Heritage encounters on social network sites, and the affiliative power of objects
Costis Dallas

Introduction: Opening the ‘black box’

Exhibit A: Site director - We expect to open at the beginning of July for the friends of travel … in space and in time! (Photos of a group of people listening to a speaker in front of a colonnade) In the palace of Aigai, today with the museum guides! We are slowly preparing, and of course the guides should hear our ‘news’ first, as it is them who will ‘broadcast’ them. 63 shares, 1 comment. Community member - People will walk light-footed because king Philip hears, the courtiers watch over, and their stories are still whispered while others went away and resonate across the world…!!

Exhibit B: Museum - The Oath-taking in the Church of Aghia Lavra” by Theodoros Vryzakis. Oil painting, 1851. The historical composition represents the legendary declaration of the Greek War of Independence on 25 March 1821 in Kalavryta (Photo of the painting). 1,800 likes, 287 shares, 13 comments. Community member A - What the heck do you mean, ‘legendary’? It happened, and this is not going to change!!!! Correct the post.

Exhibit C: Community page owner Refugee camp in front of the Theseion, 1922, Library of Congress (Photo of half a dozen tents, a man seated on the left. In the background, the Classical temple of Hephaestus at the Athenian Agora). 158 likes, 29 shares, 3 comments. Community member A We became a sacrifice [in Greek: ‘thysia ’] in front of the Theseion… what do these tents remind you of... an unrooting, then and now… Community member B History repeats itself.

What is happening with museums and cultural heritage on Facebook? How do social network sites mediate between the ‘unassailable voice’ of cultural heritage institutions (Walsh 1997) and the polyphonic and dissonant views of source communities, amateurs, and publics? Which powers does tangible cultural heritage hold within the disembodied, intangible realm of social network sites, at our postmodern time when the primacy of objects as reliable carriers of significance is challenged (Bal 2003; Hein 2007; Conn 2010)? What kinds of identities are constructed

1 Faculty of Information, University of Toronto, Canada & Digital Curation Unit, IMIS-Athena Research Centre, Greece. E-mail: costis.dallas@utoronto.ca
2 Alexander the Great Virtual Museum [Facebook group] https://www.facebook.com/groups/414624375246597.
3 The Benaki Museum [Facebook page] https://www.facebook.com/TheBenakiMuseum.
4 Asia Minor Unforgettable Motherland [Facebook page] https://www.facebook.com/anthoula.izmir.
in the encounters of diverse communities with different kinds of “objects” in the pervasive, non-custodial environment of social network sites, or “in the wild”?

Drawing from Greek Facebook sites, the “exhibits” opening our investigation offer evidence of the diversity of encounters with tangible and visual cultural heritage as it is manifested in archaeological monuments, historic places, artworks, artefacts, and photographs, as well as in the activities of institutions that act as its custodians, gatekeepers and communicators of cultural heritage, such as museums. In Exhibit A, the director of antiquities and head of the “polycentric” site museum of Aigai, the seat of the royal Macedonian dynasty of Philip II, posts under her personal name to followers of the Alexander the Great Virtual Museum open Facebook group to share the news about the briefing of museum guides on the site, and its planned opening to the public in the near future. Her message comes after three photographs of the restored remains of the palace of Aigai, “a remarkable landmark, a symbol of power and beauty … utterly revolutionary and avant-garde for its time”\(^5\), three times as large as the Athenian Parthenon, and an archetype for the public architecture of Hellenistic times. Her voice is personable, informal, and affective. Members of the community are fellow travellers to the past, and the museum guides are the mediators, the co-workers who need to receive and relay the message for safe travel – like crew and passengers of a ship in a long journey. A Facebook user responds with a comment. Her voice is equally affective, almost poetic, but her imagination conjures a different image, that of a dreamlike visit to the palace of Aigai when the museum opens: Philip II will himself be there listening, his courtiers will be overseeing the site while whispering stories like those that reached the end of the world, and visitors will be solemn and quiet, as if in pilgrimage. Like the dreams of treasure in Greek island culture, the eerie apparition of Philip II in the imagined future visit to the palace of Aigai is akin to a temporal \textit{ekstasis}, “a divinatory look into the future to discover a past that will enrich the present” (Stewart 2003). In that, it echoes the way the excavator, Manolis Andronikos, implicated the presence of archangels Michael and Gabriel in the discovery of the grand royal tomb in Aigai (Hamilakis and Yalouri 1999). Imagined time travel, and an encounter with the intangible spirits of the past, on the other hand, become the conduit by which “the inert landscape of objects and monuments is turned into a living archive of cultural values” (Appadurai 2002).

