

INTERVIEW

WITH THE

CURATOR

A wide-ranging, five part self-interview by and with the curator of the Zymoglyphic Museum. This interview was conducted shortly before and during the museum's pandemic-induced hiatus in the spring of 2020. Much of it was done sitting in a cozy chair with a lap robe or a cat, drinking strong black tea and looking out on the grey Portland rain

1. MUSEUM AS DESTINATION: VISITING THE MUSEUM

Q: What kind of people have come to visit the museum?

Visitors vary in what they know about the museum before they visit. There are people who are just passing by and see the sign, or, more likely, who saw the name pop up on a map app and were curious about it. According to Google, “museums near me” is a common search term that leads to the museum’s website. Some look around for a while, say “thank you” or ask a token question, then leave. Others are amazed that such a thing exists and that they stumbled on to it. If they are visitors who happen to be in town on the rare day that the museum is open, they often have a special feeling that they were meant to discover it.

I get a lot of tourists visiting Portland who are looking for a typically Portland experience. In New York, you go to a Broadway play; in Portland, you visit a quirky museum. The museum is on a lot of lists of off-the-beaten-path Portland attractions. It gets glowing reviews on social media, which will attract people even if they know nothing else about it.

There is a subset of tourists who seek out the unusual wherever they go, such as little museums and roadside attractions. I call this “oddity tourism” and would certainly place myself in that category.

A more specific group would be those who are interested in the particular themes of the museum. The backstory and dead things resonate with goths, steampunkers, rogue taxidermists, and rock-and-bone collectors. Others are interested in museology, curiosity cabinets, art made from natural objects, surrealism, and so forth. Often they are other artists (or creative people who don’t feel comfortable calling themselves artists) and may get inspired to do something creative with their collections. These are usually the people that I have the most interesting conversations with, and who often become Facebook friends. Some of them come back later to donate things they have and don’t know what else to do

with. These donations in turn sometimes inspire new exhibits.

Out of the more involved group, a small number, usually local people, become involved with the museum in some ongoing way; those are the people I'm most interesting in attracting. With over 3,000 visitors over the last three years, there have been probably a couple dozen visitors in that category, the one-percenters.

Q: How do people find out about the museum?

The commonest response when I ask people the question is "somewhere on the internet." Often it is the Atlas Obscura website which is the premiere online source for oddity tourism. Others hear about it from friends who have visited; often local people will bring friends and relatives visiting from out of town.

Q: If you want to attract more of the involved people, why aren't you open more often? It seems like lots of people are interested in seeing the museum!

Partly it's not wanting to be tied to a schedule, but I think the real reason is just a personality limitation on my part. While visitors are generally well-behaved, I just get tired of meeting new people and answering the same questions over and over. The questions are of course asked in good faith (although I think that people sometimes feel obligated to ask a few questions), and the asker has no way of knowing that they are the umpteenth person that day to ask that particular question. The stress between my irritation at the questions and the inappropriateness (to me) of such irritation becomes uncomfortable.

Q: What are some examples of repeated questions?

"Are you the artist?" "Did you make all this?"
"How long have you been doing this?" "What got you started?"
"What does 'zyglo-mo-zimmo-morphic mean?"

Q: How do you deal with the questions?

I've pre-preemptively posted signs with the definition of "zymoglyphic" that I can point to. I have some fairly short

stock answers for the others, because I'm not sure whether the questioner really wants to know or is just asking out of politeness. If I were comfortable being known as a curmudgeon I could put up a sign starting with "Rules: Do not ask about..." or something, but that would be counter to my main goal of connecting with people.

Q: What kinds of responses (other than questions) do you get, and which are best and worst?

I've never had any truly negative complaints, either to my face or within earshot. I suspect that people are simply too polite to say anything negative. I'm the same way myself with other people's work. I'm sure some visitors must be uncomfortable with the subject matter or the lack of craft or some such thing. There are responses which I take as neutral, such as "You must have put a lot of work into this." I don't really see it as work. Another is "thank you for sharing this." I'm not really sure what to make of that one.

