

## **Hawkeye**

Maintaining Design at Naturama

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# Hawkeye: Maintaining Design at Naturama

Connie Svabo

## Introduction

The challenge for the management and organization of a leisure experience firm which this text focuses on is *the challenge of maintaining design*. To have a professional, coherent design is a task which demands not only the initial development of this design, but also an organizational infrastructure which continuously stabilizes and maintains design. Graphic and other visual design must continuously be enforced organizationally - it must be made relevant and accessible to employees. That is the experience of a redesigned, modern museum of natural history which opened two years ago. After having been through a considerable makeover, the museum opened looking good and wearing fabulous new clothes. Two years down the road, time has witnessed the occasional eyebrow grow a bit too bushy, and a close inspection of clothing reveals the odd seam in need of stitching and a heel in need of a fixing.

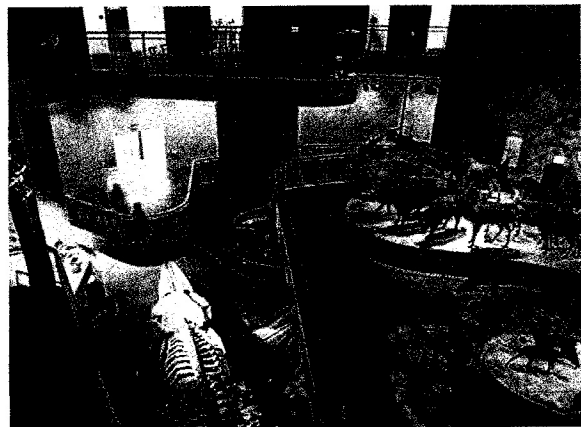
The temporal and organizational coordination and distribution of these tasks of *grooming and maintenance* is an issue which management handles - along with many other issues. Design is made durable in a variety of ways – using both actions and artefacts: The issue is spoken of at staff meetings, the production of visual material is centrally controlled, and efforts are made to ensure that staff has the knowledge and necessary templates to maintain design. A central node in this net of actions and artefacts is the marketing coordinator, who we in this text will know by the name of *Hawkeye*.

## Nature and drama

Naturama is a museum of natural history. The museum seeks to create memorable and educative experiences for its 60.000 annual visitors. An important characteristic of the museum is the modern architecture it inhabits. The old Svendborg Zoologiske Museum was rebuilt, and in 2005 the new museum, Naturama, opened. The name, a combination of *nature* and *drama*, symbolizes what kind of experience the museum hopes to give its visitors – an experience of dramatized nature.

The museum has the goal of being a spectacular attraction, and among other things it has the ambition of being among the top European attractions of its kind. Two years down the road the success has been more moderate than envisioned at the museum

opening, with visitor counts being higher than those of the old museum, but nowhere near the desired numbers. Daily challenges include finding the right structures of management and



### <PHOTOTEXT>

Naturamas exhibition uses multiple media in its narrative structure. As the visitor passes through Naturama's exhibition, the change in light and sound which may be found in nature throughout the 24 hours of day and night, may be experienced in a 1½ hour cyclical multimedia show.

organization, maintaining graphic and building design to high professional levels, keeping employee turnover down, and ensuring cooperation across distinct organizational functions.

## **Experiences on offer**

What does Naturama produce? Naturama offers educational and leisurely experiences, and furthermore, due to its status as a museum it undertakes research and documentary activities. Visitors are offered a series of experiences. The building in itself with the exhibited animals and the accompanying multimedia show is a central part of Naturama's product. To some visitors this is *the* product. They pass through the museum space on their own, and do not necessarily participate in any organized activities. To other visitors the exhibition is part of the product: there are a range of complimentary communicative and entertaining activities which visitors may participate in: guided tours, educational activities and concerts to mention a few.

Regarding the production of these services: the exhibitions can be divided into two categories: permanent and temporary exhibitions. The production related to the permanent exhibition is one of maintenance. This is primarily carried out by one man, who is responsible for technical service. The production of temporary exhibitions involves more processes and people. Responsible is a senior researcher who is Head of Exhibition. He cooperates with 5-7 colleagues from marketing and communication. Some of these same colleagues are responsible for educational activities which are both directed towards visitors on school trips, and towards families. These activities are primarily oriented towards children. Adult-oriented activities are primarily developed by the two people in marketing. These adult-oriented activities mostly consist of concerts.



