



INSIDE THE GALLERY PODCAST – SERIES 2 EPISODE 5 (May 2020)

Transcript of interviews:

STUART SEMPLE – VOMA

JENNIFER McNAMARA – ART EST

PABLO JOMER – Curators Board Game

STUART SEMPLE - VOMA

Tim Stackpool:

Let's first head to the UK and catch up with Stuart Semple, who is likely better known to you for creating large-scale public projects for cities including Melbourne, Dublin, London, Moscow, and Manchester. His most ambitious was Happy City in 2018, in which he created several large public interventions throughout Denver, which was documented in the Amazon Prime documentary Mr. Happy, if you want to go take a look. Today, however, he's turned his attention to VOMA, the Virtual Online Museum of Art, an immersive gallery that utilises video gaming architecture and design to create an exhibition space only on the internet. Stuart joins us from the UK via WhatsApp. Stuart, thanks for joining us on the podcast.

Stuart Semple:

Thanks for having me. It's good to be here with you.

Tim Stackpool:

Now, this is such an exciting concept that you've come up with. First of all, can you describe what it is you propose?

Stuart Semple:

What I'm proposing is the world's first virtual art museum, and by that, I don't mean a website where you flick through pictures. I mean an actual virtual space that's been built from the ground up to give a whole new experience of looking at art and actually operates like a museum, so there's specific exhibitions, curated shows, solo projects, an educational program where you can see the greatest art works on loan from other institutions, somewhere that anybody can go for free on their web browser, on their phone, or in their VR headset.

Tim Stackpool:

And I was going to ask you about that. I mean, in terms of creating the technology to put behind this, I mean, I guess there's a lot of different disciplines there.

Stuart Semple:

Yeah, it's complicated. Basically, the people at the forefront of this are gaming companies, right? We see it in games like Fortnite, where maybe there's 12 million players on at any one time, so we're collaborating with game makers, cloud computing experts, and CGI artists that can make things look really beautiful and get that level of interactivity that we want from the space.

Tim Stackpool:

In terms of curation, Stuart, will you be bringing in artworks that people are already familiar with, like world masters, or are you looking at creating a space where perhaps art that we haven't seen before is available to view?

Stuart Semple:

So, it's basically both. My dear friend Lee Cavaliere is going to be the director of the gallery, and he's curating it. So, he's putting together a program, but we're very lucky because it has no location, so it's nowhere, so it's everywhere. So, we can have a truly international dialogue there. We can show great old masters, like a Caravaggio painting, next to something new that was made last week, I don't know, in Iran or something by some artist nobody's ever seen. It's that kind of intermix and interplay that we can do here that isn't really possible in a geo-located space.

Tim Stackpool:

Yeah, and most curators are somewhat controlled by the space that they have, but I guess because you're building in a virtual world, if you need to add another wing to your gallery or museum, you can just do that.

Stuart Semple:

Absolutely. Absolutely. It's so much easier. It's liberating. You know, we don't need drills or ladders, or if we need an extra light or we want something to hang somewhere, wherever it can, it's amazing. It's so liberating to work in that space.

Tim Stackpool:

Yeah. And do you envisage this as becoming as well known or as well established as the Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art or the National Gallery over there with you in the UK, or perhaps the Museum of Contemporary Art here in Sydney?

Stuart Semple:

I don't know. I mean, that would be a dream come true, wouldn't it. I mean, it would be good if it just keeps going. If it works, that will be good. No, it'd be nice if people visited it and used it and it became a resource that people enjoyed, and it'd be great if it was up there with the great museums one day, but we'll see how it goes.

Tim Stackpool:

I'm kind of wondering, too... I mean, you would have thought about this prior to the world being shut down, as we've seen, across the last couple of months with COVID-19, but it's ironic that it seems so timely because of that.

Stuart Semple:

Yeah, I mean, I've been thinking about this stuff for a long time, so I've been playing with the internet and art for about 20 years, and all of those projects have been about democracy and access to art. So, I was the first visual artist to put an artwork on iTunes, for example. I actually made a virtual gallery in 1999, but the technology was rubbish. Everyone was on dial-up modems. It wouldn't have worked.