Exhibit B shows a different kind of discursive entanglement between a cultural institution – the Benaki Museum in Athens – and a community member: the Museum speaks in the impersonal voice of the object label to present a painting illustrating the proclamation of the Greek war of independence by Germanos III, the metropolitan of Old Patras, in a scene that contemporary historians consider an “imagined tradition” of the 19\textsuperscript{th} c. Greek nation-state which, nevertheless, remained part of common knowledge until recent years. A community member challenges the

\[^5\text{As described in the official website of the museum, https://www.aigai.gr/en/explore/museum/palace/aiges/verginia.}\]
use of the word ‘legendary’ by the museum, demanding that it be corrected: the member deems the painting to be reliable evidence for the event it depicts, and history cannot be changed. Both museum and community member speak in the mode of objective facts, but their knowledge base is rather different; the significance of the painting in the eyes of the community member is anchored in prior knowledge, established through national education and accepted belief – the Facebook post was granted no less than 1,800 “likes”, while 287 users “shared” the photo of the painting on their own personal Facebook timeline. The fact that the museum challenges it under veil of institutional authority must have felt, thus, as a particularly bitter form of betrayal.

It is notable, therefore, how in Exhibit C the moderator of the Asia Minor Unforgettable Motherland (“lands of our fathers”) Facebook group, a descendant of a Greek family who immigrated from Smyrna after the so-called Asia Minor disaster in 1922, adopts also the authoritative, detached voice of the museum wall label to present a photograph of a camp of Greek refugees set right in front of the Classical temple of Hephaestus at the Athenian agora, commonly known as Theseion. But the reaction of other community members – many of them also descendants of 1922 refugees from Asia Minor, who may have suffered the hardship of forced migration and the reserve, indifference, even hostility of local populations in Greece – is anything but detached: motivated by the painful collective memory of 1922, one speaks of “unrooting, then and now”. The reference to the plight of the massive recent wave of refugees from the war in Syria is unambiguous, and immediately picked up by another member, who responds: “History repeats itself”. The photograph, tangible heritage of the plight of the refugees from Asia Minor in 1922, “speaks in and to the present, even if it does so in terms of the past” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1995).

Cultural heritage and social media
Since the turn of the 21st century, social media approaches have become an important pillar in the communication arsenal of cultural heritage institutions, endowed with a promise of empowering audiences and communities in ways that the unidirectional communication of institutionally authored websites and online exhibitions could not. The historical pertinence of this promise harks back to the “visitor turn” of the late 20th century museum. It was fuelled by pressures towards public fiscal accountability and measurable service to society, by concerns for the growing irrelevance of the institution as a “temple” of stilted curatorship, research and ritual adulation of objects (Duncan 1995), by ethical and political challenges to dismantle the “unassailable voice” of curatorial authority (Walsh 1997), and, last but not least, by a growingly hegemonic desire within the field to establish the museum as a “mirror” of a living community (Rivière 1985), as a reciprocal “contact zone” between institutional and community knowledge (Clifford 1997), and even “the forum” for broader civic engagement and dialogue (Cameron 1971). More recent developments include advocating the adoption of a “participatory museum” (Simon 2010), integrating the voice of source communities through protocols of indigenous curation (Kreps 2009; Basu
2013), agency-oriented curation (Dallas 2007; Willmott et al. 2016), reciprocal research (Rowley 2013), and participatory archival practice (Huvila 2008), and forging a collaborative (Moser et al. 2002), open (Lake 2012), emancipatory (Morgan 2012) or “do-it-yourself” (Morgan and Eve 2012) archaeology.

The advent of the age of social media, symbolized by the meteoric rise of social network platforms such as Facebook, growing from a “hot or not” Harvard campus website in 2004 (Wikipedia 2017) to a pervasive global digital communication infrastructure with 1.86 billion monthly active users in December 2016 (Facebook 2017), co-evolved with these internal shifts in the field of museums and cultural heritage. Social media has been defined as a set of “particular subgenres of digital communication characterized by easy user interaction in terms of networking, collaboration around affinities of interest, sharing and commenting on self-created or self-edited content”. It encompasses categories “such as blogs (short for weblogs), videosharing sites … social bookmarking sites … virtual world sites, wikis and social network sites” (Gronemann et al. 2015). Often identified with Web 2.0, it covers a diffuse area of overlapping technologies, platforms, communication genres, approaches and methods of interaction, colonizing more or less the full lifecycle of practices of appraising, organizing, curating, communicating and experiencing cultural heritage. It thus also includes crowdsourcing and the production of user-generated content (UGC) through involving large groups of individuals in cultural heritage-related correction and transcription tasks, contextualization (i.e., content enrichment), complementing collections (i.e., contributing new objects), classification, co-curation, and crowdfunding (Oomen and Aroyo 2011), user tagging and folksonomies (Trant 2009; Cairns 2013), as well as enhanced modes of visitor interactions in digital cultural heritage installations (Ciolfi et al. 2008). The adoption of Application programming Interfaces (APIs) helps the transformation of single-function social media applications into platforms allowing interoperability of services and functionalities across systems (Concordia et al. 2010; Hennesy et al. 2012).

