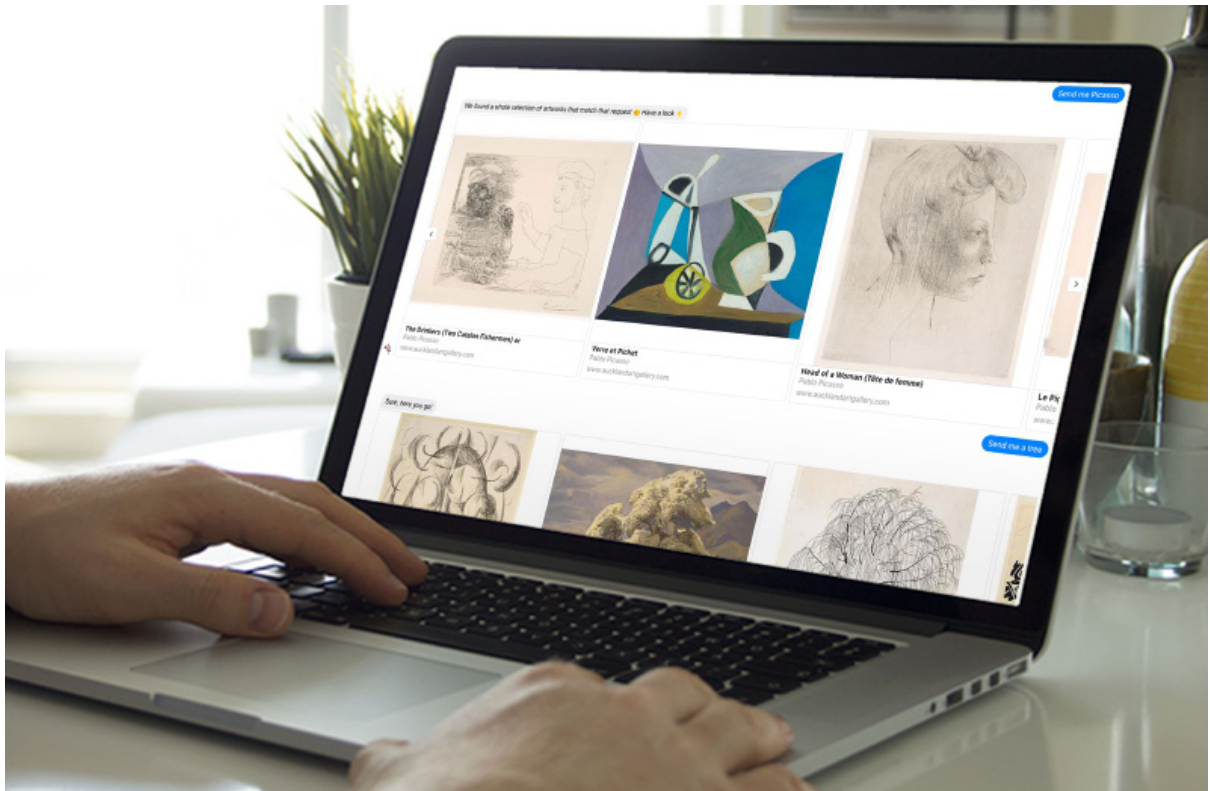


Auckland Art Gallery's new chatbot demonstrates art-ficial intelligence to give new access to 17,000 artworks



To mark International Museums Day on Friday 18 May, and ahead of next week's Techweek NZ, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki today launches a new chatbot through Facebook Messenger.

An innovative tool that utilises machine learning, the chatbot gives online audiences a new way to explore Auckland Art Gallery's collection of 17,000 artworks. Users are able to send prompts – such as 'show me...', 'send me...' or 'give me...' – followed by a keyword, colour or, even, an emotion, and the chatbot will respond with a selection of related artworks.

The chatbot is also able to respond to frequently asked questions about visiting the Gallery.

Development of the Gallery's chatbot has been a joint effort by Regional Facilities Auckland's Customer Experience team, digital development studio Pixel Fusion, and Auckland Art Gallery's Marketing and Communications team.

