catchoom

NATIONAL P■RTRAIT GALLERY
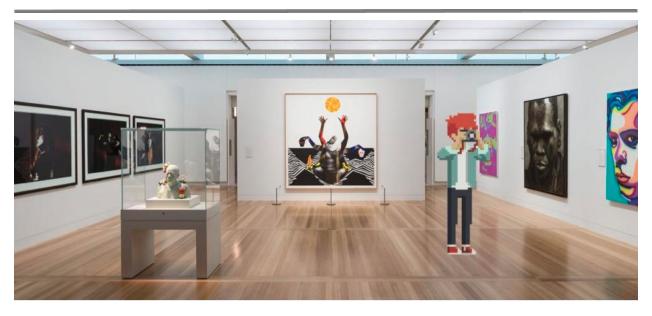

Headhunt! App Turns a Museum Visit into an Interactive Experience with Image Recognition

The Headhunt! App transforms art that is just hanging on the wall, to art that invites kids and adults to become part of it.

While the goal of a museum is to **both entertain and educate**, establishments - especially those with a traditional profile - have not always managed to live up to the **demands of modern visitors**.

Yet, it is still vital for them to mirror the technology-driven society that we live in, if they want to **remain relevant and continue to attract crowds**.

The story of Australian National Portrait Gallery's Headhunt! app shows how mobile tech can **turn a simple visit to an exhibition into an interactive journey**, allowing kids to interact with the artworks, learn more, and become a 'museum curator' for an hour.

Self portrait with gladioli, 1922 by George Lambert.
National Portrait Gallery, Canberra

The challenge?
How to engage the most demanding visitors: Kids

For a 21st century kid growing up in a digital world, simply looking at a painting on a wall will not seem interesting enough.

Let's face it, it's quite challenging to capture a youngster's attention. For that, **you need more than a passive stroll around a gallery** – children want to be entertained and actively involved.

Realizing this, Australian National Portrait Gallery wanted to encourage visitors, especially the youngest ones, to **engage with the artwork displayed**, and **connect with it in a deeper way** rather than passively looking at it.
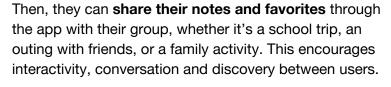
So they designed Headhunt!, a self-guiding app for kids aged 9 –14 years.

Bridging the gap between physical and digital with fun, interactive learning experiences

Kids are encouraged to **pick their favorite artworks** as they walk the halls, inspiring them to look closely at portraits and delve into the artistic elements of the work and the stories of the people featured. The app uses **iBeacons to follow participants** through the different parts of the museum.

Whenever kids choose a portrait, they just need to open the app and **hold up the camera at a painting**.

Catchoom's Image Recognition tech integrated into the app **recognizes the piece from the collection** in the blink of an eye and starts an interactive experience, adding an **element of magic that always fascinates kids**.

After looking deeply into the portrait, kids are encouraged to answer questions, find hidden elements, take pictures, record audio notes, and so on.

Then, they can **share their notes and favorites** through the app with their group, whether it's a school trip, an outing with friends, or a family activity. This encourages interactivity, conversation and discovery between users.

When the activity is finished, **a report will be generated with all the data and content collected,** allowing supervising teachers and parents, helping them learn more about what kids liked or use it as a base for a post-visit activity.

Super-fast and accurate Image Recognition with no connectivity needed

For any digital or mobile initiative planned for museums and exhibitions, **connectivity often poses a problem**.

When it comes to **most image recognition solutions offered in the market**, in order to transfer of the image from a tablet's camera to the image database in the cloud, and back to the user with the resulting content, the whole gallery would require high speed Wi-Fi connection, or all devices should use mobile data.

This can be very **costly and sometimes impossible**, especially when dealing with historical buildings.

This is why the Headhunt! app uses our On-Device Image Recognition SDK, which enables **offline image recognition on mobile devices**, regardless of Internet connectivity.

The On-Device SDK runs with no cloud support necessary, and **works just as fast whether the users are online or have no connectivity at all**.

Another reason for choosing Catchoom was its ability to **match an image** in the database, even just by looking at one part of the the picture, with an average **98% accuracy rate**. Because no kids have the patience to try something twice if it failed the first time, right?

"Catchoom works really well for us as it recognises the works instantly from just a tiny detail. The kids get really excited about this element of 'magic' in our app!""

– Gillian Raymond, Digital Manager at National Portrait Gallery

---

The tech that is taking museums to the future

What's the lesson of the Headhunt! app's story? In order for museums to **survive in the digital age**, it is crucial to adapt and evolve.

People want **mobile**, **personalization**, and **instant gratification** in all aspects of life – and that includes museum visits.

So, by developing a mobile app that enables **unique visits through a gamified experience**, combining geo-location and image recognition tech, the National Portrait Gallery is on the road to creating **meaningful and engaging experiences** that we believe will **generate a steady stream of happy visitors**.

Contact us at global.sales@catchoom.com to learn more or book a demo.