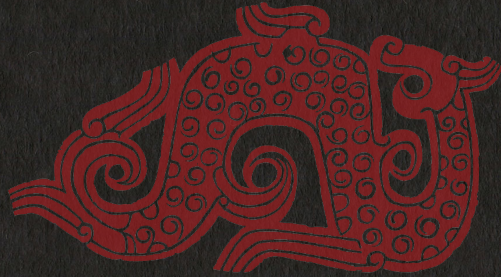




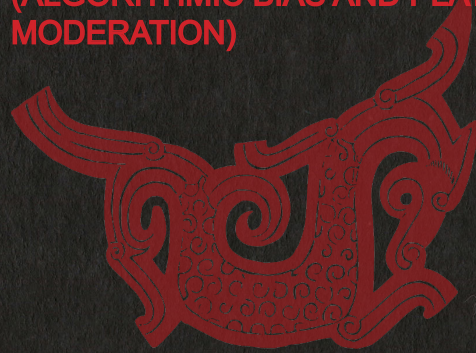
Chapter 1

INTRO: SERIOUS PLAY OR SERIOUS POWER
/ PROJECT RATIONALE / LITERATURE
REVIEW



Chapter 2

INTERVIEW I / INTERVIEW II / CASE
STUDY "QUAN" / ETHICS & AUTHORITY
(ALGORITHMIC BIAS AND PLATFORM
MODERATION)



Chapter 3

THE VAULTURE PLATFORM / USER
ONBOARDING / PLATFORM UI DESIGN



Chapter 4

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY / REFERENCES /
APPENDICES





Chapter I





“Museums are non-profits, they are mission-based organizations set up for the public good, but a long view we are starting to reassess things that we thought might be great might not all be there. It seems like we may be waiting a little longer for a definitive answer on what a next-generation museum will look like.”

-- Tom McLeod



Chapter 2

EVERYONE
is invited
EXCEPT THOSE
who were not

AN INTERVIEW
with
HONGKAI & SUYUAN



Hongmei Zhang (HMZ)

Professor, Vice Director of the Art Museum at Jilin University of Arts. She holds a Doctorate in Literature, specialises in the study of Chinese art history and theory. Zhang currently serves as Vice Chair of the Jilin Provincial Association of Literary and Art Critics and Deputy Director of the Theoretical Committee of the Jilin Provincial Artists Association.



Suxuan Jiang (SXJ)

Lead Artist of SciArt Co-lab, Shenzhen Institute of Artificial Intelligence and Robotics for Society; Lecturer at Benyuan Design and Research Center, Shenzhen University.



Q1: How do you see the role of curators in shaping cultural narratives and audience perceptions within the museum context?

HMZ: Curators are, in many ways, the storytellers of the museum world. We don't just select objects, we build the frameworks that determine how these artefacts are interpreted by the public. For each exhibition, I spend a great deal of time considering not just what to display, but how to communicate its meaning in a way that bridges scholarly research and public curiosity. For example, when we curated an exhibition on modern Chinese painting, our goal was to highlight lesser-known regional artists as well as national icons. We had to balance specialist depth with accessible storytelling, which sometimes meant simplifying complex academic ideas without losing their essence. This balance is delicate: too much theory risks alienating visitors; too little, and we risk superficiality.

Q2: How is “authenticity” constructed and maintained in museum exhibitions?

HMZ: Authenticity in a museum is as much about perception as about provenance. Our team researches every artefact—tracing its history, confirming documentation, even consulting external experts if needed. The public generally trusts our conclusions; there's a kind of “invisible authority” the museum wields. But I do notice, especially among younger audiences, a growing scepticism. Some want to know why we call something authentic, or they question the stories we tell. I recall a memorable moment during our display of the famed Goujian Sword (越王勾践剑). A visitor, perhaps half-jokingly, asked if we had analysed the sword for “DNA evidence”—wondering if scientific proof might reveal its true origins or even the identity of its ancient owner. While such questions may seem whimsical, they reflect a deeper curiosity and sometimes doubt about museum authority, even in a traditional, non-digital setting. As digital platforms proliferate, audiences are exposed to even more alternative narratives, and they bring these questions to our exhibitions. We're increasingly being asked to “show our work”, to make our standards and methods visible and open to discussion.

“As digital platform proliferate, audiences are exposed to even more alternative narratives, and they bring these questions to our exhibitions. We're increasingly being asked to 'show our work', to make our standards and methods visible and open to discussion.”

Q3: What are your observations on the digital transformation of museums in China?

HMZ: China's museums have taken great steps in digitalisation, especially during the pandemic. For instance, we launched an online 3D gallery so that students could still access our collections while at home. However, I'd say these digital initiatives mostly supplement rather than replace the traditional museum visit. A touchscreen next to a painting or a virtual walk-through can enhance accessibility, but they rarely capture the full atmosphere of being physically present with an artefact. True digital interactivity, such as immersive games or VR experiences, is still in its infancy here. It's exciting, but also challenging, because it requires new skills and mindsets, not just technology.

Q4: What is your perspective on the use of AI as a curator, narrator, or guide in the museum context?

HMZ: AI as a museum “guide” is an intriguing idea. I imagine a scenario where visitors can ask questions directly to an AI and receive answers tailored to their interests. This could be revolutionary for engagement. But the foundation has to be a reliable, carefully curated database, ideally built by human experts. There are risks if the AI starts speculating or inventing facts. For example, if an AI were to confidently tell a visitor that an artefact’s origin is uncertain when, in fact, it is well documented, that would undermine our educational mission. Audiences may not be able to discern fact from creative fiction, so we need to ensure that human oversight and fact-checking are always present in the process.

Q5: How do you view the relationship between entertainment, gamification, and heritage education in museums?

