

Workshop report

TRANS- MEDIA STORY- TELLING

Octobre Numérique - 10/24/2017



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01 Context



Introduction

The series of workshops on transmedia storytelling continued on Tuesday, October 24th in Arles, as part of the [Octobre Numérique](#) conference. Led by Ronan German (PhD student at Mazedia/CELSA on the topic of transmedia storytelling), this workshop brought together ten professionals from the heritage and cultural industries of the Bouches-du-Rhône region. Following on from the workshops held in [Chicago](#) and [Paris](#), this two-hour workshop allowed participants to produce a scenario highlighting Arles' heritage and unfolding along a museum experience continuum: before, during and after the visit.

The workshop began with an introduction to the theme so that all participants would have a common frame of reference from which to imagine their scenario.

What better way to explain the concept of transmedia storytelling than with a case-study? We chose to analyse the Van Gogh's Bedrooms exhibition which we had discovered during [our previous workshop in Chicago](#).

Van Gogh's Bedrooms (Art Institute of Chicago)

This exhibition was on show between February 14th and May 10th of 2016 at the Art Institute of Chicago. It was actually the first time that the three versions of Van Gogh's *Bedroom in Arles* (exhibited respectively in Paris, Amsterdam and Chicago) were reunited on American soil. This acclaimed exhibition saw its theme spread over many media in a particularly interesting and complementary manner.

The exhibition was, of course, at the centre of everything. Alongside these three emblematic paintings by the Dutch artist, [an immersive experience](#) was imagined by the American digital agency [Bluecadet](#). It was a life-sized recreation of the bedroom, enriched with a very poetic projection about the artist's life. While this installation opted for a dreamlike atmosphere (which lends itself well to a bedroom), an adjacent room offered visitors another experience focused on the research carried out on the three paintings during the preparation of the exhibition. Through the combination of a tactile table and a wall projection, the curious visitor could discover the behind-the-scenes of this research and the resulting findings thanks to an exploration of the works of Van Gogh in their smallest details.

A larger set of experiences gravitated around this exhibition and extended the unique universe



of those three paintings.

First, there was [an institutional website](#) dedicated to the exhibition, which brings other types of interactions such as a chronology, a quiz (about the figure of Vincent Van Gogh in popular culture), a chatbot, videos and special offers. This website also links to social networks, where videos on art research and artworks conservation are published.

The Art Institute of Chicago also partnered with Airbnb to offer everyone the opportunity to spend a night in [a reconstitution of Van Gogh's room for \\$10 a night](#); an immersive art experience with a marketing twist.

Last but not least, the Art Institute of Chicago partnered with the Magnificent Mile Association to imagine storefronts that would reinterpret Van Gogh's bedroom motifs. This strategic partnership allowed the Art Institute to reach and attract a larger audience through new entry points.

Agreeing on a definition of transmedia storytelling

The first part of the workshop ended with a definition of transmedia storytelling based on the analysis of the Van Gogh's exhibition and the multiple promotional experiences accompanying it:

- Multiple interpretation registers: scientific register (research dissemination), playful register (website with chatbot and quiz), emotional register (emphasis on Van Gogh's relation to the concept of home, to a haven of peace), register of "curiosity" (attention to details between the three versions of the painting), immersive register (reconstitution of the room in the exhibition and in partnership with Airbnb), register of daily life (showcases of Michigan Avenue), etc.
- Performative interpretation: to allow visitors to immerse themselves (or even to take on roles) in the life-sized reconstitution of Vincent Van Gogh's room.
- Create a world: constructing a universe from the paintings in the exhibition
- Continuity and multiplicity: very little redundancy between the media that are part of the transmedia experience; a multiplicity of points of view on the same paintings
- Circulation of contents: texts designed to be easily shared and exchanged between members of the public (social networks, Instagram-friendly installations, etc.)
- Depth of experience: an experience designed to allow visitors to dive into sometimes very specific and specialized content

02 The workshop



Following this presentation, participants got together to design a transmedia storytelling scenario meant to highlight elements of Arles's cultural heritage. The fact that the workshop was taking place in the "Espace Van Gogh" (a former asylum where the Dutch painter was interned in the early 1880s) really helped participants get their creative juices flowing!

What was the brief?

The objective was to imagine a transmedia storytelling experience for a cultural project (exhibition, event) and to prototype an experience continuum: before, during and after the event.

To proceed, the participants were invited to form two groups and to choose a theme (among five options) and a type of audience (adult couples, families, seniors, teenagers). The first group drew the Tarasque (a legendary beast from the Provençal folklore which gave rise to annual processions in Arles) and the second group drew the figure of the Arlésienne. Both groups chose to design an experience for a family audience.



