



ABBA the Museum

Partner 8: Kunstverein Monochrom, Austria > Günther Friesinger

1. Exhibition Concept

“ABBA the Museum is a unique exhibition filled with music, original costumes, history, images, instruments and never-before-displayed memorabilia from the ABBA’s recording and performing heyday. ABBA the Museum is an interactive experience featuring the latest technology in sound, visuals, multimedia and communications. Most of the items have been supplied exclusively by the quartet.”

2. Reception

Considering the immense popularity of ABBA around the world and especially in Europe (their music sales are exceeded only by Elvis and the Beatles) it is not surprising that the Museum, based on a popular travelling exhibition, has been a popular attraction in Stockholm since opening. Anecdotally, many visitors to the museum seem very happy to participate in the many interactive and quite visible performance activities such as karaoke singalongs and music video performances.

3. Exhibition Design

The first room of the exhibition featured a multi-screen surround sound video remixing clips from the long career of the band, emphasizing the experiential nature of the museum. The eclectic physical exhibits included both traditional glass cases containing fragile or precious objects, as well as room-sized recreations of various settings from the lives and careers of the artists, including rural concerts, recording studios, dressing rooms, and business offices. Interactive experiences were scattered throughout. The exhibition was largely linear, taking visitors from the band members' family origins and pre-ABBA careers, and ending with the more recent ABBA revival through the popular stage musical and film featuring their songs.

To access the interactive elements, visitors needed to scan their paper ticket under a bar code reader before beginning an interactive activity. This allowed the exhibition system to track and save their performances.

4. Visitors Approach-Activation/Participation

In addition to the many memorabilia, the exhibit features multiple interactive stations that can be saved and tracked by scanning the bar code on the visit ticket. After the experience the visitor can access a web page with all of their performances: trivia questions, singing auditions, trying on virtual costumes, and performing on stage with the band.

Some of the more unusual real-world-linked features are a “red phone hotline” that could ring at any moment, connecting you directly to one of the members of the group (the four of whom are the only ones who hold the number to the red phone), and a studio piano which is virtually linked to that in the island studio of Björn Ulvaeus and will begin to play automatically whatever he plays in real life, enhancing a feeling of participation and connection to the artists.

5. Conclusion: in respect to the COP1 and COP2

Toolkit 1 – to make Europe visible (COP1) – The role of popular music and culture in the formation of a pan-European identity was clear in the widespread popularity of the band ABBA, as represented most plainly by its career-making success in the 1974 Eurovision song contest held in Brighton UK.

Toolkit 2 – integrating cultural Europe (social arena): (COP2) – A popular musical act appeals to all sectors of society, and is an important part of creating a sense of community and belonging among diverse groups of individuals.

Toolkit 3 – activation, participation and & role modification: (COP2) – in this area, ABBA The Museum is extremely strong. The purpose of the exhibition (rather than some other venue such as concert, television show, etc) is to engage the visitors actively in the music-making of the group. In general this effort was



quite successful in generating interaction of the visitors with the material and with each other. One place in which the interactive experience was not very strong was the bar-code scanning of the tickets. The scanner readers were unreliable and slow, leading to frustrating moments for visitors wanting to participate in the interactive activities, but being unable to get started.

Toolkit 4 – synesthetic translation of perspective (COP1) – Almost every sense (barring taste and smell) was brought to bear on the visitor experience. One interesting decision by the Museum was to ban cash payments for tickets, and in the gift store. Signs throughout the giftshop explained the founders' perspective that a low-distribution national currency such as the Swedish Kronor is anachronistic and burdensome.

Toolkit 5 - Social web and interaction: (COP2) – In this area the exhibition was also particularly strong. After participating in as many or as few interactive experiences as they wished, the visitor could go to the Museum website and access a personalized URL which compiled all of their personal performances into a single, well-designed page. This page could then be shared online as desired.

