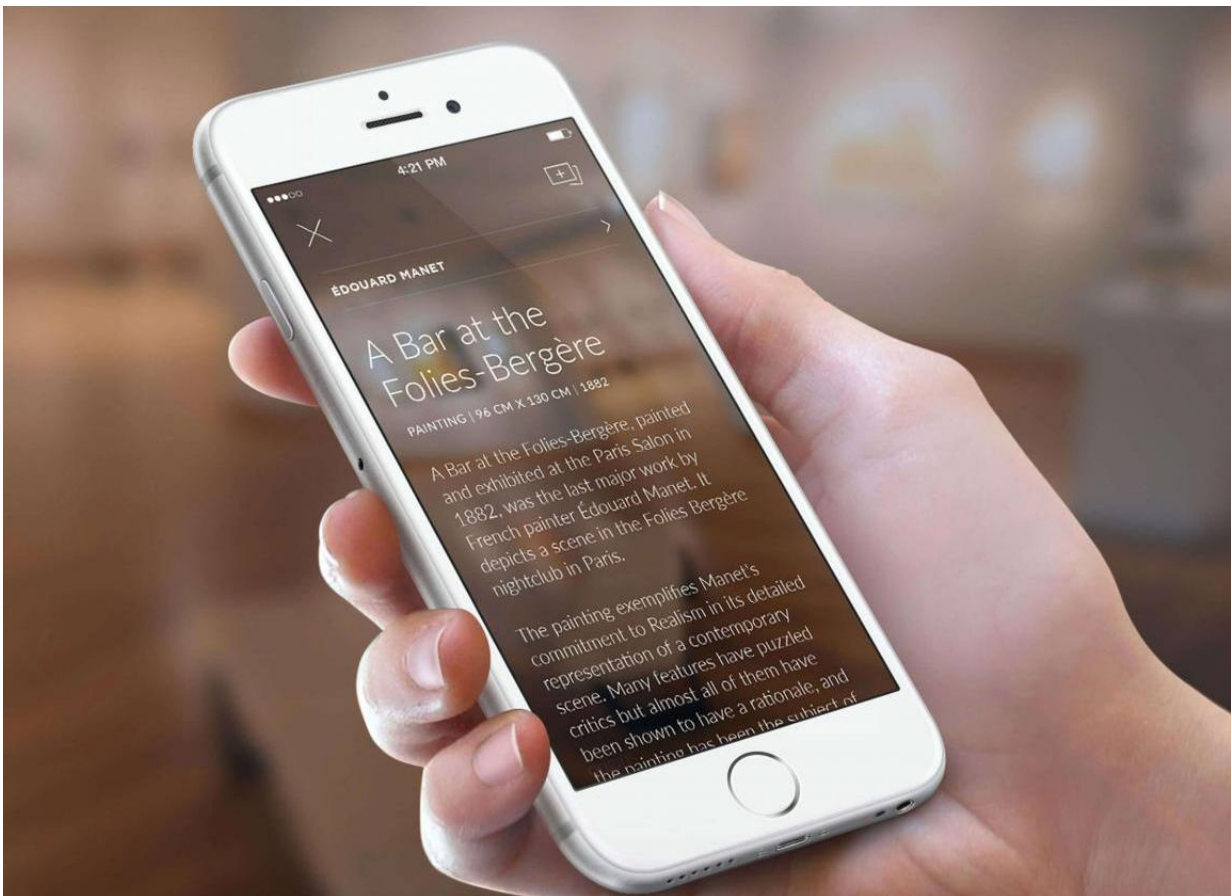


A day at the museum with Smartify app: Get comments, collect favorites

March 7 2017, by Nancy Owano



What is Smartify? A hint is there if you go up on their website, where you see people darting around a museum. Nice. They are not wearing

clunky headphones and are not restricted to a circle of tourists where they have to listen to a guide spouting dates and eras.

Yet they seem interested and they keep looking down—uh-huh. They are looking down at a [smartphone app](#) called Smartify.

With it, they can identify, scan and save what interests them.

If this all sounds vaguely musical, it is like a service such as Spotify. Before long you have your collection of art favorites. Smartify co-founder Thanos Kokkiniotis quoted in *New Scientist* described it as a combination of the music discovery service Spotify and music recognition app Shazam – but for visual works.

Technologies at play here are [augmented reality](#) (AR) and advanced [image recognition](#).

This is an app with two functions. First, you can use it to scan [using the camera], identify and save art. As *New Scientist* said, the app "uses image recognition to identify scanned artworks and provide people with additional information about them. Users can then add the works to their own digital collection."

Second, you can use it as a personalized guide to a museum or gallery. The app displays card-like information you might see as a print collection of cards at a museum gift shop giving you details on the artist.

They are making the app available on the Google Play and Apple App Store.

Matt Reynolds reported in *New Scientist* that "The app will launch in May for selected artworks at the Louvre in Paris, France, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, and all the [artworks](#) at the

Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam and the Wallace Collection in London."

What is the advantage of the app for museums and galleries? The art sites that opt-in for the service can assess [demographic](#) information about users and the type of art that grabs their interest.

New Scientist made a noteworthy point about this: While museums and galleries that sign up can access demographic information about people who use Smartify and the artworks they [interact](#) with (of use to inform their marketing and advertising), people logging into the app will have their data anonymized, said co-founder Anna Lowe. If they don't want to share their data, they can use the app without logging in.

In the bigger picture, Smartify may be riding the wave of the smartphone future. According to the team:

"In the next couple of years all smartphones will be equipped with advanced AR and VR capabilities, and the market is set to be worth £150bn by 2020. To give you some practical examples, in the future we will probably walk around a flat viewing it in VR before renting, or hover phones over IKEA [flatpacks](#) to watch the assembly instructions. Industry experts actually predict augmented reality will replace computers – allowing us to work, watch films and share information at any moment."

Still, call them old-fashioned if you must, there are some people who think any headphone, cassette, or smartphone support should not interfere with the subjective experience between artist and viewer when at a museum.

New Scientist quoted Kevin Walker at the Royal College of Art in London. "Many visitors go to museums to have an unplugged experience," he said. Reynolds wrote, "He thinks visitors should look up

from their phones and put their trust in gallery curators when it comes to viewing works of art."

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