The Mask Project

Producing safe face masks for the University of California Santa Barbara
ABSTRACT

The Mask Project is an initiative of the Art, Design & Architecture Museum at UC Santa Barbara (AD&A Museum) to design and produce face masks to help decrease the spread of Covid-19 in the region. A part of the Museum’s plan for reopening its galleries as a safe environment, the Project aims at furnishing museum staff, guards, and visitors, as well as students and faculty of UCSB, with effective face shields. Along with it, the project pursues to educate the community on how to produce a safe mask using the most effective patterns, types of fabric, and designs. Conceived as an interactive initiative, the Project will engage the public in safely designing and sewing masks at the Museum’s galleries while respecting recommended distance and hygiene measures. The Museum’s design component makes it a perfect spot to promote and host this event, as well as to exhibit its most creative outcomes. A workshop will be set up in the galleries where three needlemen/women will work in turns on making masks and providing guidance to students, staff, and visitors willing to participate in the initiative. By engaging with it, visitors will be able to produce their own mask and take it home for free.

NARRATIVE

Background

Together with the nation-wide urged recommendation to use a mask in public areas, the shortage of masks and elevated price of the ones available motivates the present proposal. This project has no precedent neither at the Museum nor at the University. However, its development is supported on on-going research, as well as on the advice from the Costume Shop of the Department of Theater and Dance at UCSB, expert needlemen/women in the community, and organizations such as Masks for Humanity. The Museum is in contact with all of them and plans on using their feedback throughout the project.
Audience
As noted in the abstract, the anticipated audience for this project includes the AD&A Museum staff, interns, guards, and visitors, as well as the students, faculty and staff of UC Santa Barbara. However, the beneficiaries of this project’s outcome could grow to include workers and users of local hospitals, pharmacies, retirement homes, schools, and hospices, among others.

Goals
The Project aims to:
- Engage the community in donating fabric and in volunteering to produce masks and personalize them.
- Educate the community in how to design and make a mask, the best types of fabric for a safe shield, the most efficient patterns for protection.
- Promote the fabrication of reusable, eco-friendly masks in the face of massive use of plastic-based masks.
- Furnish any one in need on the UC campus with a safe mask.
- Provide masks to the organizations listed in “Audience” if production is in surplus.

Team
The AD&A Museum is partnering in this project with the Department of Theater and Dance at UC Santa Barbara, which is currently providing advice to the Museum on the supplies needed to develop the project, as well as considering devoting human resources to it. The project will be coordinated by the Museum’s Communications and Programs Assistant with the support of an intern. The coordinator will be in charge of recruiting three expert needlemen/women willing to overlap their participation in the project throughout the Summer Session B (August 3 – September 12)—the project’s span. In order to ensure the workshop’s success, the needlemen/women participating in the project will be offered a stipend. Their overlap will ensure that expert advice is offered in the galleries at all times throughout the duration of the project.
Needleman/woman 1 will participate from week 1 to week 4 (August 5 – August 30)
Needleman/woman 2 will participate weeks 1, 2, 5 and 6.
Needleman/woman 3 will participate from week 3 to week 6 (August 19 – Sept. 13).
N.B. Dates have been adapted to the Museum’s schedule (Wednesday – Sunday). Museum staff will be responsible for the workshop’s installation and maintenance.

Setting
The AD&A Museum will set up a workshop in its Nachman Gallery (607 sq. ft.), making sure that physical distancing is respected among participants. The setting will include:
- Box of pre-washed and sanitized fabric (donated by the community).
- 3 tables, each one equipped with a sewing machine, sewing light, pre-cut fabric and sewing supplies.
- Stickers on the floor marking where each visitor can stay safely.
- Display area showing masks done by the community.
- Boxes for deliveries.

**Safety measures for the project**
- The Museum will ask participants to sign a form releasing the Museum from any liability for personal injury during the workshop.
- The Museum will provide participants with nitrile gloves, masks, hand sanitizer, and disinfecting wipes at the workshop.
- Participants will be asked to wash their hands with soap and water; disinfect utensils before and after use; and place the masks produced in sealed bags.
- The workshop will be cleaned daily.
- No more than 3 visitors will be allowed in the gallery at the same time that the 3 sewing stations are in use. Stickers on the gallery’s floor will identify where visitors can stand, while they visit the workshop. Museum guards will ensure that visitors comply with this condition.

**Advertising campaign**
Throughout the month of May, the AD&A Museum will work on the dissemination campaign of The Mask Project to make sure that all communications are sent out by Monday, May 25. This campaign will include producing visually appealing press releases and posts that will be disseminated through the Museum’s website (500 clicks/week), newsletter (1734 subscribers), social media (2,265 visits/week), and emailing list, including the Museum Council (37) and Museum Members (37). Further, the initiative will be shared with the Museum’s partners (American Institute of Architects, Society of Architectural Historians, Santa Barbara Museum of Contemporary Art, Santa Barbara Foundation for Historical Preservation, etc.) for dissemination. It will also be posted in the NPRN calendar. A press release will be sent to all media in the Museum’s roster (96 media). *The Current* and *GauchoVoice* will be asked to disseminate the news on the UC Santa Barbara campus. In all of its communications about the Project, the AD&A Museum will ask the community for donations of pre-washed cotton and cotton/poly blend with high thread count. It will follow up with donors with a thank you note.

**Timeline**
If the Museum is allowed to reopen for the full length of Summer Session B, which begins on Wednesday August 3, the project’s organization will follow this timeline:

March-April
Development of project’s narrative and budget. Request of feedback from Theater&Dance, and leadership at HFA.

May
PR materials written and edited
Monday, 25 - Send press release out.
Monday, 25 - Send call for needlemen/women and donations of fabric out.

June
Order sewing supplies: machines, fabric, shears, threads, needles, pins, magnifying lights, etc.
Design the spatial arrangement of workshop respecting physical distancing.
Design signage. Order vinyls.
Select candidates for needlemen/women.

July
Workshop installation.
Pick up fabric donated.
July (continued)
Precut fabrics.
Liability forms in place.

August
Wednesday, 5 - Museum and workshop open to the public.

**Projected production and delivery**
The AD&A Museum is open 5 days/week, 5 hours/day. If the workshop was fully staffed (2 needlemen/women at a time), the Museum could produce up to 60 masks/day (6 masks per person per hour, 2 masks every 10 minutes).

**Evaluation plans and impact assessment**
Several measures will be implemented to collect information from users and assess the project’s quality and impact:
- Daily interaction between Museum staff and needlemen/women will provide the former with precious feedback to adapt aspects of the initiative in need of improvement.
- Museum personnel will keep track of public participation in the workshop.
- Weekly production of masks will be annotated.
- A book for comments will be placed in the workshop to collect feedback from participants.
- The Museum will encourage participants to share their experience in social media using #Themaskproject so that the Museum can track the project’s virtual outreach.