Many people call it "weird." They often mean this as "weird in a good way" and I often use the term myself to find things that will interest me. But I also take it as a distancing, as "I don't really get what you're doing here." I generally don't self-identify as weird.

Another common response is "I've never seen anything like this!" This one certainly might be intended at neutral, but I actually like it because I like the idea of doing something no one else is doing. "Awesome" is of course common and appreciated, and "enchanting" is one I particularly like. The generally positive reviews on social media tend to assure me that any enthusiasm is not just performative. The enthusiasm helps keep me going. The response I like best is when someone says it's "inspiring" and that they will get to work on some long-forgotten art project.

Q: Do you ever respond in character, possibly by insisting that some made-up thing is real?

No! I realize that a performance as a character is a potential

dimension that would fit perfectly in the museum context. I could dress up as a mad scientist and give tours that way. I think the issue for me is that role-playing creates a barrier between me and the other person. My goal is to connect with visitors. I'd rather just have a straightforward discussion, and I think that being in character would detract from that. I once agreed to be part of a LARP (live action role-playing) game where people came to the museum to pick up clues for a role-playing game. It was not pleasant. It's just not something I'm comfortable doing. I don't even like being asked what the museum is all about when I meet someone. Usually, I will just hand someone one of my little business cards and tell them to check out the website.

Q: So no tours I'm guessing.

No, I would much rather deal with visitors one on one. I discourage school groups, field trips, and similar groups. This is partly logistical in that it is a small space, but really I don't want to be leading a tour and I would rather have people enjoy the space on their own.

Q: Aren't you really playing a role as "The Curator"?

Yes, it does give me a cover of some sort, just not in person. Most of my written output is from the point of view of a curator, or "museum management." This provides me just enough cover for comfort.

Q: Do you teach classes or do workshops?

No, because I feel that what I do doesn't really involve any specific techniques that can be taught. I myself learn best by copying and being inspired rather than being taught, so I'm hoping people will simply see what's possible and create their own version of it.

Q: Has that ever actually happened?

I did get one email from a visitor from out of town that said he had been inspired to organize his collections into a sort of museum, but mostly my idea that "personal museums are an

underutilized mean of creative expression” has not received much traction.

2. MUSEUM AS ART PROJECT: IS IT ART?

Q: You have a survey for visitors that includes the following question:

This is

- an elderly eccentric with a weird hobby, a spare garage, and too much time on his hands,
- a complexly layered, fully integrated work of art.

What’s the correct answer?

I like to think it’s the second one in the guise of the first.

Q: Are you an artist?

In Part 1 of the Curator’s Tale I described coming out as an artist despite no formal art training. I’m quite comfortable with the term now.

Q: If this is art, why isn’t it in a gallery and for sale to collectors like real art? Is this just a hobby?

This is a particularly annoying question! I think creativity does not equal commerce and commerce in fact often serves to corrupt creativity.

Q: Okay, but why not pursue a career in the art world if you want this project to be validated as art and not just some oddity?

The most practical answer is that the work itself is fragile and ephemeral and I’m not interested in adapting what I do just to make it more archival. I also get attached to what I make and don’t really want to let it go. But there are lots more issues.

1. Independence and lack of being judged. I don’t have to submit anything to a jury and get turned down, or alter what I do in order to get accepted by a gallery. I have on occasion submitted

works to galleries. Generally, if there is jury involved, the work is not accepted.

2. No competition. By working in my own genre, I'm not competing with anyone else (except maybe the Museum of Jurassic Technology).

3. I think my view of art is fundamentally different from the current art world, which is currently focused on cultural critique. My view of art as creative self-expression is probably considered outdated in the postmodern world.

4. Having a museum provides more personal interaction with people who are interested in what I'm doing than having work in a gallery would.

