Your Exhibition Will Soon Be Virtual:
Transmediating Museums into the Digital Sphere

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Contemporary museum exhibitions are abundantly multimodal, combining material artefacts with verbal labels, images, sound, haptic experiences and interactive devices. The talk will show how a textual perspective on exhibitions allows us to apply the analytical tools of multimodal linguistics: the curators of an exhibition write a text with multiple semiotic resources, and the museum visitors read, interpret, and interact with it.

The basic textual layer of an exhibition consists of the exhibited artefacts imbued with meaning by their original cultural context. Additional meanings are added through selection of some objects over others, exhibition theme, thematic arrangement, verbal descriptions, museum maps, handheld guides, etc. Importantly, exhibitions are texts that are read communally, with visitors influencing each other through their movements, their attention, and comments.

All of this becomes relevant in the new practice of online exhibitions. Increasingly, museums digitize their collections and exhibit part of them online; an example is the "Digital Belvedere". For online exhibitions, spatiality, context, presentation, sightlines, path-taking decisions, lighting, and visitor interactions can be partly re-created with different media.

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Keywords

museum, online exhibition, museum visitors, artefact semantics, curator, digitisation, participation

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