Common platforms emerging as components of a globally accessible, networked, pervasive information infrastructure include commercially owned but still mostly free to use platforms such as YouTube allowing museums and cultural heritage institutions to share videos and manage channels (Walsh et al. 2014), Flickr providing a similar service for digital photos (Kalfatovic et al. 2008), microblogging platform Twitter (Osterman et al. 2012; Vrana et al. 2016), and Facebook. Commercial platforms are complemented by open content services, of which the most notable is Wikipedia (Wyatt 2011), including also wiki-based collections of collaboratively-curated resources under initiatives such as Wiki Loves Monuments. While other platforms, such as Scribd, Second Life, the now defunct Picasa Photos and Delicious are also mentioned, a study among ca. 300 American museums (among, it should be noted, a much larger number of established museums in the US) found that 49% use Flickr, 56% use YouTube, 70% use Twitter, while 94% use Facebook (Fletcher and Lee 2012). A recent survey suggests, on the other hand, that
20.8% of the 239 established museums in Greece use YouTube, while 28.3% use Twitter and Facebook respectively (Theocharidis et al. 2014); but another survey, among the 122 archaeological museums in Greece, indicates that a much lower percentage of only 11% use Facebook, while even smaller numbers use Twitter or YouTube (Theochari et al. 2015). On the other hand, a study of selected Greek and non-Greek archival organizations found that 23% use Flickr, 34% use Twitter, 45% use YouTube and 78% use Facebook (Bountouri and Giannakopoulos 2014). Consistently, Facebook, followed by Twitter or YouTube, is the most widely used platform among cultural heritage institutions surveyed.

As Nicole Ellison and danah boyd note, some of Facebook’s defining characteristics of acquiring, listing and connecting to “friends” are now mainstreamed in other genres of social media communication, while features like the ‘News Feed’ and the social graph API have emerged as salient components of Facebook user experience: “[T]he technical affordances that define a social network site have become increasingly fluid [and] people’s practices, expectations, and social norms have also co-evolved” (Ellison and boyd 2013). boyd and Ellison (2007) have been instrumental in demarcating the concept of Social Network Site (SNS), which, in the light of this growing fluidity they redefine as

…a networked communication platform in which participants 1) have uniquely identifiable profiles that consist of user-supplied content, content provided by other users, and/or system-provided data; 2) can publicly articulate connections that can be viewed and traversed by others; and 3) can consume, produce, and/or interact with streams of user generated content provided by their connections on the site” (Ellison and boyd 2013)

To address a latent category error, we consider infrastructures such as Facebook to be social network platforms, retaining the use of the term social network sites for particular profiles, pages or groups established and used by individuals, communities or organizations. Personal Facebook sites have become a stage for “performing and interpreting identity” (Farquhar 2012), providing fertile ground for the application of Erwin Goffman’s dramaturgical theory of the self (Goffman 1959; Hogan 2010; Zhao et al. 2013). On the other hand, organizational Facebook sites, such as those of companies and institutions, have been centrally positioned as tools for marketing and branding. As Jenny Kidd suggests, the “Marketing Frame (promoting the ‘face’ of an institution)” is central in the use of social media by museums (Kidd 2011), a fact confirmed by her close reading analysis of museum posts on Facebook (Kidd 2014:42–52).

Nevertheless, the evolution of Facebook into a multifunctional social network platform, now combining services of video and audio storage and access, email and private messaging, video and audio conferencing, and blogging with its original core functionalities of personal profile display and relationship management introduces different dimensions in the way it can act as an infrastructure for the negotiation of cultural identity. As is apparent from our initial analysis of
‘exhibits’ from the Alexander the Great Virtual Museum, the Benaki Museum, and the Asia Minor Unforgettable Motherland Facebook sites, such interaction with cultural memory and identity is not limited to social network sites managed by museums and other custodian institutions, but extends to grassroots, alternative heritage, and subaltern initiatives, much like the rising movement of community archives challenging the institutional logic and power dynamic of official archival organizations (Flinn and Stevens 2009). Our selection of cases has thus been purposeful rather than representative, or exhaustive6, since our our interest is driven by theory-laden considerations of cultural heritage object agency, the changing practices of heritage curation beyond the “custodial fold”, and their implications.

Facebook encounters with Greek cultural heritage

In their analysis of posts across nine Danish museum Facebook pages, Sigurd Gronemann and co-workers identify a number of communicative genres in the museum’s Facebook posts: in order of frequency, stories (“providing information or entertainment for a museum’s audience”), news, announcements, records, “share-your-point-of-view”, quizzes, “pseudo-questions”, and “help needed” (Gronemann et al. 2015). Similarly, in their study of Twitter microblogging by the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden and by the National Air and Space Museum in Washington, DC, (Osterman et al. 2012) recognize different “categories” of museum tweets: direct inquiry, direct reply, historical information, public comments, exhibition, upcoming activities and announcements, solicitation for public participation, museum staff commentary and criticism, “use new/social media”, “thanks”, ongoing conversation, and, sharing links and resources. Looking at archaeological Facebook sites, Isto Huvila also concludes that “much of the documented activity relates to (links to) announcements of coming events, news briefs and links to various archaeology related web sites. Some groups and pages did, however, contain traces of individual to individual interactions in form of personal remarks, humour and discussions in comment threads” (Huvila 2014). Efthimia Theochari and co-workers, on the other hand, found that 45%

