

# Nights at the Museum

 By [Terry Levin](#)

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The Cape Town-based [Design Indaba](#) Festival, held in February each year, features a three-day showcase of globally-acclaimed speakers, handpicked by Indaba founder Ravi Naidoo to present case studies that are changing the world for the better.

## Volcanic disruption

An often overlooked but globally relevant issue presented by Indaba designers is their briefs from theatres, galleries and museums on to how to attract more visitors especially new millennial audiences to engage in the cultural arts.

A big ask, you might say, but now new tech, data and creative thinkers such as Cecilia Martin and Klasien van de Zandschulp of Amsterdam-based Lavalab studio are proving up to the task.

Introducing themselves as a “risk taker” and a “nerd”, the Lavalab team make their approach to recruitment apparent in the statement, “it’s not about skill, it’s about attitude,” and to their general approach as “less test, more testicles,” – [click here for more](#).

## Museums to go

One of Lavalabs projects has been to develop a visual identity for the first design museum in Russia. Using the motif of geometric cut-glass artifacts commonly found in Russian households, they have developed a beautiful visual language of symbols, which may be applied on everything related to the institution, from printed matter to t-shirts and even paving slabs.



Another aspect of this project identifies that if people cannot get to a museum, the museum can come to them, creating a museum on a branded bus. A breakthrough idea and one that might work in South Africa and other regions.

## Open-source culture

One thing Amsterdam is not short of is art museums – The Rembrandt Museum and the Van Gogh, being just two of the enormous legacy Holland holds in this regard. The problem of how these “old masters” could reach out to new Millennials has been elegantly solved by the Lavalab.

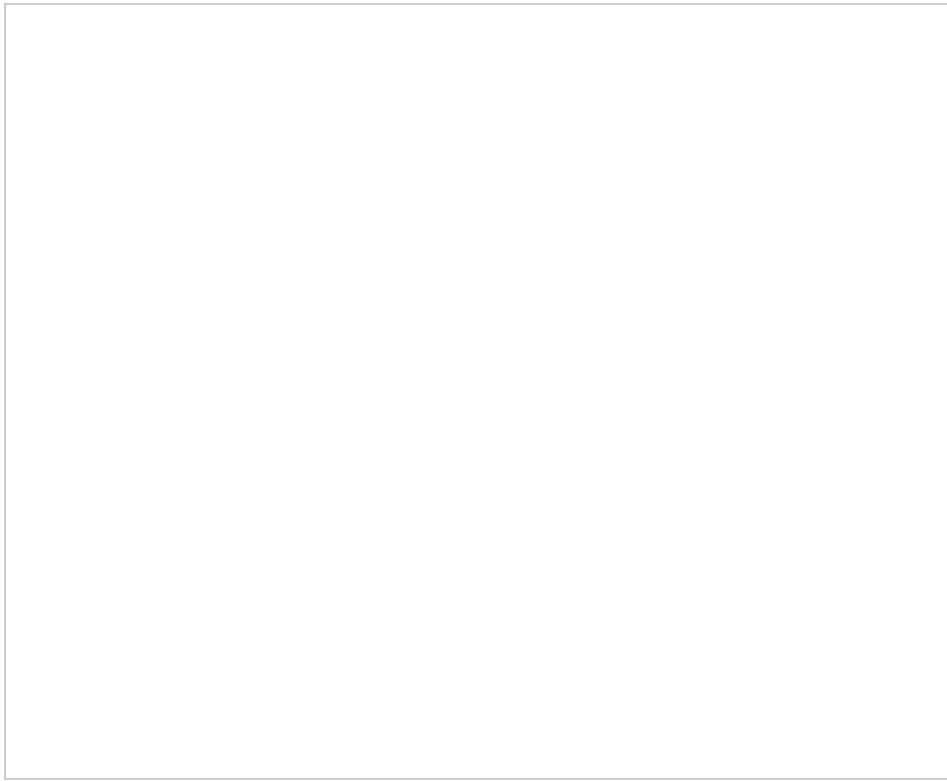
## The data solution



An app called #goldenAge uses mobile and Bluetooth technology that allows the public to interact and socialise with Rembrandt's great paintings, via social media messages and status updates from the many characters featured in painting. Alerts such as "Rembrandt van Rijn wants to add you to his network," or "Govert Flinck want to add you as a friend," appeal to the mindset of younger audience and allow the networks, power plays, jealousies and gossip of the personalities in the paintings to become more relevant and engaging.

The project is being developed as an open source platform, i.e. open and free to use by every other museum or exhibition creator and can be adjusted to different content and stories.

See the full case study embedded below:



[Northside festival #GoldenAge: interactive storytelling in the 17th Century](#) from [Klasien Van de Zandschulp](#)

## Loading...

An intriguing installation shows a series of typical gilt-edge art frames on a gallery wall, with nothing in them but that irritating circlet icon one experiences when waiting for something to load on digital platforms. A surefire way for you to be thrilled when an image actually appears, instead of walking straight past it.

If you are in Amsterdam with kids you could also take advantage of Family Labs and workshop areas as designed by another outfit of [Design Indaba](#) presenters, the acclaimed exhibition space designers Miriam van der Lubbe and Niels van Eijk [@vevdl](#).

## The 9-second rule

A case study from yet another Amsterdam-based designer, creative director Erik Kessels, identifying that people spend an average of only 9 seconds in front of a work of art, while in sports clubs they spend up to 20 minutes watching soaps on TV, inspired the studio, KesselsKramer, to install treadmills in front of painting to allow people to get fit while looking at artworks.

There are many lessons to be learned from the clever uses of technology and ideas to inspire renewed interest in shared artistic heritages. Could the above types of case studies be as relevant in South Africa in getting people to engage with each other's cultures?

Terry Levin has been covering [Design Indaba for 12 years](#) for proud media partner Bizcommunity.

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