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As summer comes to a close and school begins once again, spring and summer museum visits are memories. Here are some highlights that I received, including this from Paul Orselli. A business trip to Petaluma, California also gave me the opportunity to visit the Charles M. Schulz Museum and Research Center (<http://www.schulzmuseum.org/>) in nearby Santa Rosa. After enjoying a glass of root beer at the Warm Puppy Café and Ice Rink (Schulz was a life-long hockey and ice skating fan) across the street, I was ready to start my visit.

I didn't really know what to expect, but since I grew up with the **Peanuts** comic strip, I stepped through the front door of the Schulz Museum with a sense of anticipation. First, the good news: the building and interiors are beautiful, including several large, modern reinterpretations of Schulz' cartoon characters. Also a recreated office gives a sense of the workspace that Charles Schulz inhabited just a few hundred yards away in the home where his second wife still resides.

Now the bad news: currently the museum feels like a visit just once, "been there done that" type of place. Even though the Schulz Museum hosts temporary exhibitions drawn from original **Peanuts** artwork and themes, the entire place has the feeling of a well-appointed mausoleum.

I think the museum would be well-advised to consider the value of Mr. Schulz' future audiences, as well as those who, like myself, consider Charlie Brown and Snoopy old childhood friends.

As I eavesdropped on a school-group tour being turned loose to stare at original **Peanuts** comic strips in acrylic vitrines, and being sternly admonished to "be careful" and "don't touch the cases!" I couldn't

help but imagine Charlie Brown himself saying "RATS!"

Sean Duran was also in California and submitted the following. This summer at the Skirball Cultural Center in Los Angeles, CA, **Jews on Vinyl** was created by guest curators Roger Bennett and Josh Kun, who have scoured the country to collect thousands of vinyl LPs from attics, garage sales, and dusty archives. Pieced together, these scratched, once loved, and now forgotten audio gems tell a vibrant tale: the story of Jews in America. Based on Bennett and Kun's findings, **Jews on Vinyl** spans the history of Jewish recorded music from the 1940s to the 1980s, weaving an account that begins with sacred songs and ends with the triumvirate of Neil Diamond, Barbra Streisand, and Barry Manilow. Set in a retro 1950s-style living room equipped with listening stations, the exhibition features a soundtrack of LP highlights—much of it no longer available in any format—providing an unprecedented opportunity to experience lost moments in American Jewish pop history and new perspectives on Jewish



A retro 1950s-style living room equipped with listening stations in the **Jews on Vinyl** exhibition at the Skirball Cultural Center. Courtesy of Sean Duran.

identity. Complementing the music will be an abundance of often kitschy and surprising album art to discover and enjoy!

The exhibition was developed in association with the publication **And You Shall Know Us By the Trail of Our Vinyl: The Jewish Musical Past As Told By the Records We Have Loved and Lost** (Crown, 2008), a project of the non-profit Idlesohn Society for Musical Preservation. Idlesohn reissues select classic recordings and has created a digital online home for Jewish musical memory in an attempt to restore missing legacies to our contemporary view of Jewish America.

Jenny-Sayre Ramberg sent me this about her visit to the Oakland Museum of California. A group of us from the Monterey Bay Aquarium exhibit department took a day trip up to see Oakland Museum of California's newly renovated and recently opened art and history galleries. We strongly recommend a visit to anyone traveling through the Bay Area. It's even worth a special trip with your team if you're considering a renovation of a major permanent collection. The museum, which originally opened in 1916, is setting a new standard for testing new ideas and making the most of your collection.

As we walked up to the museum, we were greeted by giant canned spinach planters with leafy greens sprouting from the top. Immediately, my memories of this dark, cement building were challenged, and I was intrigued. The docent out front welcoming visitors told us this is an art installation that celebrates the Del Monte Cannery, while growing greens for the museum's new café.

We had come up to see the museum because we'd heard that the exhibit team had worked long and hard to re-envision and share the extraordinary collections of the museum in more accessible and engaging ways. We noticed examples of a number of approaches through both galleries: lots of docents eager to show us around and ways to incorporate our own thoughts or comments (talkback stations), images (inserting self-portraits into a wall of