Q: You could make those collages into limited edition fine art prints.

I'm not willing to make them "framed limited edition giclee prints" just to justify a higher price. I'd rather that anyone who wants one be able to afford it and enjoy it. This is another problem I have with the (visual) art world is the fetishisation of the "one-of-a-kind" which makes it into a collectible and only affordable by the wealthy. Writers and composers don't have this problem—their output can be replicated any number of times with no diminution of perception of quality

Q: So is this outsider art?

I suppose so. I have not had any formal art training. I've taken a few classes here and there but I learn better by osmosis, imitation, and trial-and-error than I do with being taught. I think the results are more creative that way. I try to get an intuitive grasp of basic principles, sometimes through parody or satire.

One advantage of visual art over writing and music is that craft is optional. Outsider art is an entire genre of art devoted to validating the idea that a complete lack of formal training in visual art is no barrier to creating it.

I have consciously avoided the art-school to gallery career path, partly in the perhaps naive conviction that outsider art is more

closely connected to a creative wellspring than art which has been rigorously selected for “quality.”

On the other hand, I’m not unaware of art history and am consciously creating art within that overall context if not within the system. So I probably fall between the classifications, not an unusual place for me to be.

Q: What other art has influenced you and why?

I find indigenous art inspiring, especially Africa, Oceania, and the art of the American southwest. My father was fascinated with the Hopi Indians and learned traditional dances. I like the idea that compelling imagery is created using natural materials for spiritual use and not as “art.”

Similarly, Asian nature-based processes such as Japanese flower arranging, Chinese scholar’s rocks and tray landscapes are compelling to me both because of the use of natural materials (still living, in some cases, such as bonsai) and the end goal of creating objects of contemplation, not art per se.

Q: Was there any art world art that appealed to you?

I went to college in New York City in the late 1960s, so I got exposed to a lot of it. I had a friend who was an aspiring art critic (the only one of us who knew what he wanted to be when he grew up). I generally thought classical art, while clearly well-crafted, was rather dull in its content, except for landscapes. I didn’t really connect with modern abstraction either, except in an abstract way. I liked the general Dada/Fluxus idea that art could be anything and anything could be art

The style that I really connected with was Surrealism. They pioneered the use of existing materials in art with collage and assemblage, and even the collection and display of found objects in art gallery displays. I also liked the fact that they sought to create art organically and spontaneously, and that special meaning could result from juxtaposition of disparate objects and images.

Q: Why do you like assemblage and collage as media?

It fits my particular approach to things which is to start with what's presented to me and do something creative with it, rather than plan something out. A lot of craft, skill, planning, and training is required in painting and sculpture, not so much in assemblage. The randomness or synchronicity of objects that are found at the same time or end up together in a work space often suggests creative inspirations that would not have occurred to me otherwise. Using existing objects instead of creating new ones means that the components retain their original associations.

On a more mundane level, the lack of a predetermined goal means that the result generally exceeds the goal, reducing the risk of disappointment. I get a lot of pleasure out of this. By not applying much learned craftsmanship to the art, I can avoid being told what to do and just figure it out myself.

Q: Why the preponderance of natural objects in the assemblages?

The natural world is just so inherently interesting. Artificial objects are usually interesting because of their cultural connotations, and, to me, they get more interesting if they are naturally weathered in some way. With natural objects, the detail just gets better the closer you look at it.

It's also something that goes back to my childhood. Both my parents were lovers of nature. We hiked and camped a lot. The whole museum is really my childhood collection of rocks, shells, and marine life, just grown and branched like an oak from an acorn.

Q: Why the fascination with decay, skulls, and ugly things as the content of the art?

I grew up in a fairly sterile suburban environment. When I went to New York, I was fascinated by decayed industrial buildings and ruins of all kinds. Anything that has that organic texture added to it I like, whether mold, moss, lichen, rust, fungus, or wherever a primal organic force takes over from a more orderly one.