Focus on COP 1 + COP2

Image 1, 2, 3 : ABBA the Museum. Foto: Reuters 2013

Image 4: The ABBA the Museum personalized experience web site. Foto: Heather Kelley 2013

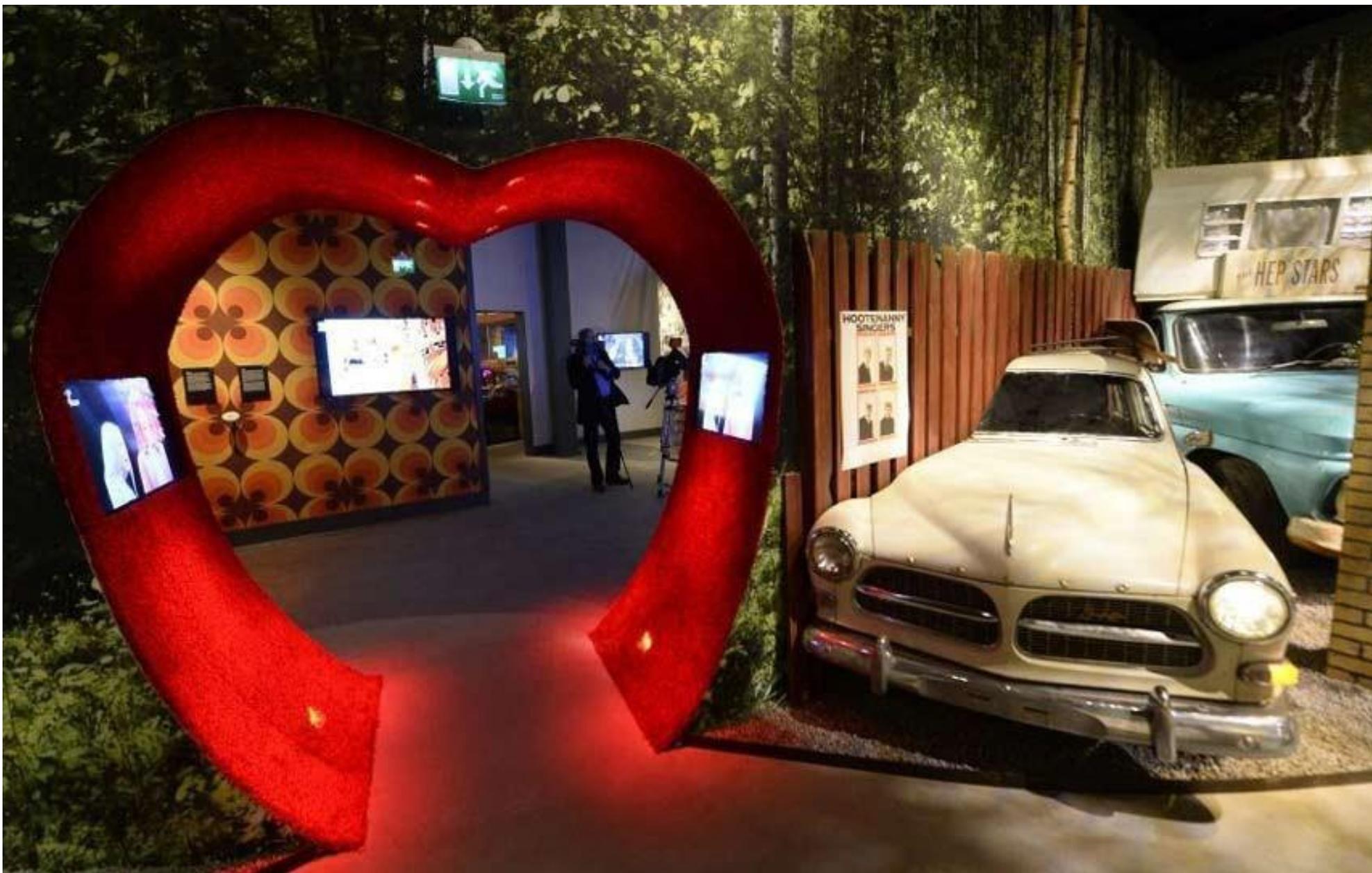


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