6 In a country of ca. eleven million inhabitants, Facebook reports that, as of November 2016, 4,7 million people are Facebook subscribers, of which 3,9 million are active (daily) users (Καθημερινή 2016). While we have been unable to locate relevant analyses on unique users in published research, from the number of ‘likes’ of museum and cultural heritage pages (e.g., 411,012 ‘likes’ for the Acropolis Museum, 137,260 ‘likes’ for the Benaki Museum, and 77,227 ‘likes’ for the Goulandris Museum of Cycladic Art), as well as the existence of more than twenty cultural heritage-related groups with more than a thousand members, we can surmise that a percentage of 15-20% of Facebook users in Greece may be engaged to some extent with cultural heritage on Facebook. In this study, we looked for community interactions in the Facebook pages of the Acropolis Museum, the Benaki Museum, the Goulandris Museum of Cycladic Art, the Macedonian Museum of Contemporary Art, the National Museum of Contemporary Art, the Museum of Byzantine Culture, the Museum and Palace of Aigai, the Archaeological Museum of Piraeus, the Archaeological Museum of Delphi, the Contemporary Social History Archives, and several other institutions. We also looked at several community sites, including the Atenistas community, the Jewish Heritage of Greece closed group, and the Asia Minor Unforgettable Motherland open group. In the following section, we draw mostly from three cases of Facebook cultural heritage sites in Greece to draw broader conclusions.
of the posts at Facebook sites of Greek archaeological museums aim at promoting an event, at 33% at promoting an exhibition, while they identify 22% as posts “that wish to maintain the museum’s presence, such as an uploaded image of the museum accompanied by the text “Good morning and have a good week””. Similarly, comments to museum posts by a community member are differentiated into 575 of comments “relevant to”, 14% of comments that ask a question addressed to the administrator, and 29% of posts “that have no relation to the posted information … irrelevant comments … such as e.g. ‘Hi to everyone in Athens, Greece’” (Theochari et al. 2015:Graphs 8, 14).

The sites we examined vary significantly in the predominant genre of content they post on Facebook. The Goulandris Museum of Cycladic Art and the Acropolis Museum fit squarely within the international norm established by the literature, whereby posts on institutional Facebook pages aim primarily to communicate their exhibitions, programmes and services to the public. Apart from its temporary exhibitions, of which the Ai Weiwei show was the one most frequently posted in 2016, the Goulandris Museum posts often on the activities of its educational programming for children and adults, publicizing competition winners and posting online the winning designs made by children. In the Acropolis Museum Facebook page, pride of place, with repeated post uploads, is taken by the innovative “A walk to the Museum with an archaeologist” programme, inviting visitors to “participate in evening walks in the Museum galleries with unpredictable stops and diverse discussions”, in a post accompanied by a photograph of the Caryatids. Interestingly, comments by community members are not limited to thanks, congratulations and other expressions of positive sentiment for the programme, but initiate object-centred discussions and topics, triggered by the photo of the Caryatids. “Bring them all back”, exclaims one visitor who, together with her comment, uploaded also a photograph of the Duveen gallery in the British Museum; “They look alive… they’re wonderful!”, says another. As noted by Kidd, comments on Facebook are often related to the images, often “bypass[ing] the particular event or question the museum was seeking to highlight” (Kidd 2014:51). The longing for the restitution of the Parthenon marbles is a frequent theme for dialogue between Greek community members through their Facebook comments, occasionally including a response by the British Committee for the Reunification of the Parthenon Marbles, and sometimes echoed by calls for their return in English, Spanish and other languages. Other posts promote the acclaimed restaurant of the Museum, and its themed menus of traditional Greek cuisine that seek to match the topics of the Museum’s temporary exhibition and programming – a growing practice of museums internationally, as they seek to enrich the sensory aspects of visitor experience (Mihalache 2016).
The identity of the Benaki Museum page and interactions with the community, on the other hand, is shaped by the very frequent posting on Facebook of items from its collections and archives – typically documentary photography charting the social, political and cultural history of Greece especially in the 20th century, but occasionally also artworks, decorative art, and other three-dimensional objects. A strategy employed by the Museum’s Facebook team is to align the theme of posts with calendar events: hence, drawing from the temporal continuity of its collections, it may post a photograph of an embroidered epitaphios, dating to Constantinople in 1682, during the Orthodox holy week, inviting a flurry of holiday wishes, as well as the comment “I saw it last year. It’s a masterpiece!”; a portrait of Georgios Kolokotronis, one of the leaders of the 19th c. Greek War of Independence, on the anniversary of his death; documentary photographs and paintings of women from the collections on Women’s Day, eliciting the comment: “You could, of course, include a work by a woman painter - Or are we lacking any?”, and provoking a sparring debate on gender injustice and inequality; a photograph from the centre of Athens on 3 December 1944, the day when fighting began between the EAM/ELAS resistance movement and governmental, British and right wing forces, leading to a bloody Civil War; or even a photograph of a painting depicting a man and a woman in embrace on St Valentine’s day, a recent and contested tradition in Greece which, nevertheless, elicited comments such as “A kiss for you, beautiful woman”, emoticons of hearts, and a visitor photograph of a heart-shaped cake. Other photographs of items from the collection accompany event and exhibition announcements. But the Museum posts also regularly with links to music online by Greek composers such as Manos Hatzidakis, or with photographs of morning coffee. A post with a picture and opening hours of the enchanting café of the affiliated Museum of Islamic Art invited a sequence of comments: “Will you buy coffee”? - Coming!!! - One teaspoon of sugar, please! I’ll wait for it on the other side of the Atlantic! – It’s amazing not just for that, but for what it exhibits!!”. While these object-centred interactions on issues that verge from politics to leisure appear at first glance to be irrelevant, they may in fact constitute important mechanisms for affective engagement between the museum and its visitors.