The Gallery's chatbot is part of an initiative called Send Me SFMOMA headed by the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA), who launched their text message-based chatbot in June 2017. Following the project's success, SFMOMA shared basic code behind the chatbot, so that institutions around the world could adapt it to their own holdings. Auckland Art Gallery's project was initiated following a conversation with SFMOMA facilitated by Sabine Doolin, Audience Strategist from InsightUnlocked, and Anna Leary, Director of Objective Virtual Marketing.

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Auckland Art Gallery Director Rhana Devenport says the arrival of a chatbot through Facebook Messenger allows not only for easier, more intuitive searching of the Gallery's collection but also for a playful experience that prompts discovery and delight.

'This year's International Museums Day highlights "Hyperconnected Museums," so it's appropriate that we're launching our chatbot created thanks to the connections forged with the team at San Francisco Museum of Modern Art – and developed with the goal of connecting Auckland Art Gallery's artworks to the millions of Facebook users across the globe. This worldwide initiative to make art museums' collections more easily and enjoyably accessible via digital platforms allows users, wherever they may be, to explore the Gallery's collection using colour, emotion and other keywords,' says Devenport.

She adds: 'We're excited to be part of a growing global network of art institutions who are making their collections accessible in this way.'

Jay Mollica, Creative Technologist at SFMOMA, says: 'Following the launch and success of Send Me SFMOMA, we decided to share some of the basic code so that our colleagues at other museums, such as Auckland Art Gallery, could adapt it in a way that works for their audiences. Auckland Art Gallery is the first institution to launch a chatbot following Send Me SFMOMA and it's especially rewarding to see the innovations they've brought to the concept and the rich experience they've created.'

Edward Leoni, Senior Software Engineer, Pixel Fusion says: 'Throughout our work with the Auckland Art Gallery, our goal has been to use technology to surface their incredible collection in engaging and innovative ways – the chatbot achieves exactly this. The exciting thing about the bot is that it is so accessible and for the first time the Gallery's collection can be searched and explored from within an app that is a familiar part of daily life for billions of people around the world. This is yet another important step for Auckland Art Gallery, as they take their art beyond the gallery walls.'

The chatbot utilises more than 100,000 human-sourced and machine-generated tags to categorise artworks – and it is still learning. The more people message the chatbot, the smarter it becomes.

Auckland Art Gallery's chatbot is now live and accessible via the 'Send Message' button on the Gallery's Facebook page.

Visit [Facebook.com/AucklandArtGallery](https://www.facebook.com/AucklandArtGallery)

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About Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki:

Established in 1888, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki is New Zealand's leading visual arts experience with 17,000 artworks in its collection. Each year, hundreds of thousands of visitors to the Gallery explore the largest collection of New Zealand art in the world and discover outstanding works by Māori and Pacific Island artists, as well as international painting, sculpture and print collections dating from the 11th century to today. With an ever-changing programme of exhibitions sourced from the Gallery's own collection of artworks and from the collections of its international partners, there is always something new to see.

Situated in the heart of Auckland city next to Albert Park, the Gallery has won multiple building design awards since expansion and restoration in 2011, and was awarded 2013 World Building of the Year at the World Architecture Festival.

The Gallery is open daily from 10am–5pm, except Christmas Day. Entry is free for New Zealand residents, Gallery Members and children aged 12 and under. Charges apply for international visitors and some special exhibitions.

Auckland Art Gallery is part of Regional Facilities Auckland, an Auckland Council-controlled organisation, which manages several cultural organisation across Auckland.

aucklandartgallery.com

About Send Me SFMOMA:

Send Me SFMOMA is an SMS-based project that lets anyone in the US text SFMOMA a word, colour or emoji and receive a piece from the collection back. It debuted in June of 2017 and quickly went viral, receiving over 3 million texts in the month of July. The project was featured in countless news outlets including, *The New York Times*, *The Today Show*, *Hyperallergic* and *The Guardian*.

sfmoma.org

About Pixel Fusion:

Pixel Fusion is a Digital Product Studio based in Parnell, Auckland. Their team of 25 designers, developers and strategists specialise in design-led software solutions. Pixel Fusion works with a broad range of clients from start-ups to enterprise, forming long-term partnerships in helping to facilitate and execute digital transformation.

pixelfusion.co.nz