HMZ: Games can be a wonderful way to make history “come alive,” especially for children and teenagers who might find traditional displays dull. For example, we once ran a scavenger hunt for students, where they had to solve puzzles about artefacts in our collection. The energy and curiosity this sparked were incredible! But there’s always a risk that entertainment overshadows substance. I’m inspired by works like Ming Dynasty Tales (明朝那些事儿), which tell history in an engaging, almost novelistic style while still grounding the narrative in research. That’s the ideal...make it fun, but never at the expense of truth.

Q6: Do you think museums can achieve greater plurality or inclusivity through digital or AI-driven experiences?

HMZ: Absolutely. digital platforms open doors for multiple perspectives. We can invite community members to share their own stories about artefacts, or use digital surveys to gather audience feedback. AI could help synthesise these voices, presenting a richer, more nuanced view of history. Still, institutional or national perspectives inevitably shape the overall narrative. As curators, we must be vigilant that technology is used to amplify, not silence, minority voices.

Q7: What advice would you give to designers and researchers working on gamified, AI-driven heritage projects?

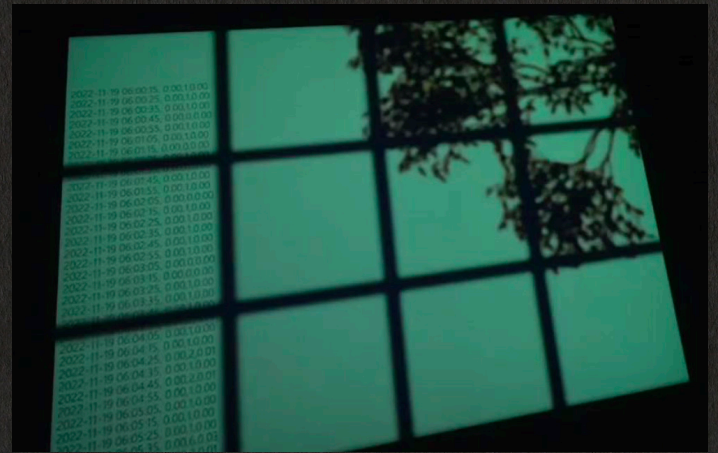
“Start with solid research. Creativity is essential, but accuracy is non-negotiable, especially in an age where misinformation spreads so easily.”

HMZ: Collaborate with curators, historians, and educators to ensure your content stands up to scrutiny. Use technology to invite active exploration and critical thinking, not just passive consumption. And above all, be transparent about your methods, so audiences know how and why stories are being told.



Q1: Can you describe your artistic practice and your collaborations between art and science?

SXJ: Absolutely. I currently work in a collaborative lab in Shenzhen where artists and scientists come together to create interdisciplinary projects. Much of my work focuses on installations, sound, and interactive forms—essentially, finding poetic and perceptual expressions for scientific concepts and emerging technologies. For example, my “Sunlight’s Emotions” project used four months of Shenzhen sunlight data, transforming it into dynamic visuals and sound. Instead of direct or “hard” interaction, I created a space where viewers are enveloped by light and sound, fostering a quiet, intimate, almost therapeutic experience. I always strive for a balance, emphasising the poetic potential of technology, rather than just its “cool” factor.



Sunlight's Emotions (Suxuan, 2023)

Q2: What is your approach to technology, especially AI in art and exhibition design?

SXJ: For me, technology should serve the concept, not the other way around. Whether it's using TouchDesigner, Python programming, or sensor data, I'm always thinking: how does this support the idea? My “micro-nano robot” project, for example, took images from scientific experiments and reframed them as digital landscapes, making visible what is normally hidden in the body. AI is a powerful collaborator, but it's not the protagonist. I use it as a co-creator, allowing for surprise and serendipity, but the original intent must come from the artist. Overreliance on AI risks losing the emotional and bodily depth that's essential to art.



Micro-nano Shanshui (Suxuan, 2023)



Q3: Have you noticed any challenges or limitations with AI and generative tools?

SXJ: Definitely. AI can be astonishing, but it also has clear limitations. Sometimes it can't generate what you want...More seriously, AI tends to reproduce existing patterns, sometimes even plagiarising or remixing old material in ways that aren't immediately obvious.

"That is why I treat AI as a collaborator, not a substitute for creative intuition or critical thinking. The question of 'who is the real creator?' becomes very important; it's about finding the right balance between control, surprise and genuine expression."

Q4: From your perspective as both an artist and a curator, what is most important when presenting work that blends technology, science, and art?

SXJ: Curating as an artist is always about conveying ideas and experiences, not just showing off technical novelty. When we design exhibitions, we must ask: is this about spectacle, or is it about thought and reflection? Technology should be a tool for new perspectives and sensory experiences, not just visual shock or entertainment. The best projects combine scientific rigor with artistic vision and sometimes even philosophical questioning.

Q5: How do you see the role of digital interaction and "play" in contemporary exhibitions, and do you worry about digital forms losing meaning or depth?

SXJ: Digital approaches are a tremendous opportunity, but they require thoughtful balance. Museums and galleries must experiment. Sometimes digital elements add clarity or accessibility, especially for complex or dry content. But "going digital" should not mean sacrificing core ideas. We need to experiment and learn from both successes and failures. The key is proportion that digital should complement, not dominate, and always stay true to the original concept.

Q6: What's your take on using irony or subversive humour, for example an "eBay museum", with AI narrators, fake stories, and grassroots voices to challenge traditional authority?

SXJ: I think your approach is absolutely artistic. Not everything in art or even in museums needs to be didactic or present a "positive" value system. Sometimes, the point is to provoke thought, to critique or question, or simply to offer a new way of seeing. The contrast between grassroots voices and institutional authority, between truth and fabrication, is what makes your game so intriguing. In the physical world, it's hard to let museums showcase grassroots or ambiguous narratives, but digital or game spaces can create exactly these alternative realities. Games are a door to the future. They let us imagine new possibilities, aesthetics, and forms of interaction. Your critical, even ironic, stance is exactly what makes such a project timely and powerful.