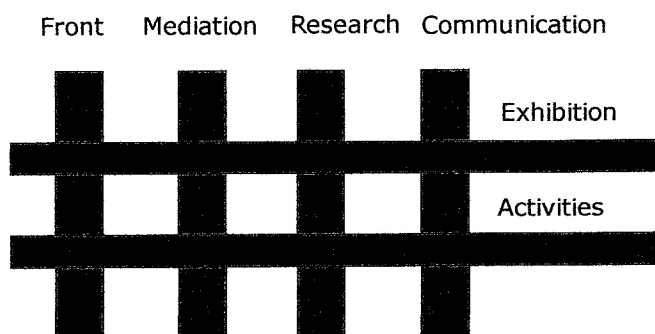
**Table 1. Overview of type of interaction offered to Naturama visitors**

Active, autonomous visitor	Visitor as participant	Visitor as spectator
Exhibition – on your own tour Exhibition – with audio-guide	Exhibition – guided by communicator	Occasional happening in exhibition space - Example: Listen to a concert, watch an ice-artist carve out a sculpture
Activity - facilitated by artefact (Example: Exercise pamphlet for children: “Say hello to us” (find animals in exhibition))	Activity – facilitated by communicator (Example: sow your own sealskin wallet)	
Interaction at a distance: Participate in contest (Example: photography: “Shoot at nature” (enter a photo for competition Club membership		

TABLE TEXT: Visitors to Naturama are offered distinct types of experiences: explore the exhibition with or without a guide, lean back as a spectator to an artistic performance or participate actively in guided activities.

## Organization

The museum is organized in six functional groups. There are 15 full-time and 11 part-time employees. The organization is diagrammed as follows.



**NATURAMA**  
NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

English version?

TABLE TEXT: Naturama’s organizational structure is matrix-based and adhocratic. Coordination, management and organization emerge as organic, task-oriented processes.

The museum orients itself towards a mainly local (regional) market, with marketing activities directed towards the island of Fyn, where the museum is located, and surrounding areas. Throughout a year the museum experiences substantial variations in visitor numbers, among other things due to seasonal variations in tourism. Competitors are other tourist attractions in the region, and on a national level, museums and other attractions which have nature/education as a theme and, in general amusement and experience parks.

On a national level the museums of national history experience decreases in number of visitors and have done so during the past 35 years from a total of 400.000 visitors to a total of 300.000 in 2004.

## **Strategy**

The museum has a strategy called “Brandmanifesto” from 2005, which holds a mission consisting of four bullets:

*Naturama’s mission is to bring people closer to the exceptional story of animals. This is achieved through:*

- *high levels of professionalism*
- *a complete innovation as regards narration and narratory devices*
- *spectacular architectonics*
- *and a passionate team of employees*

(Naturama Brandmanifest 2005, p. 3)

Following the mission is a vision:

- *By the end of 2007 Naturama will be among the top hierarchy of Danish cultural attractions*

- *By the end of 2009 Naturama will hold a natural position in the European superliga of museums of natural history*
- *By the end of 2009 Naturama will automatically be related to the opinion, that we are cutting edge as regards innovative communication*

(Naturama Brandmanifest 2005, p. 3)

Further contents in the manifesto are descriptions of “*the essence of Naturama*” where key words are *multimedia, informal, exciting, youthful, accessible, dialogic communication, experiences of involvement, with a desire to seduce, chic style, oriented towards the information age, employee as a host, driven by passion, adventurous journey.*

Three terms are presented as central for the Naturama concept: content, communication and commitment. Content means that Naturama’s point of departure is the world of animals. The animals are categorized on the three exhibition levels: water, earth and sky. Communication sets the standards for Naturama’s engagement with the public. Key words being: professionalism, edutainment, multimedia and aesthetics. Commitment refers to employees, key words being: passion, personality and ambition.