Besides decay, I find I like things that labeled creepy, weird,

or grotesque, such as reptiles, insects, . They just seem more interesting to me than others. Their very alienness suggests new worlds and ways of looking at things.

Also, I've created an environment where I can get people to appreciate the creative potential of things that might otherwise be discarded or overlooked - a leaf, a twig, and possibly me by proxy in some way.

Q: Why museum as a medium?

Most personal-scale museums are single-theme collections, which are interesting, but rather limited. What I'm trying to do here is to expand the concept to create a framework which, like assemblage, creates art from existing objects.

To the extent that you create your own museum contents, a personal museum is an ideal framework for a wildly eclectic body of work.

Q: Most artists who deal with museums as subject matter do so as a cultural critique of the role of museums as taste-makers whose authority needs to be challenged. Are you doing that here?

No, I'm trying to promote the idea that a personal museum is an option for artists who want to work in a variety of media that all have a conceptual unity, rather than creating endless variations of the same concept.

Q: Is there any political content to what you do?

I have consciously avoided any political and pop-culture references in my work, wanting it to have a more archetypal significance. However, looking back on it with a postmodern perspective, is see that it's a fertile ground for discussion of cultural appropriation and colonialism.

Q: Might this work be considered “subversive” in any way?

I like the idea of subverting the idea of the art gallery. Modern

(or contemporary) art is viewed by many as ridiculous or intimidating (depending on their level of confidence), so not presenting this as art has the advantage of attracting people who would never go to a gallery, or an art museum.

Q: You mentioned wanting to separate creativity from commerce. How does money factor in to your work?

I have purposefully separated art from money by having a salable skill that would enable the art to be separate from financial pressures. I do charge for books, prints, and even postcards and brochures, because it indicates to me that the purchaser values it to some degree. I keep prices low so anyone can afford it—books and prints are priced on the order of a cocktail or two, and there are always postcards available for a dollar. I purposely avoid the “limited edition” route of the prints, which artificially inflates the price. I do have a few giveaways, but generally I don’t give things away because I imagine people just take anything that’s free only to throw it away later.

3. MUSEUM AS SUBJECT: BOOKS AND WRITING

Q: With all the blog verbiage, books, and booklets coming out of the museum, it seems that writing about its various aspects is a major part of your project. Do you consider yourself a writer in addition to being a visual artist? If so, do you ever write about anything else?

Overall I would say no. I used to think that I would like to be a writer. I have some deep mystical notion that getting just the right words down will result in a sort of epiphany. I have bookshelf of classic works from the Homer’s *Odyssey* to Joyce’s *Ulysses* and on into contemporary writers. In college, I mostly hung out with English majors and have generally revered a wider variety of writers than visual artists.

I enjoy the writing process when I am inspired to do it, and it's very satisfying when it comes together. I have on occasion written something that I enjoy reading and rereading. However, the inspiration seems to only come from the museum context. I do like the idea of adding a literary dimension to the visual art.

I have no interest in writing a novel, or learning how to craft plot, dialogue, and character, just as I am not interested in learning to paint or sculpt. I'm more interested in the use of language as a creative medium for expressing ideas in either a straightforward or metaphorical way.

Writing can be useful for organizing and clarifying my own thoughts and recording them for future reference. I do edit as if someone else were reading it, trying to make it flow coherently. I don't get much feedback on the writing (compared to the museum) so it can feel like a waste of time if it's not useful for me.

Q: How does writing compare with creating visual art?

It's a connection to a different, more explicit, but more difficult to capture, wellspring of creativity than visual art. In a practical sense, writing is more portable. You don't need much in the way of physical space or physical objects. With self-publishing, it's easy to distribute your work widely.