Q7: Do you have any advice for artists and researchers exploring the intersection of AI, games, and cultural storytelling?

SXJ: Stay curious, and stay critical. Collaborate across disciplines. Use technology to enhance, not overshadow, your core idea. Don't be afraid to experiment, but always reflect on who is really telling the story? Whose perspective is being highlighted or hidden? And above all, remember that technology is a tool. Your intent, your critical thinking, and your artistic vision must always come first.

MY DAD OWNS
A MUSEUM
AND THIS IS
NOT
A BRAG

A CASE STUDY
ON TIKTOK

Contextual Background

"Quan (听泉鉴宝)'s live stream room on TikTok

Quan, known widely as 听泉鉴宝, is a prominent influencer on Douyin (Chinese TikTok), specialising in cultural relic appraisal and education. His engaging short videos disseminate accessible knowledge about identifying and understanding cultural artefacts. Quan also hosts daily interactive livestream sessions (usually host 80,000 to 90,000 people online simultaneously) where viewers participate by having their personal artefacts appraised in real-time. This digital practice represents a significant shift from traditional, institutionalised methods of cultural authentication, introducing a more democratic, informal, and participatory approach to heritage knowledge dissemination. The purpose of examining Quan's case is to understand how digital influencers navigate regulatory ambiguities and censorship, and how their practices may challenge conventional museum-based narratives of heritage authority and authenticity.

On March 1, 2025, China implemented a major legislative amendment through the revised Law on the Protection of Cultural Relics, significantly liberalising private cultural relic trading and circulation. Despite this progressive legal shift, substantial ambiguity and confusion persist around the boundaries of relic appraisal and trading, particularly within online and digital contexts such as social media platforms. Douyin's strict moderation and algorithmic censorship further complicate this situation, making it challenging for digital influencers and private collectors to openly discuss authenticity, value, and appraisal criteria without the risk of violating unclear regulations or triggering platform censorship mechanisms. Let's break it down now.

Keywords: Institutional legitimacy, class spectacle, private museology, decentralised heritage authority.

Situation Overview

In one of the live stream sessions, a male user entered and immediately disrupted the tone of typical crowd sourced evaluations. Instead of presenting a single object for discussion, the participant flipped his camera to reveal an entire museum display which was complete with glass cases, spotlighting, and labels.



This is my family's — my dad owns the museum.

你汶汶在哪里啊
Where are you?

Viewers were stunned. The livestream chat exploded with comments ranging from admiration to satire. At first, many suspected exaggeration or performance. But the museum was later confirmed to be Zhejiang Qiming Museum, a privately owned institution with a collection of extraordinary depth, showcasing bronze, jade, and ceremonial artefacts, some arguably surpassing provincial-level museum holdings in condition and rarity.



家里还真是开博物馆的
Your family really owns a museum?



这简直就是博物馆的VIP啊
These artifacts are VIPs among VIPs

Insights

A powerful metaphor for the broader tensions in digital heritage platforms:

- Inherited authority is increasingly interrogated, especially by younger audiences.
- Livestreamed heritage spaces function as digital counter-museums, where institutional capital can be contested in real time.
- Audience reactions reflect a collective craving for accountability, transparency, and mutual evaluation.

Reframing the Museum as a Contestable Space

This incident illustrates how private museums can bypass institutional gatekeeping and enter public discourse through informal, digital means. Traditionally, museums are perceived as institutionalised spaces of cultural authority, backed by the state or academia. Yet, by livestreaming his family's museum, the participant repositioned the museum as a personal, performative space. This shift signals the need to reject the museum-as-sanctum model. Instead, design the platform as a space where users can interrogate and reframe the meaning of heritage.

Destabilising Inherited Authority

The declaration, "My father is the museum director," was intended to assert inherited legitimacy. But in the digital commons of a livestream, such claims are fragile. The crowd quickly reoriented authority back to knowledge, experience, and critique. To design a platform, this has direct implications: AI systems should not emulate institutional hierarchy but support a model of distributed authority. Enable users to earn interpretive agency through dialogue, investigation, and co-authorship. Avoid AI that mimics the tone of the curator.

Exhibitions as Performative, Interactive Acts

The event also redefines what it means to "exhibit." On platforms like Douyin, cultural display becomes spectacle and dialogue. This implies a shift from static exhibitions to dynamic, user-responsive storytelling. Design for live annotation, alternative viewpoints, comment-driven content unlocking, or 360-degree video journeys that allow users to navigate exhibitions from different social and historical positions. In this logic, the exhibition becomes a framework for real-time negotiation.

Balancing Decentralisation and Epistemic Integrity

While digital platforms open up access, they also create risks: misinformation, authenticity confusion, and loss of curatorial cohesion. The lesson from the livestream is clear that audiences want decentralisation, but they also seek clarity. The platform must design for both freedom and rigour. Implement layered storytelling structures where "expert" narratives coexist with community generated ones. Create credibility tools (e.g. provenance tags, archival references) that don't suppress participation but provide optional scaffolding. Build a system where multiple truths can be explored, but within a transparent and traceable knowledge architecture.

Algorithmic Bias and Platform Moderation

Quan's digital appraisal activities exist within this uncertain regulatory environment. Although the recent legislation supports private relic circulation, Douyin's moderation policies still impose strict constraints on openly discussing and evaluating cultural relics online. The resulting constraints hinder transparent communication about authenticity and heritage valuation, restricting the capacity for free and informed public engagement around cultural heritage issues.