Next in the “*Brandmanifesto*” follows a description of target groups: families with children, tourists, schools and other institutions, sponsors / business partners, journalists / the press, and politicians. And last but not least some quantitative goals for visitor numbers, publicity, club members and sponsorships. In the summer of 2007 an appendix was made to the brandmanifesto. Through a workshop and follow-up an effort was made to translate the vision and mission to concrete strategic and operational levels, among other things with discussions about which target groups and goals should be given priority.

## Visitor Numbers

The overriding problem for the museum 2½ years after its reopening is visitor numbers. The museum is highly dependent on visitor numbers as a source of income. Its state funds are defined by visitor numbers.

The projected goal of having somewhere between 180.000 and 200.000 annual visitors has proven impossible to achieve. Visitor numbers are around 60.000, which are 35.000 more than the annual visitor numbers of the old zoological museum, but evidently this is nowhere near the desired 200.000. A close monitoring of visitor numbers takes place every week, and at each monthly staff meeting, reports are given on the current numbers. There is a high level of organizational attention to these numbers, and the goal at present is to get the same number of visitors this year as last year.

Running parallel with these intense efforts at getting people to come to the museum, management and staff seek out alternative sources of income. For example in the form of: *research projects* where researchers do a combination of research and consultancy work; *sponsorships* where private firms give a donation to the museum; and *conference/dinner activities* where the spectacular architectonic setting is used as an asset.

## Management

The museum is managed by the museum director, who has a background in biology and consultancy and who has been head of the museum for 9 years. The museum is in a process of transition from being publicly owned to having status as an independent institution. There is no board, but a process of constituting one is going on. A core organizational group as regards management is “*The Operations Group*”. This group is an important back-up and point of

reference for the top manager. It is an important forum for strategic and operational debates, and for the coordination and monitoring of current activities and points of focus.

The management and organizational processes are dominated by ad hoc problem solving, and more or less all of the permanent staff is involved in management processes of varying character. Coordination, management and organization emerge as organic processes, where physical presence is quite important if one desires to participate. Scheduled meetings may be rescheduled in the last moment, because the manager and what he regards as the central actors in relation to a certain issue, decide that this is beneficial. Accidentally this may occur without notification of all involved parties. Overall, there is a friendly tone among management and staff, but there are also issues of staff being discontent about certain management / communication issues.

## **Innovation**

Innovation takes place on many levels. The experiences that visitors are offered are a combination of the permanent exhibition, temporary exhibitions and activities. To the degree that developing a new exhibition or activity may be viewed as innovation, this occurs all the time. Furthermore small innovations may be seen in the continuous development and adjustment of existing exhibitions, activities and communication design. One challenge which the museum faces is the challenge of time. The development of exhibitions, activities and other visitor-related communication is constantly under pressure for time. The ideal situation would be that exhibitions and related activities were planned at least one year in advance, so marketing could communicate these experience offers in relevant places, for example in international and national tourist brochures and magazines. This is not the case at all. Exhibitions and activities are developed in the last moment. It seems to be a difficult

challenge to make committing long term plans. Every-day operational issues take up a lot of time, and it is difficult to devote time to long-term thinking and decision-making. One aspect which may be seen as contributing to this vicious cycle of being dominated by operational issues may be the visitor number urgency and the accompanying collective feeling that something must be done *now* to increase visitor numbers. This creates a permanent state of urgency which makes it difficult to prioritize long-term planning.

There are no strong management/organizational guidelines to help distinguish whether an exhibition or an activity helps achieve the overall goals. This makes it difficult to judge whether a new development project should be undertaken, or whether it is actually marginal in relation to bringing Naturama closer to its overall goals. These goals are not present in the everyday considerations and discussions about activities and exhibitions. There is a formalized vision and mission, but it is not articulated in everyday managerial practice and thus does not function as a guide for action. This may be exemplified by examining each of the goals which are voiced in the mission and vision. For instance: there is a goal to radically innovate narrative structure and props. This is an ambitious and relevant goal for a museum like Naturama, but it has not been operationalized through questions like: What does this goal actually mean? How do we make it real? How may marketing contribute? How may research contribute? How may communication/media contribute? How do we bring all of these perspectives together and through this process truly create innovative narratives?