Visual art is unique (compared to writing and music) in that you can create something interesting with little to no training, simply by following your intuition. Or I can, anyway. I'm generally pleased with the results that come a minimal effort in creating an assemblage, for example. Writing takes a lot more work. It requires a specificity that can't be left unexpressed in visual art. I work and rework sentences for clarity, trying to find the exact word and even then I'm often not still not sure. I also take a lot more care with grammar and spelling than I would with whatever the equivalent would be in visual art.

My goal, as with visual art, is to learn something in the process of trying to express, and to connect with others. My learning style is similar to visual art—absorb a lot and let it ferment. With writing I constantly worry if I'm boring the reader, or whether it

will get read at all, or if I'm being clear. Even with writing that I like for myself I wonder if anyone else will get it or if I'm being too obscure.

As far as connecting with others, visual art is more accessible in a way. It can be taken in all at once. Writing requires someone to take the time and attention to read through it. This is hard for me because I tend to assume no one is listening or paying attention to what I say. I'm already concerned that this interview is getting way too long and has no pictures.

All that said, I would have to add that writing is easier for me than talking, mostly because I can be spontaneous at first, then correct, rearrange, polish, and discard until I'm happy with it.

Q: So maybe your documentation is more about books than writing.

Yes. My first publications were visual—a book of drawings, a collection of collages, and a guide to the museum that was primarily photographs of the exhibits. The first word-centric book out of the chute had words that were written by someone else. Much of the verbal content of the anthologies is contributed by others.

My book making process is similar to how I create the other parts of the museum—I cobble together a lot of existing parts, get some other people involved, weave various themes together, and arrange it all in a pleasing composition.

Q: You've mentioned that your family environment was more oriented to books than visual art.

My mother was a voracious reader and an aspiring writer. Her ambitions far exceeded her output. Very early on, she wrote an imaginative children's book about tree gnomes and Santa Claus but was unable to get it published. She was also interested in the mystery genre and left behind copious notes with ideas, long lists of potential titles, and bits of dialogue, but no completed works that I could find. We didn't talk about it much, but I gathered from the notes she left behind that much of her interest was using

character dialog to talk about ideas.

My father was more interested in science, biology in particular. I don't think he read any literature apart from genre westerns, but he did have lots of natural history texts, field guides, and science books around.

4. MUSEUM AS ALTER EGO: GETTING PERSONAL

Q: So it sounds like you grew up with expectations for yourself around science and literature, then escaped into visual art which was open territory.

Yes. Science was fascinating but too literal and specialized; literature was inspiring but not something I thought I could do well. Art had no expectations for me and I've been able to include aspects of both science and writing into it. Art, for me, combines the discovery aspect of science with a sense of meaning found in literature.

Art was not a main interest of mine when I was growing up, other than some doodling, nor was it a big part of my home environment. By the time I got interested in it, in college, art was "anything you could get away with," as Marshall McLuhan put it at the time. Painting and sculpture were considered passé. This made it very easy for me to accept whatever I did as art.

Q: In your booklet "Creating and Curating Your Own Museum," you say that a personal museum is ideally an instantiation of yourself. Is the museum is a sort of alter-ego?

Yes. I think of the museum as a place where I can walk around in a physical representation of my own imagination. I suppose it's basically the same as someone's home decoration, all their choices in furniture, useless objects, wall and yard decorations, and book selection. I've just added a conceptual level to it by giving it an institutional persona.

Q: Are there advantages to having an institutional persona?

The museum also gives me an identity in the community—I'm "that guy with the museum." That works well for me as I'm not comfortable setting up social engagements and often not interested in general socializing, so it's helpful to have a situation where people come to me and who have similar interests.

Having a museum also gives me a way to work with people whose work I connect with. I can collect and display other artists' work, or include their books in the library. With the museum press, I can include their work in anthologies.

Q: Do you create for yourself or for others?

At first, it was just me—a sort of journey into my own imagination and making something concrete out of it. As I've had more visitors, I've enjoyed their enthusiasm and gotten rather addicted to it as an ego boost. A few have even used the words "creative genius."

Q: Do you collaborate with other people?