To circumvent Douyin's stringent moderation rules, Quan strategically employs coded, euphemistic, and metaphorical language. He deliberately adopts alternative terms to avoid algorithmic scrutiny, using expressions such as “开门” (literally "open the door") for genuine artefacts, and “dangerous” as a discreet reference to counterfeit or fake objects. These adaptive linguistic techniques allow Quan to continue providing valuable educational content and appraisal services to his viewers while navigating regulatory ambiguity effectively.

As the platform integrates AI to moderate, curate and amplify content, it must confront the risks of algorithmic bias. Machine learning models are trained on data that may reflect existing cultural hierarchies. For the AI livestream museum platform, this highlights the need to design language processing systems with cultural and contextual sensitivity. AI moderation must be able to distinguish between coded resistance and actual misinformation. It must also support users who are attempting to preserve the integrity of heritage discussion in restrictive environments. This means training language models on culturally embedded euphemisms, enabling human review when ambiguity arises, and allowing for semantic flexibility without sacrificing safety or compliance.

Therefore the livestream moment is a structural challenge to how heritage is narrated and valued. For an AI livestream museum, the design task is to reimagine what authority, interpretation, and participation look like when history is streamed live and shared collectively.



Chapter 3

Laurel



The Vulture Platform

Vulture: An AI Livestream Museum Platform

Vulture is a 24/7 AI-driven livestream museum and auction platform that reimagines how cultural heritage is experienced, circulated, and contested in the digital age. At its heart is an AI auctioneer, a narrative agent who guides audiences through continuous auctions of cultural relics, speculative artefacts, and digital reconstructions. Vulture transforms cultural heritage into a participatory level event, streamed live for collective interpretation.

Unlike traditional museums, Vulture does not present objects as static truths behind glass. Instead, each artefact enters the stage of the livestream as a story to be debated, bid upon, and re-narrated. The AI auctioneer introduces objects through fragmented histories, weaving together fact, speculation, and audience live commentary. Users participate not only as bidders but as co-curators. Challenging authenticity, contributing alternative narratives, and even unlocking hidden layers of the artefact's story through interactive mechanisms such as "Two Truths and a Lie."

Vulture also functions as a living archive. Every object that passes through the auction, whether genuine, counterfeit, or purely fictional, is preserved within a searchable digital repository. Users can revisit past auctions, annotate relics with community perspectives, or even trigger a "re-auction" for collective reappraisal. In this way, Vulture builds a distributed and contested memory bank.

Vulture engages directly with the politics of algorithmic mediation. Inspired by livestreamers like Quan, who navigate strict platform moderation through euphemism and coded language, Vulture integrates linguistic adaptability and transparency into its design. The AI auctioneer itself plays with metaphor and coded speech, reflecting the precarious balance between cultural expression, regulatory oversight, and algorithmic bias.