Stuart Semple:

So, this has been a dream for a long time, and I think with the COVID situation, I was thinking, "Actually, let's do a really meaty, big project while we're all in lockdown, something that we come out of that is beneficial," and really, COVID kind of spurred me to do it in a lot of ways because the art world's coming online, they're making the most of being online, but I'm not really seeing the level of innovation that I'd

like. It's still JPEGs on websites, by the most part. So, I'm hoping this will be useful forever, and something good will come out of this horrible situation.

Tim Stackpool:

Yeah. I mean, I'm guessing you and your colleagues have put a lot of money into this themselves. First of all, how are you going to close the project off in terms of the dollars that you need? Then secondly, how will you continue to fund it?

Stuart Semple:

Yeah. So, I've put the last of my money into it, which wasn't enough, so we went to Kickstarter. We did a crowdfunding campaign. We needed to raise £5,000 more to finish it off. The server space is really expensive for high-data games, by the way. So, yeah, we hit our target within 48 hours, which is brilliant, which means that we can finish it off. Then, going forward, we're hoping that people will donate. That's my big hope, that when they leave, if they had a nice time, they'll leave a dollar and that'll keep us going. We'll also look at institutional funding, like the Arts Council here in the UK and some other grants that are available. So, we really want it to be free. It's not a commercial project, so we're hoping to run like that, but let's see.

Tim Stackpool:

You could probably attract, hopefully, benefactors as bricks-and-mortar galleries and museums do, as well.

Stuart Semple:

Yeah. I don't see why not, and as long as their ethics are aligned with ours, maybe even commercial sponsors can have their logo somewhere, or whatever. I'm not against that, if need be, so we can see all of that, but the main aim right now is to get the thing open, get it done.

Tim Stackpool:

Yeah. The other thing is, too, is because it's not restrained by borders, of course, you're talking about going to your Arts Council in the UK, but there's no reason why you couldn't necessarily approach art councils right around the world in various countries, if perhaps it could tie in with some level of marketing or promotion to a worldwide audience, I guess, in a way. As you say, as long as it aligns to the ethics that you hold.

Stuart Semple:

Yeah, I think so. I mean, obviously we'll be bringing in international shows, and we're talking to museums around the world right now about partnering with us and collaborating with us in collections, and even collections of images. There's some people who collect really big, high-res files of images and really, we're not borrowing artworks, we're borrowing pictures of artworks, which makes the job a lot easier.

Tim Stackpool:

The other thing is, too, with private collections, as well, I mean, they're withheld from us. With your proposal, of course, you could take private collections, and depending on the agreements that you come

up with the collectors, you could have an exclusive presentation of a collection, which would make your proposal even more unique.

Stuart Semple:

Yeah, definitely. Lee's already having a conversation with private collections of things that people haven't seen for a very long time, and we're looking at work that hasn't been exposed for a while, some difficult ones like Nazi looted art and things like that, giving a voice to things like that. Yeah.

Tim Stackpool:

Yeah. That'll be amazing, because I think about, as you say, playing Fortnite or Minecraft, although I'm guessing your resolution will be somewhat better than what we see on Minecraft, but even going back, you were talking about the dial-up modems back in the late '90s. Earlier than that, games like Wolfenstein, where you had these castles or these keeps or whatever they were called back then, where you would navigate through, and you really are taking an extension of that, but the VR side of it is really the thing which is probably even more compelling, because you do immerse yourself in that gallery by having those visors on.

Stuart Semple:

Yeah. It's next level, like what I'm seeing from the geeks... I'm going to call them the geeks. But what I'm seeing from the geeks is literally blowing my mind every time they show me. What is possible now is off the charts. It's moved so far. I played Wolf3D back in the day. I know exactly what you mean. It's not that now. You are in this thing, and it is real. You can be outside the museum and look down at your feet and you can see the grass, and you're going to pick up a pine cone and then you can walk in. You can get so close to the van Gogh painting on the wall, you can see every brush stroke, how the light reflects off it. Then you can walk into the cafe and talk to people. It's not anything like what we've seen before, this stuff.

