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### "Promoting the cultural heritage of Uruguay through the net : MUVA Virtual Museum of Arts Uruguay"

by Alicia Haber, curator of MUVA Virtual Museum of Arts Uruguay



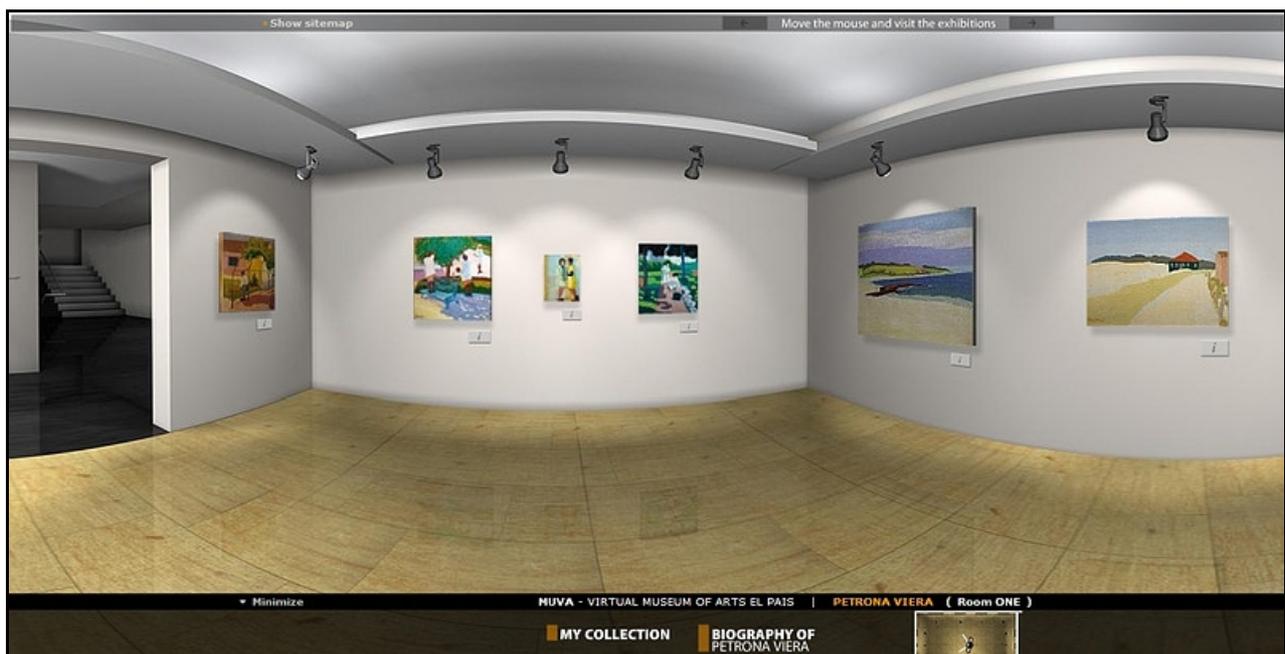
My paper will focus on MUVA Virtual Museums of Arts from Uruguay, its achievements but also its problems. I will deal with the creation of a virtual museum in a Third World country, entirely done by Uruguayans, with a very limited budget. I will present the way in which we had to face problems to create it in 1996, how we got to create it and how we got to expanding it and keeping it alive.

At the same time I will deal with the way in which we had to undergo the terrible crisis of 2000-2005 that was the worst in Uruguayan history and how MUVA survived and expanded.

Nevertheless it could not make changes, only expand.

Today, when the country is recovering (although very slowly) we are creating new exhibitions in multimedia technology that will allow a modernization of the Museum, a greater interactivity. Everything was done and has to be done with a very low budget since there is only very limited funding and the priorities in the Uruguay are others.

Nevertheless we are already working in a Flash version, introducing video, sound, and many other ways of interaction and by the time of the Meeting I aim to present our first exhibitions of the new version of MUVA.



Recently, we are working, after the terrible crisis, with the new capabilities for handling sound, video, 2D and 3D animation as well as more advanced graphics. These we hope will make

MUVA a more flexible dynamic and appealing medium ideal for relaying information. I will present our new exhibitions in Flash at the Meeting and it will be the first time, the new aspects of MUVA will be presented abroad in a professional Meeting.

The new MUVA is under construction and meanwhile we are also updating the old one. so MUVA is never stagnant. I will speak about our methods achievements and shortcomings in this area as an example of Third World strategies of cultural survival change and growth.

I will address the issue of multiculturalism in Internet and the way we are trying to include a "peripheral" but interesting culture. site and country (Uruguay. Uruguayan art. Spanish ) in a web dominated by bigger countries and dominant cultures. First World Sites are much more visible, have another budget and our aim it to emphasize the presence of Third World websites.

Visual arts are very important in Uruguayan culturallife. In this respect, both national and international experts judge art production to be one of the county's most outstanding characteristics. Furthermore, Uruguayan art is relevant on the Latin American art scene. Nevertheless, the country's art faces ail kinds of problems linked to its socio-economic situation and there are many factors hindering its visibility. The creation, expansion and now creation of a new version of MUVA, I will explain in my presentation, is in part related to the frustrations and limitations stemming from certain socio-economic realities and to the constraints of the Uruguayan society. Artists, architects, curators, museum directors fight and suffer but now this virtual experience, in a sense, might help them and offer new ways of satisfaction. Many constraints disappear in Cyberspace.

A web-museum will not solve the problems of Uruguayan art. This web-museum is an alternative medium to give more visibility to Uruguayan art and calm frustrations in an another realm - the virtual world - possibly giving Uruguayan art a new place in the world.

The idea is to use the Web as an exhibition medium that will recreate the museum experience and to mimic as far as possible the sensation of being inside a building. The guiding principle in this line of thought is the generation of virtual environments dosely linked to reality.

The rationale for the creation of MUVA's virtual building, is that the construction of an art museum such as the outstanding ones in the great metropolitan capitals of the world, would have cost from 50 to 100 million dollars, a prohibitive sum in the situation of Uruguay. A new museum is not even in the long-term plans of the Government or the Municipality or of any other public or private institution.



MUVA seeks new opportunities for Uruguayan art and tries to give it more visibility. It offers a new venue for Uruguayan artists and wants to increase and improve opportunities for Uruguayan artists to enable them to come doser to the national and international art community. Thus. it fosters recognition of Uruguayan art.

The role envisioned for the virtual museum is to advocate, support and promote Uruguayan art and provide information on the subject. The idea is to disseminate knowledge about the country and make its resources and cultural heritage more accessible. At the same time, MUVA endeavors to decentralize culture.

In the interim, it also tries to cover the needs of the Uruguayan Diaspora. It might well be a new source of syllabi for Latin American studies. MUVA hopes to encourage cultural diversity on the Net. and one of the goals we hope to achieve is to attract different profiles of visitors and increase the number of our viewers. MUVA also aims at attracting new audiences for art, for the "real" museums and collections and to stimulate them to enjoy "real" artworks.

This are some of the issues I will explore in my presentation and at the same time I will present the older version of MUVA and the new we are constructing now.

I wil present the museum navigating on line, navigating in a CD in English...



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