

COMMUNICATING THE MUSEUM 20

BRUSSELS 2018 27 TO 31 MAY

CELEBRATING THE HISTORIES, LIVES AND EXPERIENCES OF THE LGBTQ COMMUNITY

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The weight of words

- Queer came from a lack of vocabulary to talk about the LGBTQ community. It was once a violent expression, but now, as a reclaimed term, is used with pride.
- “Queering” a space involves the telling of queer stories with a focus on the positive, inclusive aspects of the community.
- Difficulties:
 - Stereotypes
 - Are people happy to be addressed as members of the LGBTQ community?
 - Or would they rather be considered individual members of the general public?

Fierce Queens event by Royal Museums Greenwich bringing drag queens into a royal venue in a gender bending extravaganza.

- Questions on how this will be seen from inside and outside. How will the double meaning of queen (monarch / drag performer) be received? What is a royal space – just a venue; a random place for a party? A delicate space for a certain level of society, demanding of respect?
- Storytelling was essential. Finding and collecting stories that resonate – from Queen Anne and her friend the Duchess of Marlborough to the portraits of Elisabeth I mixing notions of masculine and feminine power, bravado and style.
- Questions going forward: What behaviour is expected for the museum workers at an event like this? How should we approach and rethink themes of gender? How can we measure the commitment of the participants and the event’s legacy?
- Lessons learned and achievements: Attentive marketing is key. Legitimising by joining LGBTQ History Month. Inclusivity broadening the public – 80% of attendees had never been to the Queen’s House before.

Queer British Art exhibition featuring artists and themes categorised as queer, spanning 1861-1967, concluding with the end of criminalisation of homosexuality in the UK.

- Tate was required to explain and defend this project, and it delivered impressive returns: 180 000 visitors, younger than average, 20% of which had never been to the museum.
- New interpretation styles in the arts: the importance of authenticity, and the ongoing conversations of appropriation of legacy. Broadening the conversation and the scope: possibilities for another show.
- Creating an inclusive welcome – 20 training sessions with full Tate workforce, raising awareness of inclusive language around sex, gender, identity, sexuality (“ladies and gentlemen” not appropriate).
- Lessons learned and achievements: Open up and continue a public conversation (“Thanks! This show made me more gay”). Generational changes are to be taken into account and respected.