Stuart Semple:

I mean, we're even thinking about audience participation. Are we going to let you draw a moustache on the Mona Lisa? We can. I don't know that we will, but it's possible, and that's exciting.

Tim Stackpool:

I know, I know. But are you crossing the boundaries of defiling somebody's work?

Stuart Semple:

Quite possibly. I mean, I'm not saying we'll do that, but we might let you write... You might be able to draw on the wall somewhere or add something to the space, or whatever. So, we're playing with all that. I mean, it belongs to the audience.

Tim Stackpool:

And collaborative tour guides. I can well imagine that you could have people from all around the world. Your tour guide could be in Tanzania or the Antarctic.

Stuart Semple:

100%, and we've already looked at what it is to lead a group through the space. It's there. It's weird. It can do it. Yeah. It's all possible. It's amazing.

Tim Stackpool:

Incredible. Now, you did mention Kickstarter a little moment ago. In terms of your craft as an artist, what's your position on other artists, and do you have any advice for other artists or even other galleries who are thinking about using crowdfunding in order to develop their art, in order to not just sell their art, but also lift the market recognition of what they do?

Stuart Semple:

Yeah. I think it's a beautiful thing, because you have a direct relationship with the audience and they come with you on the journey of developing what you're making, and actually that's really nice, because you get that input and that dialogue in the work that you're making, and crowdfunding makes total sense, particularly online. It narrows the gap between, yeah, you and the audience. It's a great, great thing, and a lot of people are willing to support an artist or the creation of something new, to be part of that. I think it's a beautiful thing. We're very lucky that it exists.

Tim Stackpool:

So, where do people go now in order to see what you're doing and perhaps even make a contribution, even outside of your crowdfunding?

Stuart Semple:

Yeah. So, the crowdfunding's still running for another month, so you can still donate, and you'll get to come to the private view and you'll get a virtual sculpture and you will get the tote bag and the museum poster. So, you can still do that for the next few days, and that's on [kickstarter.com](https://www.kickstarter.com), or you can head over to VOMA, [voma.space](https://www.voma.space), which will be where it will be when it's done. You can put your email in there, and I'll let you know when we've opened the doors, and then you can come and visit, and that'll be nice.

Tim Stackpool:

Yeah. It's a terrific concept, Stuart, and I'm really excited that you took the time to speak with us on the podcast. Thank you very much.

Stuart Semple:

Thanks for having me, and I'm glad you like it.

Tim Stackpool:

That's Stuart Semple there, talking about VOMA, his Virtual Online Museum of Art, which, as he said, you can learn more about by signing up for updates at www.voma.space.

JENNIFER McNAMARA – ART EST

Tim Stackpool:

COVID-19 will continue to have an impact on anyone alive today and could well be talked about in history as much as World Wars or the Great Depression. The past few episodes of this podcast have pretty much been occupied on how the situation completely shaped our experience with the arts. Galleries and artists all impacted as well as larger teaching institutions, but what about the more local art schools? Jennifer McNamara is the Founder and Director of Art Est, a very popular and highly regarded art school located in the Inner West of Sydney. Normally they would hold around 50 classes a week offering advanced classes for grownups as well as for teenagers and younger school kids, and it too has felt the effects of COVID-19. Jennifer McNamara is on the line. She's joining us as well via WhatsApp. Good to have you on the podcast, Jen

Jen McNamara:

Pleasure. Happy to be here.

Tim Stackpool:

I would guess that your school has never really faced a challenge as significant as it has over the past two months or so.

Jen McNamara:

It's been a major upheaval to our courses and to what we do, but funnily, when I first opened in 2008, the Global Financial Crisis hit, but the difference then was I was a growing business, and I had no track record, and nothing to compare it to. Whereas, as we've steadily grown over the last 13 years, and have become quite successful, it's been a very different position to be in.

Tim Stackpool:

Yeah. In terms of what you've had to do, any changes you've had to introduce, or closures you've had to undertake? I mean, how have you made it through the past... Well, what is it now? Two months, pretty much.

