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**PROJECT OF FINNISH NATIONAL GALLERY AND
UIAH MEDIA LAB**

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Abstract

Multimodal interfaces for Museum Audiences: A collaborative study The MUMMI project (Multi modal Museum Interfaces), a study project conducted by the Finnish National Gallery's Art Museum Development Department and the Media Lab of University of Art and Design, Helsinki, was launched in 2001. The project aims to contribute to the emerging field of digital and interactive media and support innovative applications, which would improve the accessibility of diverse audiences to cultural heritage information.

The initial purpose of the project was to promote the methods and good practice of user centred design, visitor studies and accessibility matters (Design for All principle) and to unite the expertise of both institutions for common objectives. The project aims to incorporate the content rich and versatile cultural heritage information with the latest innovations on digital interactivity and installations. It also aims to enhance the understanding of the museum visitors and their various needs, and to create content that is meaningful, intelligible, and communicable for its users - regardless of their various backgrounds, skills and learning styles or strategies.

From its beginning the MUMMI project has had a vital part in Media Lab's interface design and information design studies, where MA-students and researchers of New Media are able to practice user centred design with real audiences and interesting content (<http://mlab.uiah.fi/mummi>). While creating innovative museum applications the MUMMI project also provides challenging case studies in the accessibility and usability matters.

Already, the project has produced several final thesis projects for Media Lab students (see: <http://mlab.uiah.fi/~marjo/museum>)

The synergy between Media Lab and Art Museum Development Department has been very close and fruitful. While Media Lab is in charge of the implementation of the technical

innovations, interface design and the human-computer-interaction, the Art Museum Development Department coordinates the development of museum applications and produces content. In addition, the Art Museum Development Department takes part in teaching, planning the MUMMI curricula and its objectives, and evaluation of the demonstrations.

The MUMMI project also aims to disseminate its research results and know-how on the challenges and implications of the recurrent media for the cultural heritage field. This means efficient networking. One important information channel for the project is the Access Consultation for Finnish Cultural Institutions managed by the Art Museum Development Department and financed by the Ministry of Culture and Education. The project partners have also produced several links and cooperation with other universities, museums and research and cultural institutions, among others the Finnish Association of Deaf, the Finnish Federation of Visually Impaired, the national and European Design for All -network, the University of Helsinki (Department of Translation Studies, Department of Art History, and Department of Computer Science), and the University of the Arts in Philadelphia.

The paper discusses further the process of this multidimensional cooperation and demonstrates its present results. It also describes the methods of teaching (workshops, lectures, projects, planning through virtual platform) and gives practical guidelines for the development of Multi modal museum interfaces.

Keywords: Design for All, User Centred Design, Collaboration, Cultural Heritage, Art Museum, Multimodality, Virtual exhibition, New Media studies.