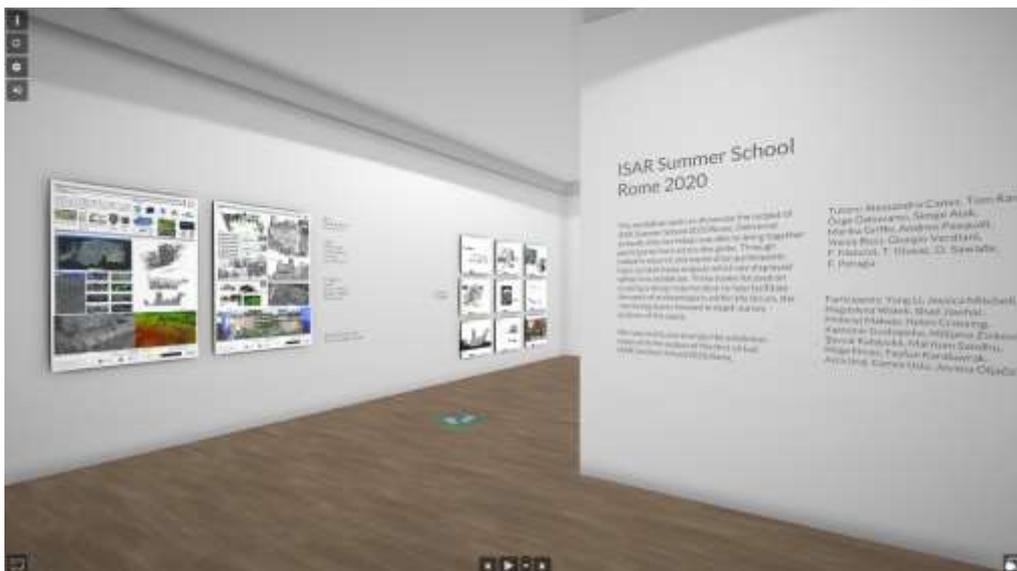
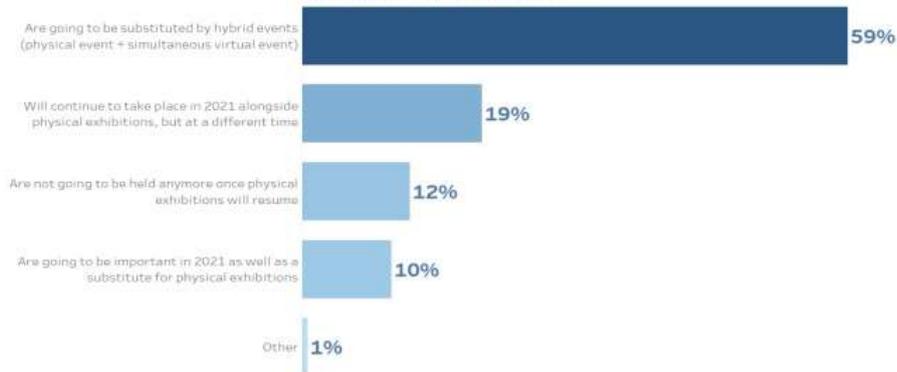


Fig. 1. A Screenshot from the Virtual Exhibition Tour of ISAR International Summer School, www.artsteps.com (© Artsteps User: Thomas Greene Rankin).

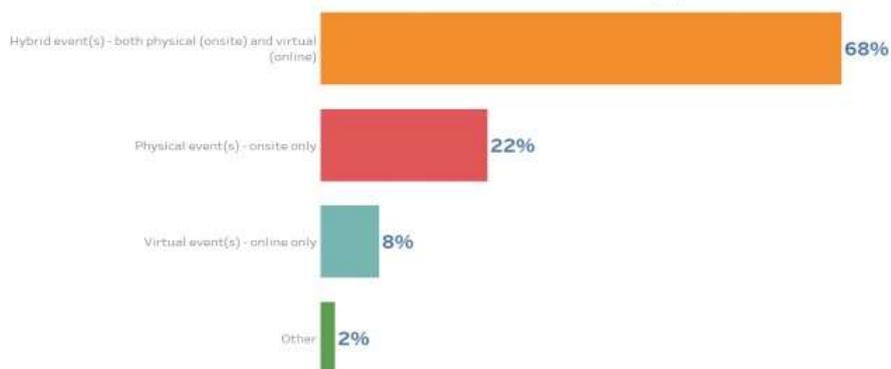


Fig. 2. A Screenshot from a virtual exhibition created by Artspaces, showing the architectural details of virtual space, www.artspaces.kunstmatrix.com (© Artspaces User: Megan Pollock).

THINKING ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCE OVER THE LAST MONTHS, VIRTUAL EVENTS...



THE NEXT EDITION OF YOUR MAIN SHOW(S) WILL BE?



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Fig. 2. A Screenshot from the Virtual Exhibition Tour of ISAR International Summer School, www.artsteps.com (© Data source and analysis: GRS srl, Venice, Italy|Dubai, UAE).

Conclusion

Scientists, artists, students, and designers will prefer virtual platforms to held exhibitions to show their work even after the pandemic. Although people still prefer physical exhibitions and museums to virtual ones, reasons such as it is being easy to use and prepare, being cheap, being able to reach international participants without using any vehicle and increasing interest and ability of the public to the online realm are some the reasons to prefer virtual exhibitions. Therefore, virtual exhibitions are still among the best options for those who want to make their exhibition accessible to the most comprehensive and diverse participants.

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