Our third case unsettles the notion of object, as illustrated in the posting of pictures of artefacts and documentary photographs in the Facebook pages of institutions such as the Benaki Museum, but also of communities such as Asia Minor Unforgettable Motherland. On September 8, 2010 a laconic post inaugurated the Facebook presence of the atenistas activist group: “Welcome to atenistas. A group that wants to act for Athens!” A cascade of further posts followed within hours. “We want our city back”, exclaimed one, castigating the illegal parking and urban decay of the Aghia Irini square, “one of the most beautiful squares in the historic and commercial centre of Athens”. Another, reflecting on the current state of the neoclassical buildings of the Athens Academy, the University of Athens and the National Library, wondered if “those who make decisions about Athens have ever walked in the centre”. Followers and comments grew, likes and
shares multiplied\(^8\). As the *atenistas* community of “Athenians in action” burgeoned in size and activity, its Facebook page became a main focus, mobilizing thousands of people interested in the past, present and future of Athens to engage in 141 grassroots actions between 2010 and 2016. Scores of cyclists occupied the main streets of Athens one Sunday evening, making a political statement against the domination of the private car in the city, and cyclist tours are now a regular *atenistas* event. Food, blankets and clothes were collected and distributed to people in need. Playgrounds and school yards were painted with graffiti. Abandoned plots of land were cleaned from garbage, replanted, and turned into gardens open to the community.

While the scope of the *atenistas* extends to broader civic agendas, many of the group’s actions so far have focused on culture and heritage. Interpretive posters, providing historical context to unknown architectural and archaeological monuments, as well as signage to places of cultural interest, were designed, produced and affixed *in situ* by members of the group to provide intellectual access to visitors. People were invited to participate to guided tours to archaeological monuments and sites. They were prompted, through the group’s Facebook page, to discover “the museum in the city” through a heritage treasure hunt, concluded by free entry to the National Archaeological Museum. “Open walks” were organized to engage participants with different aspects of the tangible heritage of Athens (related to Ottoman heritage, the reign of King Otto, the Jewish heritage of Athens, and the city at the time of Nazi occupation, but also to the historic Anafiotika neighbourhood on the side of the Acropolis, the “invisible Athens”, the “hidden” stores and workshops of the city centre, the shopping arcades, and the culinary culture of the city). An amateur photography competition was launched, and eighty photos shown in a public exhibition. A cyclist tour was organized to crowdsource photographs of open-air sculpture in the city, and the results were collected in an online geo-mapped digital collection.\(^9\) Facebook posts with photographs of the historic architecture of the city, but also of broken pipes, abandoned yards, and, most notably, the very activity planned by atenistas, is the object of the group’s communication.

The predominance of images as the main media of communication in institutional posts, such as those presented above, may correspond to a well-documented phenomenon that online audiences actually *prefer* viewing and sharing visual content rather than reading (especially long) text. In Zhao and Lindley found in their qualitative study of Facebook users, “photos were highlighted as the media type most likely to be of value. Participants generally felt that the “things that are important to me is pictures, photography, just pictures” (Zhao and Lindley 2014). Nevertheless, transported to the field of museum communication, this notion is at dissonance with another widely accepted notion, i.e. that museum audiences can be engaged primarily through story-telling, a practice in which language is central. One additional dimension explaining this

\(^8\) http://www.facebook.com/atenistas,

\(^9\) https://atenistas.org/category/anakoinoseis/.
The phenomenon may be connected to Nina Simon’s intuition that “[m]useums, and museum staff members, tend to be highly visually-oriented. It’s about the objects, the display, the people, the process, the event – the image of the experience. I suspect that there are many more museum professionals who are ready and eager to share photographs or videos documenting their work than are ready to write about it” (Simon 2013). Yet visuality is perhaps the most salient dimension for gaining access to objects, and their significance (Bal 2003). To make sense of why, and how, cultural heritage sites on Facebook mobilize new ways of interaction within communities, or between communities and institutions, we need to go back to objects.