Jen McNamara:

It is. Originally I think, like a lot of other businesses, we were just watching and waiting to see what was happening globally, and then more locally, and on Friday, the 20th of March, we made the call to cancel our Easter School Holiday Program, because it was quite evident that the peak hadn't quite reached as far as the coronavirus pandemic was happening, and the school holidays were not going to happen as we knew it. So I cancelled those classes, and then over the weekend, when the Premier, I heard was about to announce that the state was going to go into pretty much a lockdown, I made the call then to suspend our classes for the rest of term. We were at the end of week six of an eight week term, and with two weeks to go, and I just felt that was the right thing to do. For everyone's safety and wellbeing, it was the decision that I made on that day.

Tim Stackpool:

But how do you cope with what the balance sheet is going to look like, over that period? Because like you said, it's watch and wait, not knowing when you're going to be able to open again. I mean, now it all becomes about how you're going to manage a business. Really, doesn't it?

Jen McNamara:

Yeah. The thing for me was the uncertainty around it, not knowing is really harder to manage than having some kind of key dates to work with, and so knowing that the Premier was about to lock down the state, I thought, "Right, this is a decision I have to make now," and then we'll just deal with the fallout that comes with that. We had two weeks left of term. It was too quick to pivot to online classes for all of our classes. Some of our tutors did embrace that for maybe one class to wrap up the term, but most of them, we just couldn't do that. But on that day I contacted each of my tutors to let them know what I was planning, and then I just emailed each of our student groups to let them know that this is a decision we had made, and wholeheartedly, everyone just supported the decision, and also knew the inevitable was about to happen.

Jen McNamara:

But what I did do, knowing that my tutors would then be out of work for an unknown period of time until we get back to business as usual, was that I actually invited the students to rather than ask for a credit or refund on their balance of their fees, if they would like to gift that to their tutors, and I have to say, I was just blown away by the generosity of the students who just said, "Yes, please. I don't need it. Just please help the tutor," and that was really extraordinary. The tutors were themselves, just really grateful and quite blown away by the support they received as well.

Tim Stackpool:

Now we're looking at coming out of perhaps a period of hibernation. There's a lot of speculation regarding a second wave and all that sort of stuff too. But how well do you think your school and your business as well, will bounce back? And again, I guess, you're kind of wondering what's going to happen in the future.

Jen McNamara:

I think during this time, like over the last couple of months, we've tried to stay as active as we possibly could under a new normal. We did offer a much reduced program of classes during the school holidays and went online, and so we had 27 classes over nine days where we would have had a hundred, so we were operating at 25%. Over the last couple of months, I've adjusted my way of thinking, and the way we run the business, and not necessarily look at it being a profit making business, but just a survival business and not just surviving for me, but to provide courses that our students could still enrol in, and our teachers could still conduct for them.

Jen McNamara:

Normally I have a bottom line where I think, "Well, I can't run that class. It's not going to be profitable," but at this time I think, "Well, if it's at least covering the cost of the tutor, then I'm going to run the class, because then it's a win, win for everybody."

Tim Stackpool:

And in terms of new opportunities that come out of that, Jen, I mean, would you think about an underlying online opportunity going forward in case any of us were ever presented by this again?

Jen McNamara:

Yeah, absolutely. In fact, it's pushed us to do things we've never done before. We might've thought of, but just put in the too hard basket and let's just focus on what we do well and we're a studio based art school, we love having people coming in here and having that face-to-face contact, but we've discovered through the online teaching is that, particularly for the adults, we've attracted students from all over Australia. We've now got people in a class from Northern Territory, Queensland, South Australia, Victoria, country New South Wales, and even a former student who moved to Seattle said, "Oh great. Can I do the class, Sunday night my time is Monday morning your time, with Marie Mansfield? That's exactly what I want to do." So she's joined the class as well. Ours are very much real time interactive with the tutor giving feedback, and teaching, demonstrating, and students asking questions. It's as close as possible as it can be to a real time, a studio based class, as you're going to get this, the students have all got their little studio set up, they can have a wine while they paint if they want to ...