The two groups were instructed to develop their storytelling on at least three different media (exhibition, web documentary, application, social networks, video mapping, public display, radio or TV show, press, digital kiosks in public space, happenings, short films, touchscreens, etc.) and present their work in the form of a user-centric journey map.



Group 1: "The mysterious mystery of the Tarasque"



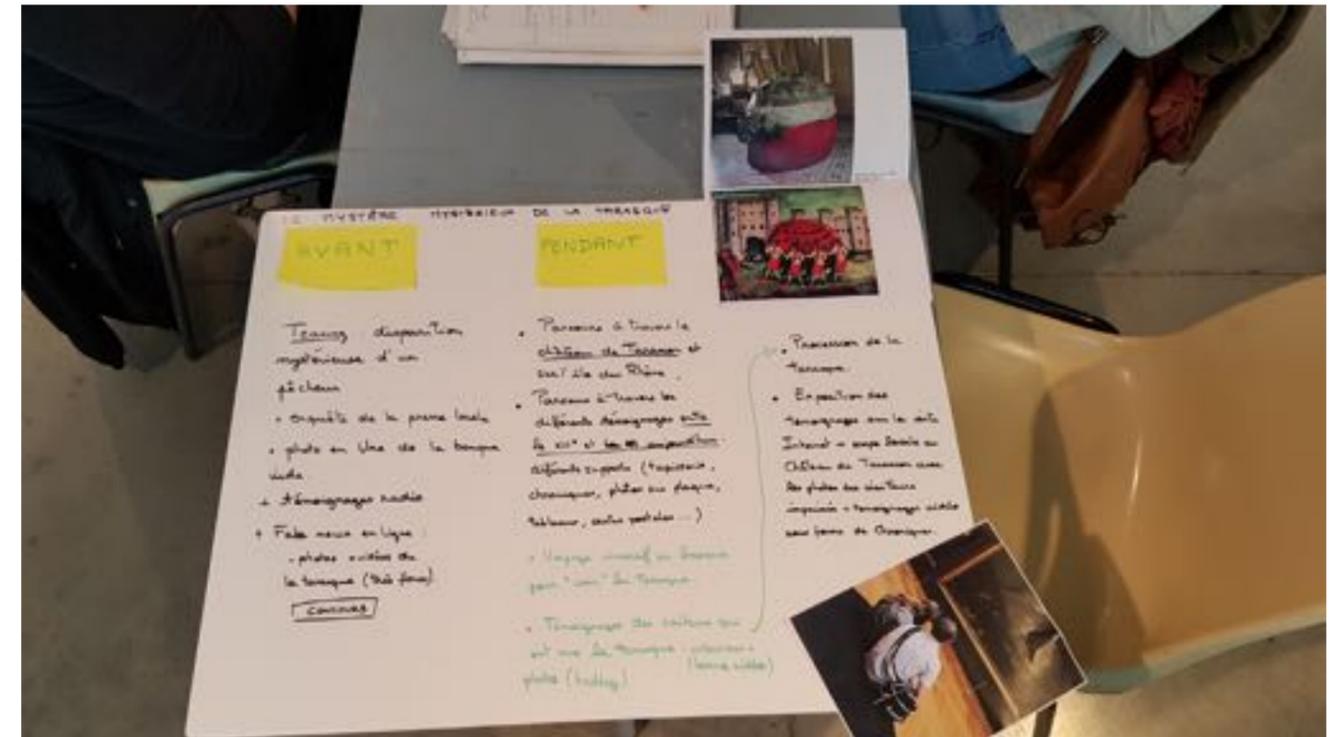
In the pre-visit phase, the mystery of the Tarasque is revealed little by little through a partnership with the local press in which the disappearance of a fisherman on the Rhone is reported. An investigation is conducted, supplemented by radio testimonies. Online, information multiplies about the appearance of the Tarasque; the photographs and videos used show a similar aesthetic to those that used to circulate about the Loch Ness Monster. In order to make progress in the investigation, the city launches a public competition.

The actual visit consists of a tour on the site of the Château de Tarascon and on the Rhone Island. This tour is an opportunity to highlight the different testimonies gathered between the thirteenth century and today, thus accentuating the different format they have taken: tapestries, chronicles, photos on plate, paintings, postcards and images of Epinal. This tour is completed with an immersive boat trip on the Rhone to «see» the Tarasque. Visitors are encouraged to take and share photos during this trip, and to leave their testimony on an onsite multimedia kiosk. In doing so, visitors enrich the existing narratives and continue the tradition



of telling stories of the Tarasque's mysterious appearances, this time through new media.

In the post-visit phase, visitors were invited to attend or take part in the procession of the Tarasque. Their photo/video testimonials were promoted on a website dedicated to this event as well as in an exhibition organized in the Château de Tarascon, on the theme of "Chronicles".



Group 2: "Mom, what was it like back in your days?"



