Director builds astonishing new art gallery from scratch during lockdown. Visitors now welcome.

Many museums have created online galleries during the pandemic. But Pere Izquierdo Tugas, director of the Consorci del Patrimoni de Sitges, in Catalonia, has gone one better, creating a complete virtual version of the exhibition centre itself.

Figure 1: Sitges x OWW collab video (draft) (click to play video)

[Press kit (Images & Videos)](#)

Pere Izquierdo, 57, an archaeologist and art historian, loves technology. "I'm a digital native," he says. "I started using a computer in 1975, at the age of 12". Thus, when he discovered *KULTURA*/*Occupy White Walls* (OWW), a new online art platform and game with 80,000 galleries already created by players, he realized that he had found the right place to give visibility to the museums he directs and the art collections in them.

"We have an interesting [collection](#), but it's not well known," he explains. "Visitors are surprised when they see it". He first thought OWW would be just a way to show the collection during the lockdown. He then realised it could be a permanent way to show the centre and its collections to a wider global audience.

OWW is built around its pioneering art discovery AI that *'finds art you'd like, even if you don't know what art you like'*. This is how it has already attracted tens of thousands of 'non artsy' gamers to engage with art and create their own virtual display spaces.

"Our mission is to spread art and OWW is an excellent opportunity to reach out to those who would love art but may not be very familiar with museums," continues Izquierdo. "We especially focus on young people, many of whom think that museums are sad and serious places. We must make them understand that we exist and make the works of art in our museums more popular ".

So he rolled up his sleeves and started building in his free time the environments of Sitges' museums by himself. Thus, was born a parallel architectural complex where you can spend a few hours among masterpieces of all times.

"First, we made a parallel version of the Sitges museums to show the paintings in rooms similar to the real ones." I looked for the OWW elements most similar to those in reality, even if our decorations are very particular, so in part it is my reworking. There are mosaics, stained glass windows, ceramics, freely inspired by those of real museums."

The online visit starts with the presentation in the Piazza dei Miracoli, one of the central places in the game. A short presentation tells the story of Sitges and its vocation to be an artistic and cultural centre. In an environment of great atmosphere, part of the square's futuristic architecture, it is explained how, in 1891, Santiago Rusiñol, an artist of great charisma, first came to Sitges, a Catalan village near the sea, and created the cradle of Catalan Modernism. Rusiñol knew, and corresponded with, with all the great artists of Paris, from Toulouse-Lautrec to Degas.

Figure 2: Piazza dei Miracoli in OWW

One must-visit place in the game is the Museum of Cau Ferrat, Rusiñol's home-studio. It is an extraordinarily dense museum, with 2,700 objects in 400 square meters, including five Picassos.

The whole upper floor of Cau Ferrat is like a temple of the arts, with the three allegories created by Rusiñol that preside over the room like three apses in a church. There are 17 paintings by [Ramon Casas](), another Catalan Modernist great, works by [Miquel Utrillo,]() lover of [Suzanne Valadon]() and father of Maurice Utrillo. Among the most important pieces are two paintings by El Greco: *The Penitent Magdalene* and *The Tears of St. Peter*, as well as a collection of medieval altarpieces.

In *Occupy White Walls* you can also visit the Museum of Maricel (Sea and Sky), which was originally the home of the American millionaire, Charles Deering, who had an impressive art collection and bought an entire barrio, a city neighbourhood, to exhibit its collections. There too, in the game, there are numerous works that tempt you to go and see the real museum, from Gothic altarpieces to Rusiñol's paintings. Another remarkable room is dedicated to the allegories of the First World War by [José Maria Sert](), the painter who created the decoration of the United Nations Palace in Geneva.

"In the game we tried to keep the same tour routes as in the real world museums. At Cau Ferrat in the physical museum, there were explanatory cards, which we had to remove with the Covid emergency. Thus, visitors to the real museum can visit the rooms with a smartphone app that describes the various paintings. That same app can also be used for visiting OWW. In the virtual part of Maricel, on the other hand, there are signs with brief explanations. In the future, in the game, it would be great to do guided tours with avatars. Explanations of the works disseminated by the speakers present in the halls could also be envisaged (Sound cloud music/audio integration was added to KULTURA/OWW in a recent update)".

All this is a work in progress. "We are also working on the Romantic Museum, which will soon reopen in the real world, and the Stämpfli Foundation for Contemporary Art. In the latter case, however, there is a problem of rights ", notes Pere Izquierdo.

There are other initiatives. "On the 22nd of June, we will be holding a competition in which OWW players will be invited to curate exhibitions on any subject they choose as long as they include at least 15 artworks from the Sitges collection. The prizes will include a museum catalogue, a reproduction of an artwork, and lots of 'cubes' – the (free) currency players use to build their own OWW galleries.

"I think this game offers endless opportunities of this kind, this is how art and museums will look in the 21st century".

"Since the parallel version of the Sitges museums opened, many people have commented on the virtual's museum's reception desk, saying they want to go and see the real museum," notes Pere Izquierdo with satisfaction. "For us it means having hit the target. I am in love with KULTURA/OWW. We took a professional tool and turned it into a game, into something that can be fun for people. And it's wonderful that people can play at what we usually do as work ".

To explore the parallel Sitges museum, [download/stream the game](), once logged in press T for the teleport menu and click on Sitges in the featured gallery list.
Alternatively, you can explore the collection through [Sitges on KULTURA]().

StikiPixels

StikiPixels is the company behind [KULTURA](#)/[OWW](#). Based in London, StikiPixels is a 20-person start-up founded with a vision of using the power of online games and artificial intelligence to democratise art, enabling the public unhindered creativity and self-expression while providing artists a fair and level playing field.
Can an online world change old-school reality? [We think so](#).

And the reference for press inquiries.

PRESS AND MEDIA INQUIRIES
Please contact Mario Gerosa at info@mariogerosapress.com