Sometimes. I find working with others can be both rewarding and frustrating, depending on my expectations. Often I will meet someone and have elaborate fantasies of how they could become involved with the museum. Of course, they often have their own ideas and it usually turns out to be something totally different from what I can imagine. Even working with just myself, I can't predict when I will be inspired and when not.

The museum has worked really well for me as a social magnet. My favorite part of the project has been meeting people who are enthused about and have some of their own creative input. Mostly I pluck them out of the visitor stream. I can look at it through other people's eyes. Both the up and down sides of this are the unpredictability of what other people might do (and, of course, whether they actually follow through on it). It's very satisfying to me to have another pair of eyes and its associated brain look at my work and come up with a creative response.

Q: What do you see as the successes and disappointments so far?

I've created something unique that a lot of people connect with. It's been a good way to pull together a lot of my varied interests in what feels like a constructive and creative way. Having a physical museum been a good way to get my art seen in a world where the supply of art far exceeds the demand (and attention span).

There have been a fair number of creative projects that people have done based on the museum, which is one of favorite things about it. Some of them I have specifically encouraged, others have been offered spontaneously. The ones I have encouraged often turn out very differently than what had expected, generally in a good way. I've been pleasantly surprised at how popular the collage prints are and I really enjoy the idea of them hanging on people's walls.

On the other hand, there has not been much of an ongoing community around the museum. I tried to start a Zymoglyphic Society which was great for about a year, but died out due to lack of interest. I suspect that my combination of interests may not overlap with others. If the museum is my alter-ego, then trying to organize people around it is like organizing around a person rather than an idea.

One disappointment is that I meet a lot of local people who seem to be interested in the museum, even enthusiastic, but they very rarely show up to visit.

There have been to date no online reviews of the books or even any real evidence that anyone has read them. This is most likely due to books, whatever the content, being tiny drops lost in a vast sea of words and pictures on paper, which far exceeds the collective attention span. The physical museum by its uniqueness, easily garners eloquent reviews, 5-star ratings, and lots of photos on social media.

I've always had a fantasy that the museum would become the subject of scholarly interest, but that has not happened.

Q: Maybe you should do it yourself!

I actually have done this. My first attempt is included in the first anthology, reviewing the museum using the persona and pseudonym of an imagined scholar. I had an idea that treating the academic journal article as a literary form would be interesting, the ideal merger of science and literature.

Q: Speaking of which, what's the deal with interviewing yourself? Shouldn't someone else be conducting the interview?

I'm not very good at coming up with something on the spot that I'm happy with. I like being able to take my time organizing my responses and rewriting for clarity. So this becomes a way to organize my own thoughts. I had also thought that an interview format would be more engaging for others to read. I carry on a lot of internal dialogue, so it's natural to be talking with myself.

Q: Do you let people other than yourself interview you?

Sure! There are a couple of email interviews linked on the web site, and a friend did one on his esoteric radio program. However, I have turned down several requests from local TV stations, partly to avoid the extra traffic to the museum and partly because I'm just not comfortable being on camera. I would rather be heard than seen.

Q: Is being a curator your actual job?

Yes, in many ways it is the ideal job. I don't have anyone that I need to report to, nor do I have any customers whose needs I'm beholden to. I do feel obligated to have the museum open at the posted hours, and to be a gracious host, but nothing bad would happen if I just closed up.

When I retired, I was struck that my curator job was very much like the old one—mostly working at the computer, taking walks to take a break from it, making lists of tasks & prioritizing them. Even though I had no one to report to, I still felt that I was wasting time if I was not being productive on my project list.

Q: As your own boss, I suppose you have to do your own performance reviews. Anything you would give yourself low marks on?

Sales and marketing, primarily. The physical museum sells itself due to its uniqueness and limited capacity. Book publishing, however, is highly competitive, and I don't want to go to book fairs or do a lot of promotion on the internet, even though I would like for the books to gain a wider audience. I have a blog that I used to enjoy updating, but it's fallen to a low priority in recent years. I haven't really kept up with other social media except to make announcements. I don't really have an improvement plan for any of those areas.