The second group focused on the theme of a diorama presented at the Museon Arlaten and titled "The visit to the newborn's mother." In this diorama, several women are depicted visiting a young woman who has just given birth to a child. In the Provençal tradition, these women each brought a gift with a symbolic meaning: "good as bread", "healthy as salt", "straight as a match", "full like an egg" and "sweet as honey." This group's intention was to bring this gift tradition into our present society.

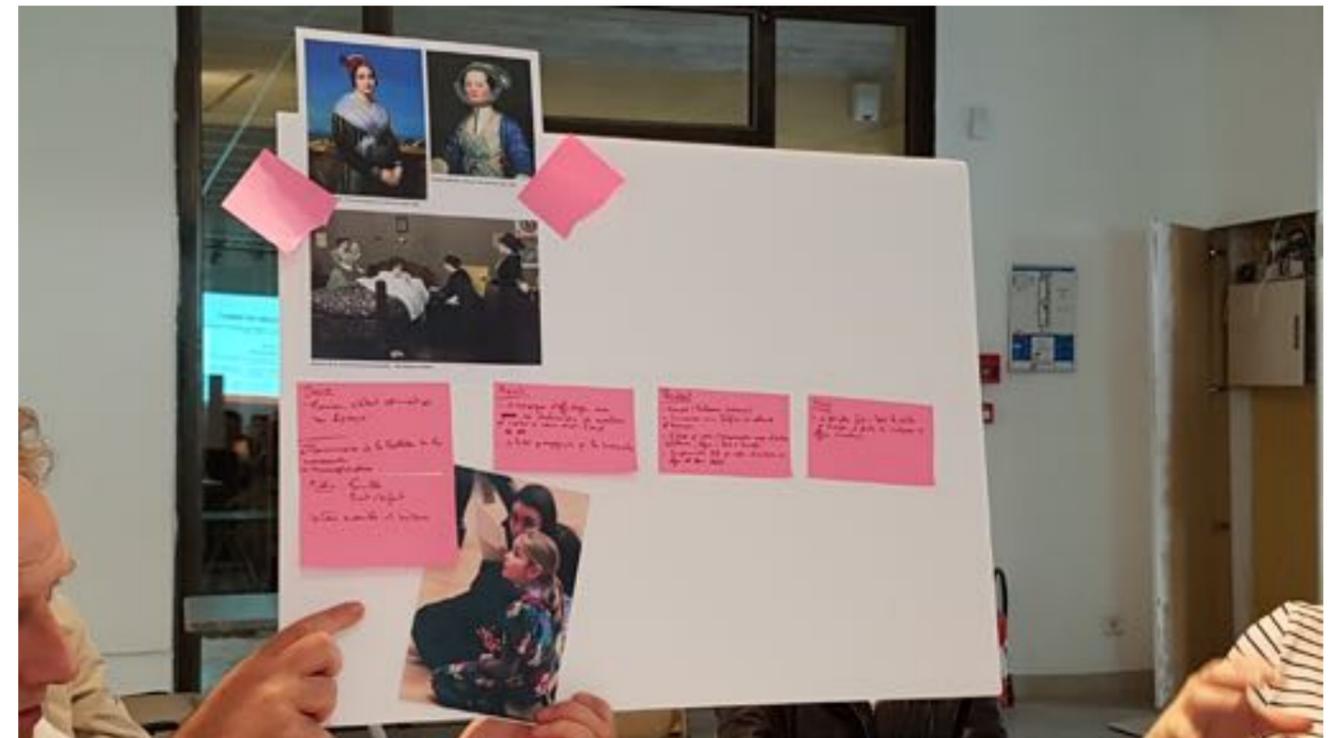
In the pre-visit phase, a poster campaign raises public awareness on the topic of birth and on the perpetuation of certain traditions, including visiting the young mother and her infant with gifts. A hashtag is created so that members of the public can engage in a conversation with the institution prior to their visit. The goal is also to foster intergenerational conversations between family members about birth experiences. In order to initiate dialogue in a school context, a teacher's booklet is also produced.

During the visit, people were invited to discover the exhibition in which the diorama is found.



They also have the opportunity to put on costumes, restage the diorama and take a selfie, sharing those moments on social media with the exhibition's hashtag. A video installation compares the Provençal traditions of birth with traditions from distinct time period and populations across the world. Finally, a 3D printer can be used to create a personalized object which is then donated to the diorama's newborn (who is none other than Frédéric Mistral, the founder of the Museon Arlaten!)

In the post-visit phase, people are able to continue the experience and to "keep in touch" with the young mother and her infant on social media where the museum has created an account for her. Members of the public can follow the first months of the infant's life and hear from the young mother. This allows for the interaction to continue beyond the exhibition space and help visitors learn more about what the first months of maternity (and, more broadly, of parenthood) looked like at the turn of the 19th century.





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