Under the pressure of everyday operational challenges such as economy and employee turnover, an empty space seems to emerge between the initial ambitions and current practice. Furthermore a lot of time and energy is used on the development of new activities, but without careful attention to how this development work may benefit from economies of scale. Successful activities are developed, but are only realized once, instead of for example 5 or 10

times. A repetition of these single, successful activities would substantially increase the pay-off from development work.

### **Employees: a multifunctional staff – a bit of a circus, actually...**

Something which is quite exceptional at Naturama is the multi-functionality of the staff. The senior scientist biologist (who has started out a new job area with his responsibility for exhibitions) doubles as photographer. The press-responsible organizes concerts. He also steps in as conferencier at any public event. The marketing assistant steps in when the cafeteria needs an extra hand in sandwich-making. The secretary does the catering for business meetings. The biologist-communicator acts as bartender at evening events. The museum director is in the front line of the pushing, lifting and shoving which is involved when large mammals are put on exhibit.

This multi-functionality has many qualities, viewed from an organizational perspective. It is an important contributor to the organizational ability of making ends meet, which is crucial to a small firm. The practical value of the organizational ability to make ends meet cannot be underestimated. This multifunctionality is a strength – both from a learning and a job satisfaction perspective. Variation in the content of a job is one of the classical focus points if/when the goal is to create satisfactory jobs with rich learning possibilities (Illeris 2002; Larsen & Svabo 2002; Raelin 2000).

## A look at design

One management / organizational task which is quite important and which also is a challenge in this initial phase of the museum's new existence is how to keep the design up to the standards which were launched at the museum opening.

The graphic and spatial design of Naturama is very carefully choreographed. Naturama has a profoundly professional and streamlined *look*. Graphic design is carefully integrated with the exhibition design, and, actually, with the physical appearance of the entire museum. The exhibition uses graphic elements, for instance through stencilled shadows of animals, which may be seen on the wall, contours which are re-found again in graphic- and web design. There is a graphic sign language which is well planned, coherent and which encompasses all of the organizations visual communication towards customers. T-shirts, pens, flyers, signs, adds, newsletters, tickets, folders, webpage, and computer interfaces in the permanent exhibition. A manual for "*how to make your visual communication look professional*" couldn't have done it better. This coherent design language holds an important aesthetic and symbolic quality. It provides coherency, and avoids *noise* in the organizations visual communication.

According to Hawkeye a coherent design is important because:

### Naturama Design

Graphics

Examples of other artifacts

### TEXT FOR ILLU

Naturama's coherent graphic design language is used on a wide range of organizational artefacts: folders, signs, t-shirts, pens



*"Recognition is important. It is crucial to have a coherent identity as a sender. Most people probably won't notice small differences in type size or similar small differences. These things are probably most commonly noticed by us professionals, but it is important nevertheless in relation to all receivers, it is important to have a coherent expression because it builds recognition."*

The first step towards professional design was taken with the employment of Hawkeye as marketing responsible. The museum (re-) opened in April 2005. Hawkeye - who has previous experience from marketing in the museum sector - started out work in November 2004. The task which Hawkeye undertook in this period of time was to establish a graphic design language, in cooperation with the museum director and with an external design firm.

Involved in such a process is intense communication about and clarification of the aesthetic, symbolic and instrumental qualities, which a design should hold (Pratt & Rafaeli 2006). The process of communication between the design firm and the organization is one of dialogue and discussion of concrete suggestions.

Granted the opportunity to give advice to firms, which still have this process pending, Hawkeye offers the following advice:

*"Have everything ready in advance."*

*"It may be difficult to know in advance, what material you are going to need, so it is a good idea to visit other firms which offer experiences which resemble yours, and to analyze their communication material. This is inspiring and it also gives you an idea of what material you may need."*

An important first step for having a professional design, then, is to be prepared. This does not imply that this first step alone does it, though. Hawkeye says:

*“Things always come up. New activities are developed, new exhibitions are made, new material is produced. And new employees will need an introduction to the design.”*

*“Creating a professional design is a job that never ends.”*

## **The challenge of maintaining design**

The aspect which we will explore further in this text is *the challenge of maintaining design*.