Q: How about things you've done well?

I have lots of skills! I can do the design and layout of the books myself. I enjoy doing the writing, editing, and photography. I have experience in user interface design and can maintain the web site. None of these skills are at the level where I would want to do it for others, but they work well together for the museum as a one-man operation.

5. MUSEUM AS DREAM: LOOKING AHEAD

Q: What are your plans for the future?

My favorite part of this project is how it has grown organically without a plan. The museum concept has provided a protective shelter and a place of honor for projects that might otherwise have had nowhere to go.

In a way, I feel like the museum itself is approaching completion. I've documented it in a book, the website seems close to its final organization, the exhibits seem like a complete unit, the stream of visitors is reliable.

The whole museum framework sometimes feels like a sort of cage to the extent that I feel need to find a spot in the structure for any new thing that I do. Sometimes the idea of just starting

something brand-new and unknown has its appeal. I may need to get back into the proverbial basement and find those neglected aquaria that I dream about.

Nevertheless, I do have quite a few projects in the hopper that I am looking forward to!

Q: What are those projects?

Esoteric Museology is a term I have been using for the study of personal museums. This project could manifest a new book and a web site, and ideally an exhibit and catalog of artifacts from personal museums. This project would promote the idea of personal museums as a means of creative expression.

Creating an alchemy lab is a mad-scientist fantasy that I have. I like the idea of metaphorical chemistry combining my nostalgia for chemistry-set experiments with ancient traditions of exploring esoteric ideas with alchemical implementation.

Q: Any plans for about getting other people involved other than just waiting for someone interesting to show up?

I'm planning a residency program, which would be a good way to connect with like-minded people in a sustained way. Artists could use the museum's resources to create their own takes on zymoglyphia.

Q: As of this moment, the museum has been on hiatus for nearly two months due to the pandemic, with no end in sight. How is that going?

Not too badly, really. Most of my projects now, such as book production, are computer based, and I can still go putter around in the museum whenever it's warm enough. I do miss having visitors, though.

The physical structure of the museum, the collections, and the fragile exhibits has sometimes seemed like a burden. I thought would be much easier if the museum existed only as a virtual presence—a book, a web site, a blog. This is kind of an “be

careful what you wish for” moment.

Q: Any perspective gained?

Yes, I’m less concerned with having the museum be taken seriously as art, and I am just more appreciative that people are interested in it at whatever level of involvement they choose.

Q: What happens to the museum when you are gone?

A good and as yet unresolved question. I have not yet found anyone with the fanatical devotion required to take over someone else’s project. Most people I know have their own creative projects that are the focus of their attention.

The physical objects in the exhibits are mostly pretty delicate, so sale and dispersal would be a problem. The web site will continue until some technical change renders it obsolete. The books are in a sense a bid for limited immortality. I imagine that if I get enough of them out there, they will circulate around, and people will be discovering them for quite a while, like a legendary obscure volume discovered in a dusty used-book shop.

Q: Final thoughts?

I will turn 70 this year (2020) and have no idea how much time I have left. My father wrote his autobiography when he was 67, formatted as a year-by-year account, illustrated with photographs, and primarily focused on his experiences as a reconnaissance pilot in the Second World War. He lived another 33 years after that, productive to the end.

My mother lived long as well but was debilitated by dementia and failing eyesight. My brother died of a heart attack at 51, so it seems my options are to go at any moment, decline slowly and inexorably as my mother did, or have another good three decades. Or, most likely, something totally unexpected will happen.

I am at the age where I think about death frequently and I vacillate between thinking I need to focus, get a lot done, and leave behind a worthwhile legacy, versus feeling that nothing

really matters in the long run and I'll be dead anyway, just a minor blip in the space-time continuum.