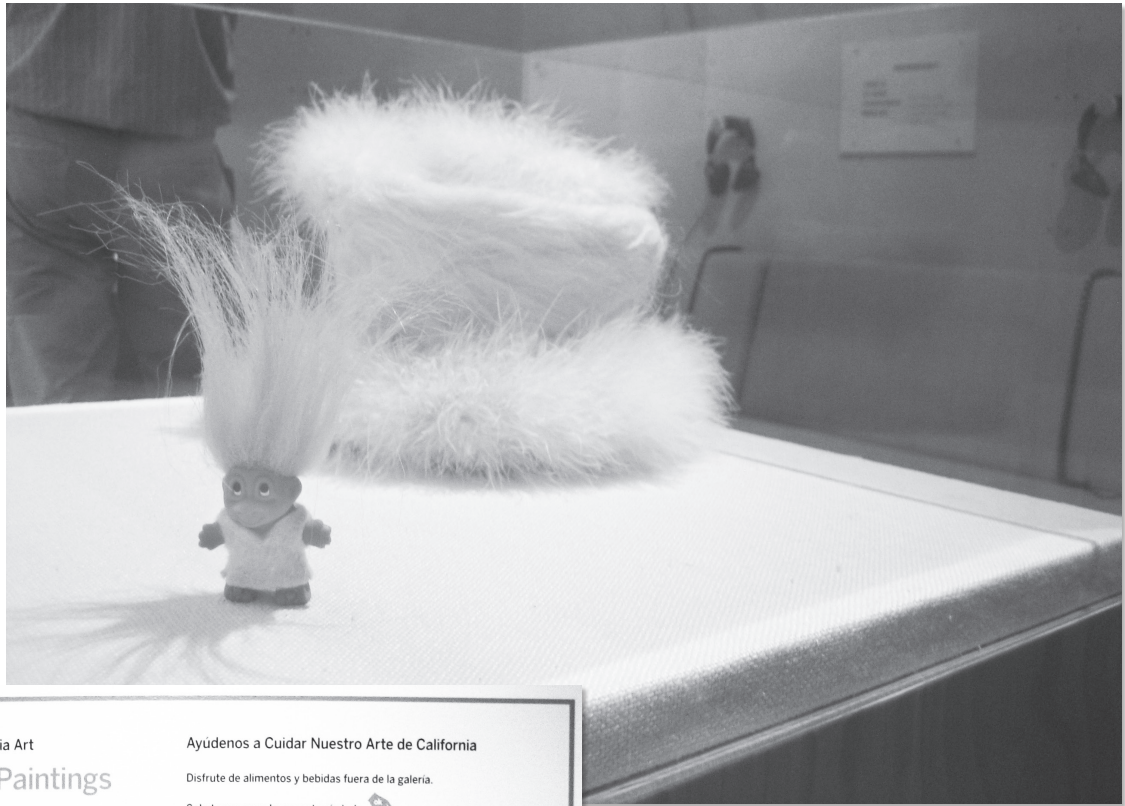
Visitors to the Oakland Museum of California are greeted by giant canned spinach planters with leafy greens sprouting from the top. Courtesy of Jenny-Sayre Ramberg.



Visitors can draw their own portraits on a nearby touch screen and add them to the wall of portraits. Courtesy of Jenny-Sayre Ramberg.

portraits), and even personal history (putting a sticker down to build a map of where visitors' families come from). The museum's promise to celebrate "the story of you" comes through in these types of visitor interactions.


In the art galleries, the original cement walls have been partially covered in warmer, white panels. Pieces were well-spaced, lending an air of expansiveness. The art has been reorganized according to themes, and intimate galleries supply comfortable seating to encourage contemplation and conversation. Some areas pose questions, such as "What makes art?" where visitors can explore different views



At this exhibit, the visitor is asked to consider "what is art?"
Courtesy of Jenny-Sayre Ramberg.

Help Us Care for Our California Art
Don't Lick the Paintings


Enjoy food and drinks **outside** the gallery.


Touch only when you see this symbol. 
Oil and dirt from hands damage artworks and objects.

Use of **pencils** to draw and write in the gallery is encouraged. Ink from pens can damage artworks and objects.

Take photographs but please **do not use flash**. Bright lights slowly degrade art and can disturb another visitor's experience.

Safely store large bags and umbrellas in lockers.

Ayúdenos a Cuidar Nuestro Arte de California
Disfrute de alimentos y bebidas fuera de la galería.
Solo toque cuando vea este símbolo. 
La grasa y la suciedad de las manos dañan las obras de arte y los objetos.
Los invitamos a usar lápices para dibujar y escribir en la galería. La tinta de las plumas puede dañar las obras de arte y los objetos.
Tome fotografías, pero por favor sin flash. Las luces brillantes degradan lentamente las obras de arte y pueden interferir con la experiencia de otro visitante.
Guarde bolsas grandes y paraguas en forma segura en lockers.