Jen McNamara:

But also, what we've found is that there's one particular class where there's about five artists who have signed up for it, who are all fairly accomplished in their own right. In fact one just won the Glibly Art Prize. But for them it's a way of connecting through an art class from all different parts of the country, and doing professional development, and having social interaction at the same time. It's opened my eyes to what's possible, and I've been discussing with some of our tutors, such as Marie Mansfield and Nicole Kelly, about actually continuing to run online classes in tandem with studio based classes.

Tim Stackpool:

You mentioned how you were surprised, not so much surprised, but a little bit overwhelmed in terms of how your students, your clients I guess, in a way, were generous towards your tutors when you had to shut down. But was there anything else in terms of the community reaction that you saw which surprised you? I mean, you have a great level of community exposure. You're well known in the area for the classes that you run and facilitate, but did anything else stand out for you in terms of how the community reacted to the position that you and your tutors were in?

Jen McNamara:

It's actually been really heartfelt, just the anecdotal comments and people just meeting me in the street when you're allowed out, or phone calls or emails. In response to, for example, the email that I sent asking people would they like to gift the fees. Just the little comments they made, just everyone supporting each other and just stay safe. Yes, we do have a high profile in the local community and beyond, and I think everyone genuinely is just wanting to support other people in their community. All local businesses are just reaching out to help each other, and it's really... I think there are silver linings in this whole COVID-19 pandemic.

Tim Stackpool:

Yeah. This is as much a business discussion as it is about art, and galleries, and schools. Ahead of setting up Art Est, you had significant business experience, particularly in marketing. How have you taken advantage of that experience to make sure that your business has been resilient through this and will remain resilient for any other challenges that come up in the future?

Jen McNamara:

We've always strived to have a diverse offering, to rely too much on one particular area of business, I think is risky. In that regard, I knew that I would be able to survive this downturn, but also, there's been government support generally for small businesses, which has been really helpful, and just helped alleviate the pressure on all of the outstanding bills that everyone needs to continue paying, even though they haven't got the revenue being generated at the same time. But I think diversity and being able to think creatively about how you can continue operating under different circumstances, and knowing what your customers want. For our students, a lot of them are very senior, and so they've not really that computer literate, but so many have embraced online learning, because they're just so keen to stay connected with each other and with their art.

Jen McNamara:

They've been prolific. We've created Facebook groups for each of the different class categories, and that's a peer-to-peer group. It's not a teaching structure, but the students are uploading photos and sharing the work that they're doing either in their class or between classes. It's actually been really wonderful to see what they're doing, and I think we could have done that ages ago, but we just didn't. Something so simple. That's been really nice too, and generally we have an exhibition of student work in the middle of the year, and that is work that's been developed in the first six months, and we're thinking, "Oh, well, they haven't had any classes this term," but in fact there's probably a lot more work they could exhibit.

Jen McNamara:

We're still going to run that at the end of June, and hopefully by then we can actually have an actual opening in the gallery, whether it's an extended opening with booked time so that we can monitor how many people are here at any one time. We just have to do things differently except that nothing will be the same as it was, and that's kind of a nice thing as well.

Tim Stackpool:

I will however, miss the sausage sizzles that you often run out of the car park on your special open days.

Jen McNamara:

Yes. Well, we haven't had one of those for a while, but yes, they were good fun, weren't they?

Tim Stackpool:

It all sounds pretty positive, Jen. I mean, you seem to be in a fairly happy place, even considering the difficulties.

Jen McNamara:

I'm optimistic. Absolutely. I believe that art is therapy, and it's something people turn to when other things aren't necessarily great in the world. At this time, as was during the Global Financial Crisis, which we survived as well, I think people look to things that nurture them. You've only got to see what's happening around, all these people posting stuff on Instagram and Facebook about what they've been doing. They're creatively cooking, they're creatively painting, and doing activities, and knitting and all these different craft, and other sort of artistic pursuits are occupying their time, and their mind, and their imaginations during the lockdown. I think that's been wonderful, but I also think they can't wait to come back in and have that connection with like minded people who share their passions in a space like Art Est.

Tim Stackpool:

And hopefully there'll be able to do so very soon, Jen. Thank you so much for your time on the podcast.

Jen McNamara:

Happy to be here, Tim, stay safe.