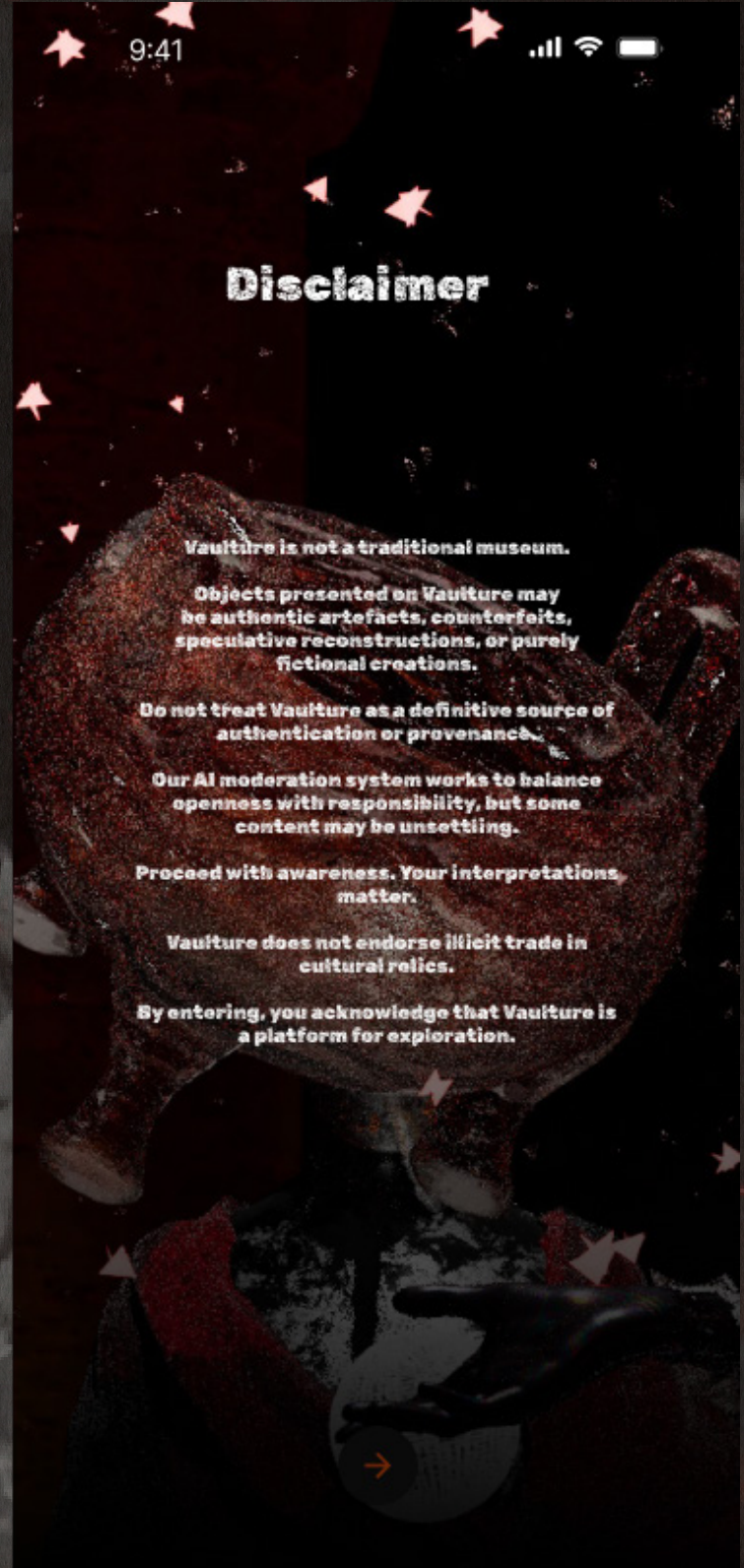
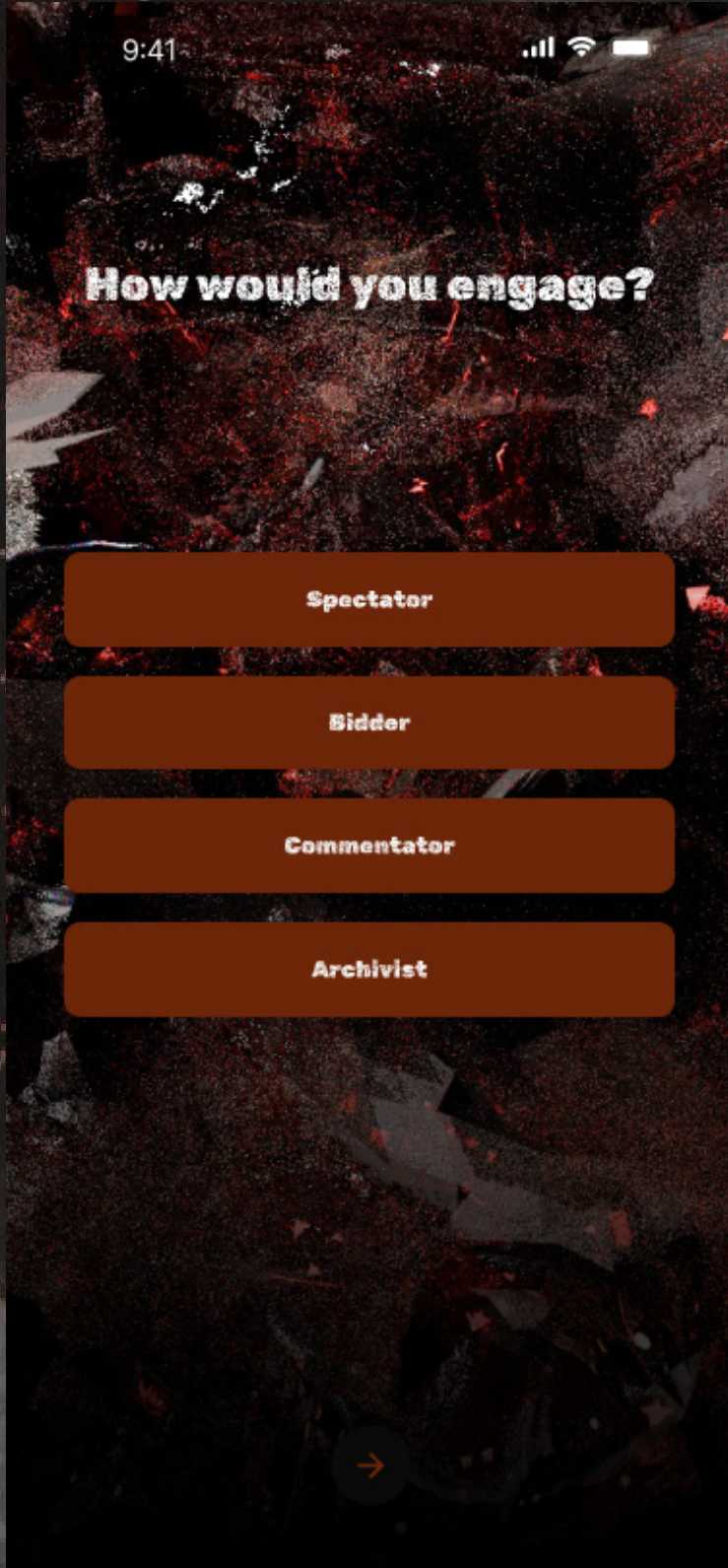
Vulture is a critical stage where heritage is performed, gamified, and problematised. By merging livestream culture, AI narration, and auction mechanics, the platform invites audiences to ask: Who owns history? Who speaks for the artefact? And what happens when cultural authority is streamed, sold, and shared in real time?

Vulture Manifesto

- ☆ We believe that **history** is not a relic in glass box.
- ☆ We believe that **heritage** does not belong only to those who inherit institutions, titles, or bloodlines.
- ☆ We believe that the **museum** is not a **mausoleum**.
- ☆ We believe that **algorithms** should not flatten voices, every glitch, every euphemism, every coded word is part of culture's survival.
- ☆ We believe that **auctions** are not just about ownership, but also about **performance**, **speculation**, and **the right to imagine**.
- ☆ We believe that the **archive** is not fixed, each carries **infinite versions of itself**.
- ☆ We believe that the **future of heritage** lies in **stream**, **feeds**, and **collective interruptions**.

Team Vulture

User Onboarding



Platform Prototype



Platform Figma Board: <https://www.figma.com/design/ACkhp4lhnLiZOy99t4p6eD/Vulture-Platform-Prototype?node-id=0-1&t=aKiP1EnmEaCp3id-1>

9:41

9:41



Serious Play? Serious Power?