請和我們一起保護加州藝術
請在藝廊外面享用食物及飲料。
看見此標誌時，才可以觸摸。
手上的油漬及塵污會損壞藝術品及物品。
在藝廊內繪畫或書寫，建議使用鉛筆。原子筆的油墨會損壞藝術品及物品。
可以拍照，但請勿使用閃光燈。強光會使讓藝術品逐漸褪色，並會影響其他人觀賞。
請將較大的包裹及雨傘妥善存放在儲物櫃中。

This sign at the entrance of the California Art Gallery tries a novel approach to behavioral signage.
Courtesy of Jenny-Sayre Ramberg.

(continued from page 5)

and opinions—the relative artistic merit of, say, a troll doll—and cast a vote for different museum objects.

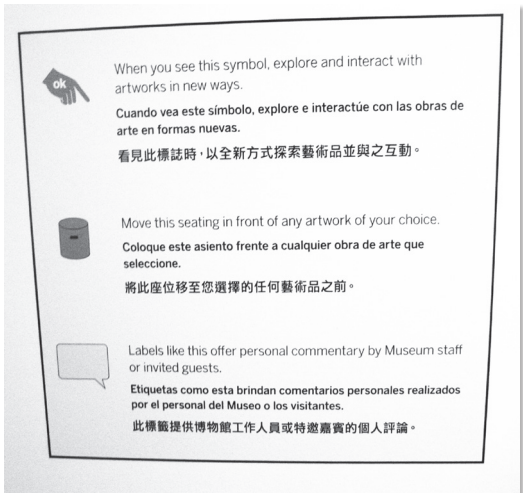
We really enjoyed the spare and thoughtful text in the art gallery, as well as the provocative questions and commentary by artists, writers, and staff on various pieces throughout the gallery.

The interpretation had a wonderful lighthearted tone. An example from the

orientation “lobby” included way-finding maps (which are currently being evaluated) and visitor guidance such as “Please don’t lick the paintings.”

One of the bravest things the exhibit team has done is install graphics that are mostly paper and temporary, awaiting evaluation and subject to change. The idea sent shivers of excitement and fear down our spines. What a wonderful and terrifying thing to do! Check it out and look for the third gallery of natural history to open in 2012.

And last, but not least, Darcie MacMahon wrote, I was in China this spring and had a chance to see quite a few museum exhibitions. Several things impressed me—the Chinese are obviously pouring lots of resources into museums, many of their exhibition techniques are quite up-to-date, museums are well visited by Chinese people, and most museums have dual-language labels in Chinese/English (some



Evaluation is testing how new types of labels are helping meet the goal of making the collection more accessible to visitors. Courtesy of Jenny-Sayre Ramberg.

better translated than others).

My favorite was Emperor Qin's Terra Cotta Museum in Xi'an. Site of China's first empire



View of the vast excavations at Emperor Qin's Terra Cotta Museum in Xi'an, China, with reconstructed figures in the foreground and ongoing excavations in the background. Courtesy of Darcie MacMahon.

at the end of the Silk Road, this amazing complex features beautiful architecture, a large and very professionally done museum, and several airplane-hanger-like buildings that protect excavations of the Emperor's full-scale, hand-sculpted terra cotta army, designed to protect him in the afterlife. To date, only about 10% of the tomb has been excavated, but the vastness of even that 10% is incredible with thousands of warriors (each looks different), horses, and other "support staff" such as acrobats arrayed over numerous acres. Archaeologists unearth the remains, reconstruct the figures, and place them back

in their original excavated locations for visitors (over 2.5 million every year) to see what the original installation would have looked like. Alongside the reconstructions are active excavations where you can watch archaeologists at work, and in the formal museum visitors can explore the story in more depth as well as view objects too delicate or small to keep in-situ. Just recently scientists have developed ways to stop the figures from losing their pigments, at least sixteen colors that rendered the



Museum staff documents and stabilizes all finds from the excavations, such as this terra cotta warrior's head, complete with fragile surface pigments. Courtesy of Darcie MacMahon.

figures vividly life-like, so future exhibits should include some of these. It's an amazing ongoing project, and just looking at the excavations conveys instantly the wealth and power of a megalomaniac emperor, and the incredible history of Chinese arts. Like rolling a history, art history, and a human interest story into one visual glance.

As you visit museums during the upcoming months, take mental notes and photographs, then send them to me for the Spring edition of Exhibit NEWSline. ✨