The affiliative powers of objects

Lucy Suchman (2005), drawing from the work of Alfred Gell on object agency in the anthropological context (1998), advances the notion of the “affiliative powers” of objects, which she identifies as “the ways in which objects are not innocent but fraught with significance for the relations that they materialize”. In multiple encounters between institutions and communities in Greek Facebook cultural heritage sites, objects – the 1922 refugee tents in front of the Theseion, the missing Caryatid in the Acropolis museum, Moralis’ painting of the kissing couple, the photo of Athens at the break of the Greek Civil War, the schedule for the atenistas “open walk” – enact affiliative powers, mediating within the members of a community, or between communities and institutions. Like the multiple affiliations of Suchman’s 8200 Xerox photocopier as both a mundane instrument of office practice and a scientific object of research – in artificial intelligence, human cognition, user interface design, ethnmethodological inquiry, etc. (Suchman 2005) – the visual and material objects of heritage implicated in Facebook encounters acquire multiple affiliations as objects of collective identity.

Schau and Gilly had summoned the notion of ‘affiliative identity’ to explain how consumers present themselves through their possessions not only to indicate aspects uniquely distinguishing them from others, but also to situate themselves in “social worlds” and communicate who they are to a specific community. While these display practices are made more complex through other parameters – such as how much they are made to represent operating or ideal(ized) values characterizing the identity of individuals – the use of affiliative objects, including but not limited to personal possessions, seems to be a central strategy for self-presentation also on digital and social media, whose potential to allow the emergence of situationally defined, multiple, potentially inconsistent or even conflicting identities (van Dijck 2013) offers the promise of a “freer form of self-presentation”, challenging identity formation theories depending solely on bodily enactment, material acquisition and physical proximity. To present themselves in personal sites, individuals not only employ strategies of “constructing a digital self” through purposeful selection of a “collage” of personal information and media, of “projecting a digital likeness” through digitally improved and polished pictures of themselves, or of “reorganizing linear narrative structures”
through hyperlinks providing elaboration, bracketing and thematisation. They also engage in “digital association” through hyperlinks, symbols and photos of objects not bound by ownership or proximity, and “blur[ring] the distinctions among the material, the immaterial, the real and the possible” (Schau and Gilly 2003).

It is this dimension of affiliative identity that becomes relevant as we consider the encounters of community members and institutions in Facebook sites, including those of museums and grassroots communities in Greece. Affiliative identity – the collective bond that links individuals to collectivities through practices of cultural consciousness – is enacted, in these sites, through different kinds of affiliative objects: heritage objects, such as documentary photographs and pictures of artefacts, in the case of the Benaki Museum and of the Asia Minor Unforgettable Motherland pages; objects of museum exhibitions, programmes and visitor services, in the case of the Goulandris Museum of Cycladic Art and the Acropolis Museum; objects of planning and future action, in the case of the atenistas group of “Athenians in action”. The process demonstrates the contingent, fluid and hybrid status of cultural identity formation on social network sites, which act not just as a stage for the presentation of self, but, more importantly, as spaces of “hybrid performativity” where cultural identity is perpetually negotiated and formed “in relation to concepts of heritage, ethnicity, […] social peer groups, and wider affiliations in society” (Shaw and Krug 2013). As found also in a study of social media practice among ethnic minority groups in Norway, such a process of affiliative identity-making may involve the evocation of autobiographical narratives, poetic expressions and language play, but also images that act as metonymic symbols of the self – a gesture representing the peace sign, the logo of a football club, the photo of a rapper (Mainsah 2011).

Affiliative objects centreing around Greek cultural heritage are central to heritage encounters involving source communities, amateurs, local people, tourists and heritage professionals on Facebook. Their affiliative power is enacted as memory work, as cultural capital, and as civic participation. They thus become the trigger for the construction and negotiation of affiliative identities, and change themselves as they co-evolve in social conversations with the agency of community members, and the dynamics of the power differentials between institutions and communities.

Understanding how particular encounters are shaped by the performative agency of these objects, as well as of how their functional genres (Yates and Orlikowski 1992) instantiate different kinds of collective rationality (DiMaggio and Powell 1983) for museums and cultural heritage organizations, going beyond the temple and towards a new kind of forum (Cameron 1971), or contact zone (Clifford 1997), is a challenge not just for academic research, but most importantly for cultural praxis.
References

Appadurai, A.
2002 Cultural diversity: a conceptual platform. UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, 9–16. Cultural Diversity Series No. 1. UNESCO Publishing, Paris.

Bal, M.
2003 Visual essentialism and the object of visual culture. Journal of Visual Culture 2(1): 5–32.