Given that the important first step is taken: the organization has an aesthetized, beautiful body to put on display, how do you then keep it groomed? How do you avoid the gradual decay of this beautiful body? How are eyebrows kept plucked in the right shape? How are appropriate colour combinations kept? How do you avoid the sneaking in of strange typographies (fonts), in sizes and spacings which go off in all kinds of different directions? How do you ensure that all folders have the same (de-)sign language, that pictures are placed not at random, but in accordance with the overall graphic design? And: how do you ensure not only graphics, but also the spatial design of the place? How do you avoid mismatching oilcloth table cloths laid on tables used for paint-and-glue and other messy activities for children. How do you avoid the unaesthetic appearance of sales-trolleys in the cafeteria? How – in a wide range of ways – do you avoid the *disintegration of design*?

## **Coordination is central. Nothing escapes the vision of Hawkeye**

On a daily basis in Naturama, design is maintained through a series of organizational actions and artefacts. One important aspect which contributes to a coherent design language is that there is a *central coordination* and monitoring of externally oriented visual material.

Everything that leaves the firm has been through the hands, eyes and computer of Hawkeye. Through this close monitoring standards are enforced. And where material deviates from the predefined design language, a dialogue is taken between Hawkeye and the involved parties. Hawkeye is central to the maintenance of design. She has the vision of design – a way of looking which implies attentiveness towards the details of font, format, color, picture placement etc. She holds ownership of the design: she participated in its development. She knows that decisions have been made about font, format, color, picture placement etc. She knows that there are standards for these issues. And furthermore she knows through her professional background that these things are important – that they actually *are* the design language. These perspectives make her continuously attend to the issue of design and thus ensure, and maybe even enforce, the design.

Using the notions of *vision and voice*, we can say that through the employment of Hawkeye the museum manager ensures that design is given a voice in Naturama (Hughes 2007). Hawkeye has the ability *to see design* and she has the ability *to speak design*. These perspectives of voice and vision are very important if organizational reality is seen as conversational – as continuously emerging dialogues about what we are doing and what we should do (Shotter 1993).

Ofcourse the voice is useless, if nobody listens to it. The top manager thus has an important role to play in the support of this design vision/voice constellation, and Hawkeye has an important task of interpersonal communication, the task of speaking in convincing manners and with authority about design. In fact, we can even say that her role in this context is *to author design*, in the sense that *to author* etymologically means *to augment, to enlarge, to cause to grow, and to set forth in written statements*. Hawkeye has to organizationally *set forth design* (Shotter & Cunliffe 2002; <http://www.etymonline.com/>).

Hawkeye's vision and voice is a strong enforcer of design, but as organizational infrastructure it is also fragile. When things are out of Hawkeyes sight, when she is not there, things may disintegrate.

## **Things do escape Hawkeye. Things faraway and out of sight**

*Physical distance* poses a challenge to the maintenance of a coherent design language. Graphic material that is made by functions which occupy physical space distant from the marketing function, displays occasional incoherence in design.

Some background information about the physical layout of Naturamas organizational functions may be necessary to understand this issue: The core staff of the museum is localized in two areas. Management, Marketing, and Finance is located in the new museum. Communication/Mediation, Research and Front have offices in the old museum. Initially Communication/Mediation and Front were also housed in the office area of the new museum, but approximately a year and a half after the museum opened these groups chose to move into the old museum.

Disturbances in design coherency do not only emerge in material produces by these functions. Material which deviates from the design language is also created by people seated in the proximity of Hawkeye, but it seems as if these deviations are more often caught along the way.

## **Call in the troops. There is a need to create strong alignments.**

If we look at the process of *disintegration of design* from an actor-network theoretical perspective, several things become apparent. First of all, we may understand this disintegration on the background of a *fluid* social reality. That social reality is seen as fluid

means that it is constantly decaying, it is constantly shifting and changing. Order is not the natural way of social reality. Order is something which needs to be worked at, maintained. The social world constantly shifts and changes (Latour 2005; Law 2004).