You define it. Enter the stream.
Watch the past unfold in real time.



9:41



9:41

Join Now

For a collective museum, for a non-mausoleum museum.

Login

New to Vulture? [Sign up](#)


Platform Prototype

9:41


Login

Please login and enjoy your journey

Phone number

 Phone number

Password

 Password

[forgotten password?](#)


Login

Sign up


9:41

Sign up


Phone number

 Phone number

Security code

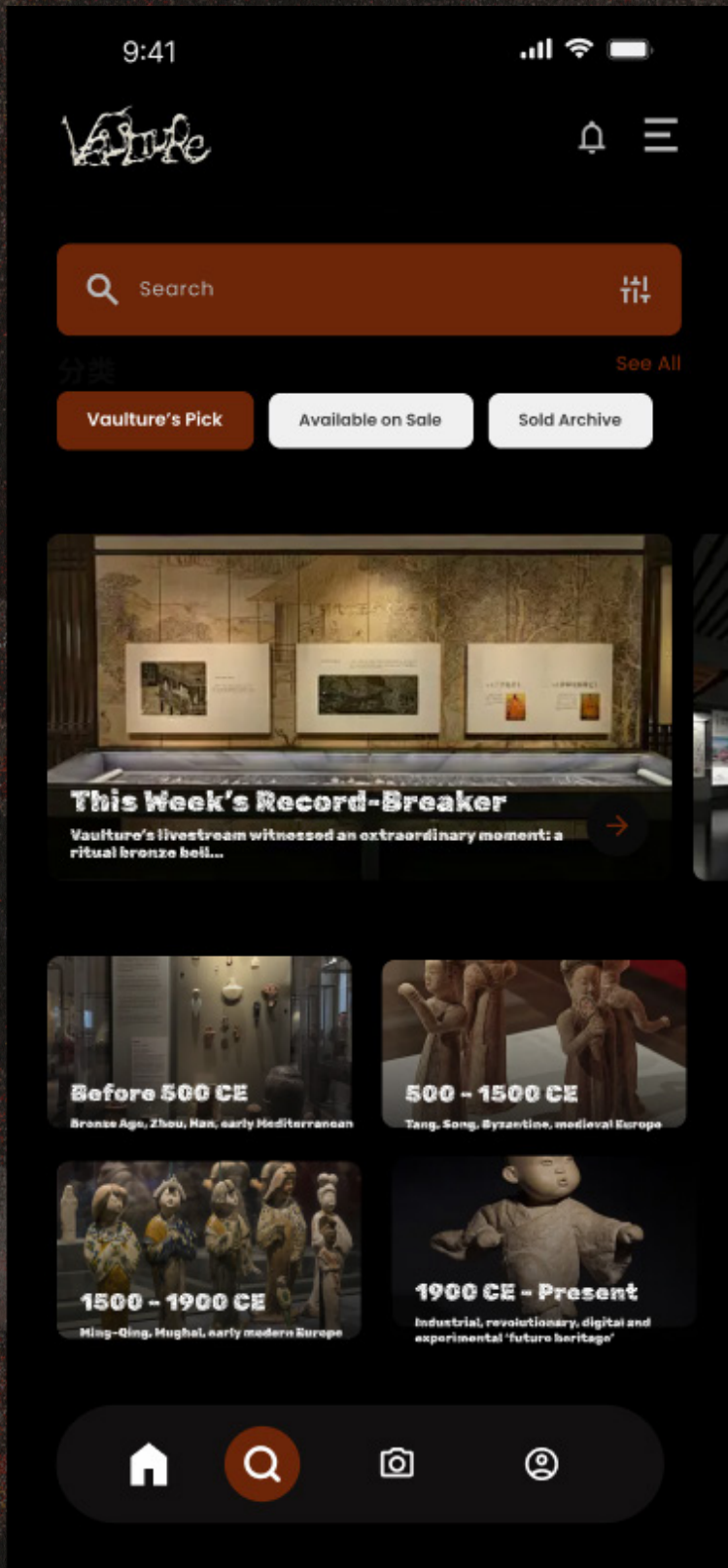
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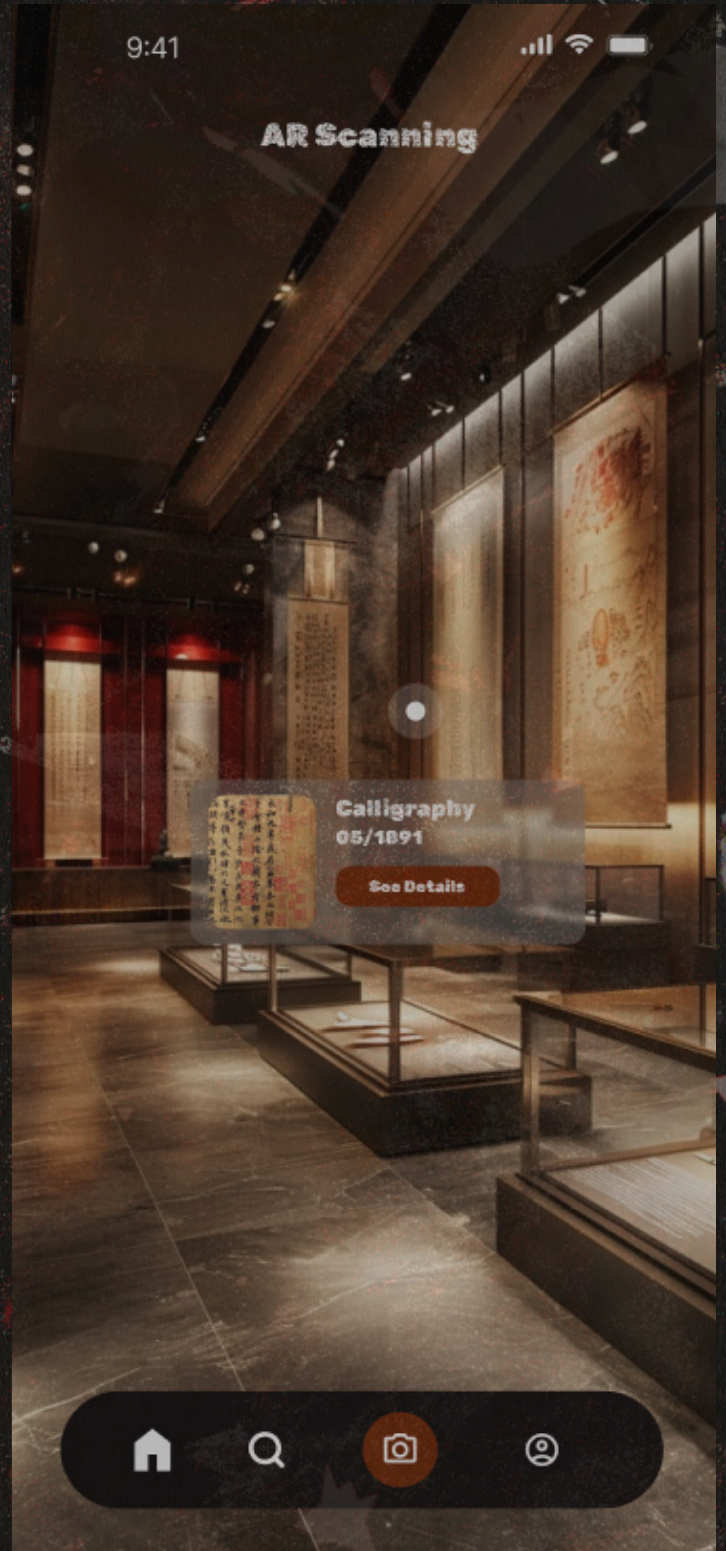
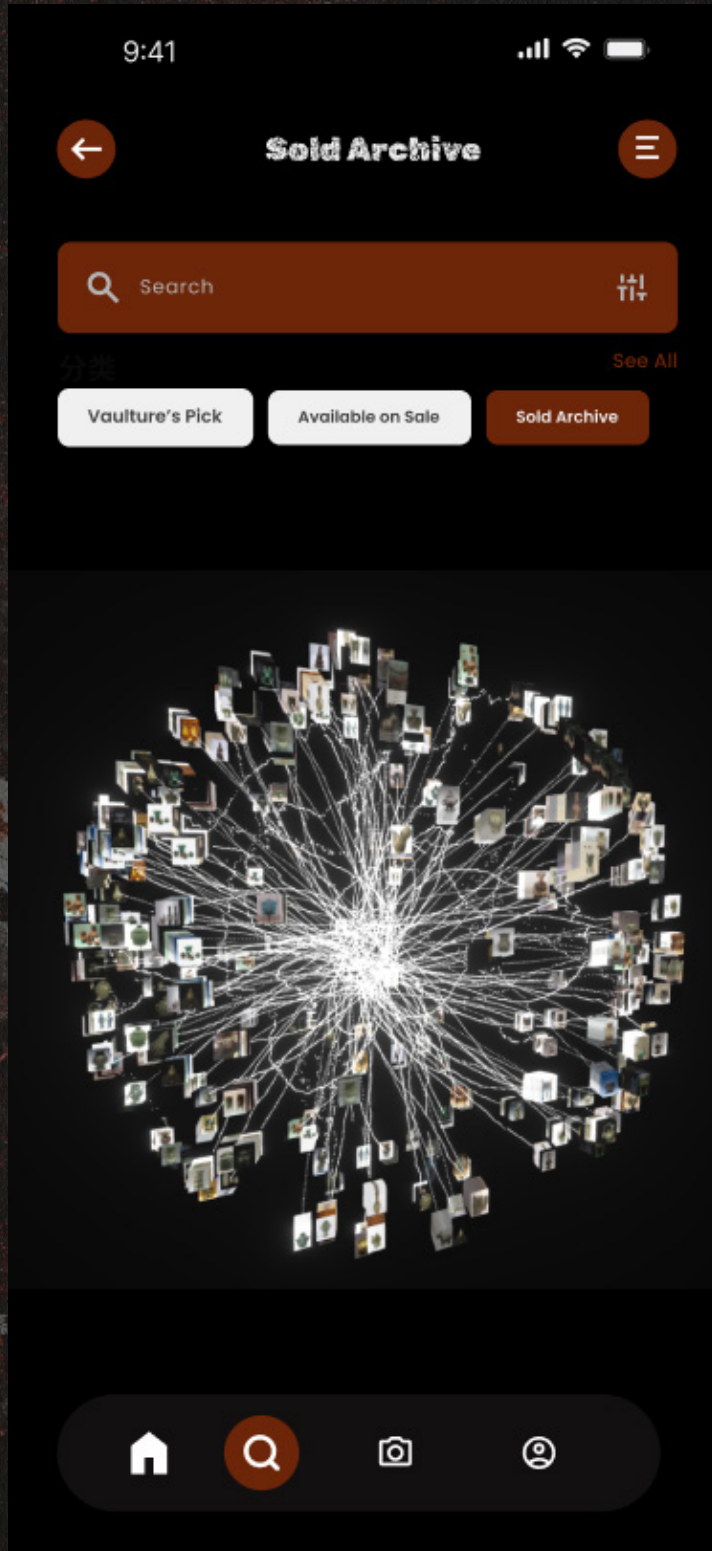
 Password