Basu, P.
2013 Reanimating cultural heritage: digital curatorship, knowledge networks and social transformation in Sierra Leone. In A. E. Coombes and R. B. Phillips (eds.), Museum transformations: art, culture, history. Blackwell, Oxford, UK.

Bountouri, L., and G. Giannakopoulos
2014 The use of social media in archives. Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences 147: 510–517.

boyd, danah m., and N. B. Ellison
2007 Social network sites: Definition, history, and scholarship. Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication 13(1): 210–230.

Cairns, S.
2013 Mutualizing museum knowledge: folksonomies and the changing shape of expertise. Curator: The Museum Journal 56(1): 107–119.

Cameron, D. F.
1971 The museum, a temple or the forum. Curator: The Museum Journal 14(1): 11–24.

Ciolfi, L., L. J. Bannon and M. Fernström
2008 Including visitor contributions in cultural heritage installations: designing for participation. Museum Management and Curatorship 23(4): 353–365.

Clifford, J.
1997 Museums as contact zones. Routes: travel and translation in the late twentieth century, 188–219. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass.; London.

Concordia, C., S. Gradmann and S. Siebinga
2010 Not just another portal, not just another digital library: A portrait of Europeana as an application program interface. IFLA Journal 36(1): 61–69.

Conn, S.
2010 Do museums still need objects? . University of Pennsylvania Press.

Dallas, C.
2007 An agency-oriented approach to digital curation theory and practice. In J. Trant and D. Bearman (eds.), The International Cultural Heritage Informatics Meeting Proceedings. Archives & Museum Informatics, Toronto, October 25.
van Dijck, J.
2013 ‘You have one identity’: performing the self on Facebook and LinkedIn. Media, Culture & Society 35(2): 199–215.

DiMaggio, P. J., and W. W. Powell
1983 The iron cage revisited: institutional isomorphism and collective rationality in organizational fields. American Sociological Review 48(2): 147–160.

Duncan, C.
1995 The art museum as ritual. The Art Bulletin 77(1): 10–13.

Ellison, N. B., and danah boyd
2013 Sociality through social network sites. In W. H. Dutton (ed.), The Oxford handbook of Internet studies. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Facebook
2017 Company info. Facebook newsroom. January 1.

Farquhar, L.
2012 Performing and interpreting identity through Facebook imagery. Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies: 1354856512459838.

Fletcher, A., and M. J. Lee
2012 Current social media uses and evaluations in American museums. Museum Management and Curatorship 27(5): 505–521.

Flinn, A., and M. Stevens
2009 ‘It is noh mistri, wi mekin histri.’ Telling our own story: independent and community archives in the UK, challenging and subverting the mainstream. Community archives: The shaping of memory: 3–27.

Gell, A.
1998 Art and agency: an anthropological theory. Clarendon Press, Oxford.

Goffman, E.
1959 The presentation of self in everyday life.

Gronemann, S. T., E. Kristiansen and K. Drotner
2015 Mediated co-construction of museums and audiences on Facebook. Museum Management and Curatorship 30(3): 174–190.

Hamilakis, Y., and E. Yalouri
1999 Sacralising the past: cults of archaeology in modern Greece. Archaeological Dialogues 6(2): 115–135.

Hein, H. S.
2007 The authority of objects: from regime change to paradigm shift. Curator 50(1): 77–85.

Hennesey, K., R. Wallace, N. Jakobsen and C. Arnold
2012 Virtual repatriation and the Application Programming Interface: from the Smithsonian Institution’s MacFarlane Collection to ‘Inuvialuit Living History’. In N. Proctor
and R. Cherry (eds.), *Museums and the Web 2012: Proceedings*. Museums and the Web, San Diego, CA.

Hogan, B.
2010 The presentation of self in the age of social media: distinguishing performances and exhibitions online. *Bulletin of Science, Technology & Society* 30(6): 377–386.

Huvila, I.
2008 Participatory archive: towards decentralised curation, radical user orientation, and broader contextualisation of records management. *Archival Science* 8(1): 15–36.

Kalfatovic, M. R., E. Kapsalis, K. P. Spiess, A. V. Camp and M. Edson
2008 Smithsonian Team Flickr: a library, archives, and museums collaboration in Web 2.0 space. *Archival Science* 8(4): 267–277.

Kidd, J.
2011 Enacting engagement online: framing social media use for the museum. *Information Technology & People* 24(1): 64–77.

Lake, M.
2012 Open archaeology. *World Archaeology* 44(4): 471–478.

Mainsah, H.
2011 ‘I could well have said I was Norwegian but nobody would believe me’: Ethnic minority youths’ self-representation on social network sites. *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 14(2): 179–193.

Mihalache, I. D.
2016 Critical eating: tasting museum stories on restaurant menus. *Food, Culture & Society* 19(2): 317–336.

Morgan, C., and S. Eve
2012 DIY and digital archaeology: what are you doing to participate? *World Archaeology* 44(4): 521–537.