In this perspective it becomes obvious that we can not take durability for granted. We cannot take design for granted. Having a professional design language is a continuous process of maintenance. The first step – of course – is at all to establish this design. This is a task which most commonly is carried out by professional, external parties. The second and more continuously challenging task is to ensure that this design language is understood, cared for, and thus maintained by all employees who leave physically visible traces on the organizational body. So important questions for strategic consideration and practical action are: how is design made durable? How may an order of design be maintained?

Latour suggest that two phenomena make these constantly shifting interactions more durable: *things* and *social skills* (Latour 2005, p. 68). In this case – the challenge of maintaining design – we can say that *things* are actually part of what is decaying and disintegrating. The *thing* of design is not made durable enough in itself. So if we wanted to use Latours suggestion that things and social skills may contribute to making shifting interactions more durable we can ask: *what things* and *which social skills* may contribute to maintaining a coherent design language?

Central to the maintenance of design are technological artefacts which may help staff use the right design: design manuals for instance. They can help Hawkeye's colleagues produce material that has *the right look*. They can help initiate dialogues about what design is. These artefacts – in cooperation with dialogues - are important because they can help extend the vision of design, so design is not only something which Hawkeye sees, but something which a whole work-net of colleagues and artefacts enact (Blackler 2000; Blackler et.al. 2003;

Dugdale 1999; Engestrom et.al. 2003; Gherardi et.al. 2003; Law & Hassard 1999; Law 2003, 2004; Suchman 2003).

The attempts at making design durable through the creation of a design manual plus supervision and monitoring makes good sense if we look at it through the optic of actor-network theory. In order to maintain design, enforcement is necessary. A design language implies controlling the visual expression of graphics and spaces. This control may be attempted exerted through the creation of other artefacts, for instance the artefact of a design manual. This constellation of artefacts – a design language and a design manual (and other related artefacts) – following Gagliardi: “help, hinder, or even prescribe organizational *action*,” (Gagliardi 1996, p. 568). Inspired by actor-network theory we may see that the organizational artefact of design constantly decays, shifts and disintegrates (like the rest of social reality) (Latour 2005). If a management goal is that the organization has a coherent design language, this goal must continuously be enforced. The design must continuously be attempted made durable. This enforcement may happen through the establishment of *chains* of actions and artefacts. For example a relational net consisting of: *Hawkeye – already established design templates – a design manual – dialogue at staff meetings – one on one supervision at staff computers – continuous monitoring and evaluation of produced material...* Maintaining design thus becomes a task of creating strong networks of action: to create alignments of artefacts and actions, of people and things, which try to ensure the maintenance of a specific order of design (Dugdale 1999; Gherardi et.al. 2003; Law & Hassard 1999; Law 2003, 2004; Suchman 2003).

Design is a controlling device (something which guides/ disciplines the action of organizational members), but at the same time it is also fragile, weak in its ability to guide action *on its own*. It needs the support of other actions and artefacts – for instance a design

manual. Organizational efforts in this sense must circle around how to create strong relations between distinct but related artefacts with a common objective: to guide organizational action in such a manner, that it finds the right (organizationally predefined) form of expression. An important task of internal communication thus becomes *to facilitate* the use of and adherence to a design, for example by providing preformatted templates, accessible design manuals and other *things* as Latour would call them, which make the design durable. Furthermore, an important task is to communicate, discuss and debate the motivation for and importance of a coherent design language. Continuously. The latter falling within the category of what Latour calls *social skills*. We can extend this a little further: it becomes an organizational task to continuously vocalize, put words to, and thus *utter* in organizational conversation – the language of design. Conversation alone doesn't do it, though. Metaphorically speaking a dictionary also has to be printed and provided.

Organizational action is continuous efforts at creating certain realities and certain desired types of order. The effort at creating a specific order of design must continuously be made through *conversation* and through *material manifestation*. To maintain design is to ensure its continuous practice. Maintaining design becomes about not only *vision and voice*, but very much about *inscription* – about authoring in a concrete textual sense. To maintain design is to materialize it, continuously.

Thus design is maintained - as performative material.

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