Sign up

Sign in



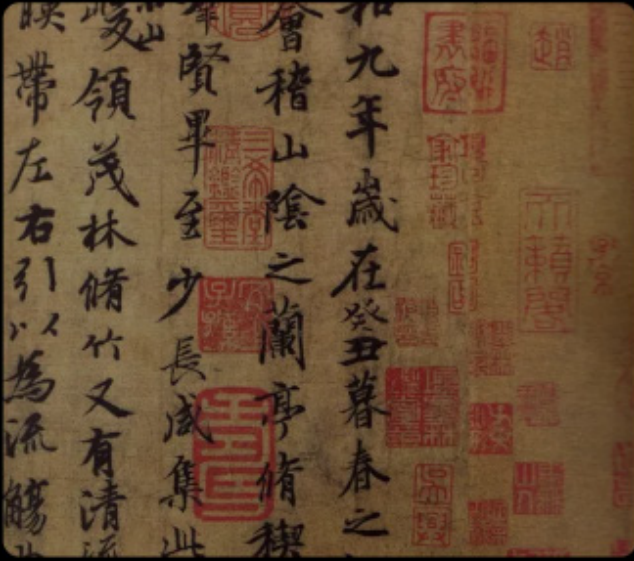
Platform Prototype



9:41



Details



693620 Follow

Chinese calligraphy

Wang Xizhi's Preface to the Orchid Pavilion Gathering

The calligraphy is admired for its fluidity, natural rhythm, and balance. The red seals covering the scroll are imperial collection stamps added by later dynasties, particularly the Tang, Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing emperors. Each seal reflects the scroll's long journey through history, passing through royal collections and connoisseurs' hands. These seals themselves form a secondary layer of history, turning the manuscript into a palimpsest of authority and appreciation.

Vulture's Generated Info

1:12

Save to Like

9:41



Profile



693620

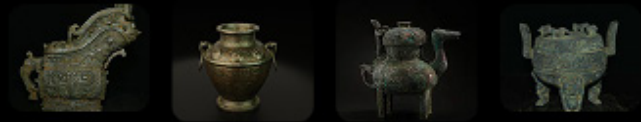
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Chapter 4

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Executive Summary

Vulture emerges at the intersection of cultural heritage, livestream culture, and artificial intelligence, presenting a new paradigm for how history is accessed, questioned, and performed. Rather than reproducing traditional museum authority in digital form, it leverages the dynamics of auction, storytelling, and collective participation to reframe heritage as a process of negotiation. The platform is designed to activate artifact, as prompts for dialogue, speculation, and reinterpretation.

The project situates itself within contemporary debates around digital museology and the politics of authenticity. It acknowledges that audiences today are no longer satisfied with passive observation; they expect opportunities to interrogate provenance, contribute alternative narratives, and expose hidden histories. Vulture responds by offering a continuous, AI-mediated performance in which authority is distributed and objects become catalysts for shared meaning making.

The innovation of Vulture lies equally in its critical awareness of risk. Issues of algorithmic bias, moderation, and regulatory ambiguity must be addressed to ensure the platform does not unintentionally reproduce exclusionary structures. By experimenting with transparency frameworks, linguistic adaptability, and participatory checks, Vulture proposes pathways for reconciling openness with accountability.

Looking forward, the platform carries significant potential for cultural innovation. Future development could include multilingual AI auctioneers capable of embodying diverse voices, immersive livestream environments that allow audiences to interact spatially with relics, and blockchain-based provenance systems that preserve narrative histories as evolving archives. In doing so, Vulture positions itself as a tool for cultural display and as a pioneering experiment in algorithmic museology. One that foregrounds dialogue, imagination, and collective authorship as the future of heritage engagement.

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Appendix (interview script)

Section 1: Curatorial Authority and Heritage Narratives

Q1: How do you see the role of the museum—and the curator—in shaping narratives of cultural heritage for the public?

Prompt: Are there particular responsibilities or challenges you encounter in balancing different historical or cultural perspectives?

Q2: In your experience, how is the concept of “authenticity” negotiated or constructed in the display and interpretation of art and artefacts?

Prompt: Do you think the audience’s perception of authenticity matches the curatorial or academic view?

Section 2: Digital Transformation and Gamification

Q3: How has the digital transformation of museums (virtual exhibitions, online collections, digital storytelling, etc.) impacted your curatorial practice?

Prompt: What have been the most significant opportunities and challenges?

Q4: Have you or your institution experimented with gamification or game-based learning tools (e.g., interactive apps, digital games, VR)? What have you observed about their impact on visitor engagement and learning?

Q5: In your opinion, can digital games or playful experiences deepen visitors’ understanding of heritage, or do they risk trivialising complex themes?

Section 3: AI, Mediation, and the Future of Curation

Q6: Artificial intelligence is increasingly used in museums—for interpretation, personalisation, and even as narrative agents. What do you see as the potential and risks of AI as a mediator or “storyteller” in the heritage context?

Q7: How do you feel about the idea of a game or digital platform where an AI presents multiple—and perhaps conflicting—stories about the same artefact or collection?

Prompt: Could this foster critical thinking, or might it confuse or fragment heritage narratives?

Section 4: Market Dynamics and Alternative Narratives

Q8: How do you perceive the relationship between museums and the broader circulation of art and artefacts—for example, through private collections, auctions, or even online marketplaces?

Q9: Do you think the provenance and market journey of an artefact can (or should) be included in the way museums tell their stories? Why or why not?

Section 5: Inclusion and the Future

Q10: How can museums become more inclusive and pluralistic in their representation of culture and history—both in physical and digital formats?

Q11: What advice would you offer to digital designers, game developers, or researchers who want to foster more dynamic, participatory, and critical engagement with heritage?

Thank you again for your time and insights. Is there anything else you would like to add, or any question you wish I had asked? May I follow up with you if I need further clarification as my project develops?

(End of Script)