Morgan, C. L.
2012 Emancipatory digital archaeology. . University of California, Berkeley, Calif.

Moser, S., D. Glazier, J. E. Phillips, L. N. el Nemr, M. S. Mousa, R. N. Aiesh, S. Richardson, A. Conner and M. Seymour
2002 Transforming archaeology through practice: Strategies for collaborative archaeology and the Community Archaeology Project at Quseir, Egypt. *World Archaeology* 34(2): 220–248.

Odom, W., J. Zimmerman and J. Forlizzi  
2011 Teenagers and their virtual possessions: design opportunities and issues. *Proceedings of the SIGCHI conference on Human Factors in computing systems*, 1491–1500. ACM.

Oomen, J., and L. Aroyo  
2011 Crowdsourcing in the cultural heritage domain: opportunities and challenges. *Proceedings of the 5th International Conference on Communities and Technologies*, 138–149. C&amp;T ’11. ACM, New York, NY, USA.

Osterman, M., M. Thirunarayanan, E. C. Ferris, L. C. Pabon, N. Paul and R. Berger  
2012 Museums and Twitter: an exploratory qualitative study of how museums use twitter for audience development and engagement. *Journal of Educational Multimedia and Hypermedia* 21(3): 241–255.

Papacharissi, Z., and M. de Fatima Oliveira  
2012 Affective news and networked publics: The rhythms of news storytelling on# Egypt. *Journal of Communication* 62(2): 266–282.

Rivière, George Henr  
1985 The ecomuseum: an evolutive definition. *Museum* 37(4): 182–183.

Rowley, S.  
2013 The reciprocal research network: The development process. *Museum Anthropology Review* 7(1–2): 22–43.

Schau, H. J., and M. C. Gilly  
2003 We are what we post? Self-presentation in personal web space. *Journal of Consumer Research* 30(3): 385–404.

Shaw, A., and D. Krug  
2013 Heritage meets social media: designing a virtual museum space for young people. *Journal of Museum Education* 38(2): 239–252.

Simon, N.  
2010 *The participatory museum.* Museum, Santa Cruz Calif.  
2013 Museum 2.0: image beats text: good for museums, tough for me. *Museum 2.0.* July 3.

Stewart, C.  
2003 Dreams of treasure: temporality, historicization and the unconscious. *Anthropological Theory* 3(4): 481–500.

Suchman, L.  
2005 Affiliative objects. *Organization* 12(3): 379–399.

Theochari, E., D. Kousouri, L. Beleri, A. Bounia, V. Datsioudis and A. Partsinevelo  
2015 Facebook as a communication tool of Greek archaeological museums. *archaeology & arts*, March 30.
Theocharidis, A.-I., D.-M. Nerantzaki, V. Vrana and D. Paschaloudis  
2014 Use of the web and social media by Greek museums. *International Journal of Cultural and Digital Tourism* 1(2): 8–22.

Trant, J.  
2009 Tagging, folksonomy and art museums: early experiments and ongoing research. *Journal of Digital Information* 10(1).

Vrana, V., K. Zafiropoulos and K. Antoniadis  
2016 Top European museums on Twitter. *Tourism and Culture in the Age of Innovation*, 457–469. Springer.

Walsh, C., J. Albright, T. Apperley, C. L. Beach, C. Beavis, R. Black, I. Bogost, C. Bradford, A. Burn and D. L. Carlson  
2014 YouTube as the art commons? Strategies, perceptions and outcomes of museums’ online video portals. *Digital culture & Education* 6(4): 393–408.

Walsh, P.  
1997 The web and the unassailable voice. *Archives and Museum Informatics* 11(2): 77–85.

Wikipedia  
2017 History of Facebook. *Wikipedia*. January 14.

Willmott, C. A., A. Tattt, M. A. Corbiere and A. Corbiere  
2016 Toward language in action: agency-oriented application of the GRASAC database for Anishinaabe language revitalization. *Museum Anthropology Review* 10(2): 91–116.

Wyatt, L.  
2011 Wikipedia & museums: community curation. *Uncommon Culture* 2(1): 33–41.

Yates, J., and W. J. Orlikowski  
1992 Genres of Organizational Communication: A Structurational Approach to Studying Communication and Media. *The Academy of Management Review* 17(2): 299–326.

Zhao, X., and S. E. Lindley  
2014 Curation through use: understanding the personal value of social media. *Proceedings of the 32nd annual ACM conference on Human factors in computing systems*, 2431–2440. ACM.

Zhao, X., N. Salehi, S. Naranjit, S. Alwaalan, S. Voida and D. Cosley  
2013 The many faces of Facebook: Experiencing social media as performance, exhibition, and personal archive. *Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, 1–10. ACM.

Καθημερινή  
2016 4,7 εκατ. οι χρήστες Facebook στην Ελλάδα, τα 3 εκατ. μέσω κινητού. *Καθημερινή*, November 3, sec. Internet.