Tim Stackpool:

Jennifer McNamara there, dealing as much with the business aspects of managing under COVID as well as having to run the art school, and if you want to take a look at the extensive nature of the operation, head to www.artest.com.au.

PABLO JOMER – CURATORS BOARD GAME

Tim Stackpool:

Finally, now let's head to the town of Linköping in Sweden, where Pablo Jomer is developing the board game called Curators, and it's about the business of creating a collection, running the museum, dealing with space. And Pablo, who does have past experience with releasing board games, joins us on the podcast. Thanks so much, Pablo.

Pablo Jomer:

Thank you, Tim.

Tim Stackpool:

Now this is a very, very unique subject for a tabletop game. How did this all come about? What inspired you?

Pablo Jomer:

Well, to be honest, when we picked up the game from Jacob, the museum theme was already there.

Tim Stackpool:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Pablo Jomer:

It wasn't as strong as it is now, but it was there. So it was kind of Jacob's idea, and I think what inspired him was a little bit like the old museum world, gathering objects, like in Indiana Jones.

Tim Stackpool:

Oh yes. So is it Jacob is a colleague or associate of yours? How did you meet him? And he had already done some design, I guess.

Pablo Jomer:

Yeah. So I actually met him through selling our old game and I met him through a friend and we had a designer's meetup and that's where I played Jacob's game the first time.

Tim Stackpool:

Right.

Pablo Jomer:

And I really liked it, and I also really liked museums myself. I'm a very big fan of museums. So I really liked the theme, so then we started developing it together.

Tim Stackpool:

And away it went, now, in terms of the development as you talked about, Jacob already had some basics in place, then you went on to determine more extensive gameplay. I mean, what's the thinking behind that? I mean, do you have a certain criteria that you think about when putting a game together?

Pablo Jomer:

Well, we were looking for a kind of mid-weight game, something that was a little bit bigger than the game we had made previously. And also we were looking for something that had some type of unique feature to it so it would be easier to kind of market it.

Tim Stackpool:

Yeah.

Pablo Jomer:

And when we tried Jacob's game, it had a really cool feature with some action selection chips that we hadn't seen anywhere else. So we were immediately very interested in it, but it also had some problems that we could see which, because we are aiming at a broad kind of family markets and hobby gamers, and we wanted something a little bit simpler, so we felt like we had to make some changes. And that's when we started to introduce the tile building, and we also introduced a secret loan contracts, which are the contracts that carry kind of the objects from different museum.

Tim Stackpool:

Right. So let's just wind back a little bit. You're talking about this, are you able to briefly but simply talk about how the game works?

Pablo Jomer:

Yeah, sure. You're actually a curator or a head curator of a museum, so you're kind of the leader that is trying to expand the museum and its collection. And to your aid, you have your five employees that are represented by chips in the game. And so you're actually expanding it from a small board on your table with the polyominoes, Tetris tiles-

Tim Stackpool:

Right.

Pablo Jomer:

That are representing kind of wings of the museum, so kind of expansions. And so you're expanding the museum and then same time you're trying to place objects in them. You're trying to do this in a certain way to complete a loan contracts, because if you do, you can borrow a different famous object, from more famous museums. Yeah, we had to do some concessions to kind of make it with the museum theme. But there are actually loan contracts in real life, they're not very specific about how the museum should be built.

Tim Stackpool:

Yup.

Pablo Jomer:

So some concessions were made, but I think we kind of kept the many things true to the museum spirit.

Tim Stackpool:

So, and to win the game, you have to ensure that your museum and all your wings are built and then all your exhibitions are in place. Is that how you win the game?

Pablo Jomer:

You actually try to accumulate the visitor points. So usually we play with victory points in board games, but we made a little play on that. So you're actually getting visitor points-

Tim Stackpool:

Visitor points, okay.

Pablo Jomer:

And you get them from doing different things.

Tim Stackpool:

Okay. Yeah, so everyone wants more visitors coming to their gallery and their museum. But you came up with a number of characters, some of which are those that go looking for the exhibitions, some are those which build parts of your museum as well. But in terms of finding the names for the characters, you went about a very interesting way to get those names.

Pablo Jomer:

What we did was we're crowdfunding the game. So we wanted everyone to kind of join in, on giving suggestions for the character names. And then we kind of filtered them a little bit because while some suggestions didn't fit very well with the game, we wanted to have a more serious tone. And then we put all the suggestions that we thought were good fits into a vote. And so everyone could take part in kind of like online vote for the names.

Tim Stackpool:

Yeah. How many players in total can you have in the game?

Pablo Jomer:

Well, it's from one to four players. So there's a solo mode and that's where actually the characters become more important as well because they will kind of join in on the solo missions.

Tim Stackpool:

You spoke about how you enjoyed visiting museums when you were younger around Sweden and Stockholm, and Sweden has many popular museums. There's the terrific Vasa Museum, that Viking ship. There are museums in various cities around Sweden as well, Uppsala, Linkoping where you are. Of course, I think the Air Force Museum is in Linkoping, if I'm not mistaken.

Pablo Jomer:

Yeah. Yeah. There is a museum here and we usually visit it quite a lot because they have a really good kid section as well, so we bring the kids over there.

Tim Stackpool:

And also in Gothenburg, or Goteborg as you call it. And of course the ABBA Museum as well, which is very popular too. But were you surprised when Jacob first introduced you to this game that no one else had come up with a similar concept for a museum board game?

Pablo Jomer:

Yeah, we were actually a little bit intrigued by that because we didn't know about any museum board games at the time. I think there was one that was very, very old that had done something museum themed and it wasn't very successful. I think the board game industry is kind of like looking for new themes and I felt like, "Wow, this is a good theme. So it should probably be popular just because it's new." So that was kind of a good fit. And then when we had decided on the name, we decided that it was going to be called Museum first. And I think it was two days after that, another publisher revealed that they were going to do a museum game called Museum, and I was like, "Oh no." So there is another one, but I think there's three now or something like that. And so they have a little bit of a headstart, but in the board game industry, it's not so competitive. It's usually kind of we're trying to help each other instead, so.

Tim Stackpool:

It's interesting. Now, the game has already won some awards, I understand, even before release.

Pablo Jomer:

Yeah. We took part in several designer competitions and we have the luck to win one of them, and we placed second in another one. And it's a really good kind of opportunity to spread the game and that's why we joined it. We didn't expect to win. And so we were really, really happy when we were announced the winner.

Tim Stackpool:

Well, that's great news. Now, as you indicated, you crowdfunded this whole project. Now, and as part of the crowdfunding, people could pledge and receive a copy of the game, but it's likely that people will be listening to this podcast after the campaign closes. So what would the plan be for people who would want to pick up a copy of this game after the campaign closes? Is it available online? Is it available in museums?

Pablo Jomer:

It will be available online even after the campaign completes. It might be a few days where it's not available, but then we will try and make it available. It's called like a late pledge, and usually it will be a little bit more expensive, kind of more closely price as it will be when it comes into retail. We're hoping that a lot of museums will want to-

Tim Stackpool:

Of course.

Pablo Jomer:

To take it into their shops. But I think some of them will also require that they are in the game. So we're still hoping that some museums will hear this and maybe reach out to us and offer us to maybe have some photos of their objects in the game.

Tim Stackpool:

Oh, is that how it works?

Pablo Jomer:

Yeah, yeah. We've contacted several different museums to kind of get their allowance to have the pictures of the objects in the game. Some of them charge us a little bit for it, others have given it up for free, so.

Tim Stackpool:

Well, that's, I mean, certainly getting everybody involved in it including the crowdfunding, but getting the museums involved is a great way to move ahead. And Pablo, I think it's a very unique direction that you've taken here to think about a board game called Curator, which is just perfect for galleries and museums. And I wish you all the very best with it.

Pablo Jomer:

Oh, well, thank you very much, Tim.

Tim Stackpool:

Pablo Jomer, there in Sweden talking about this new game Curator devised by Jacob Westerlund, which is under development, but if you want to learn more, look up curators at kickstarter.com. You might be able to make a late pledge. If not, head to Pablo's website which is www.worldshapers.se.