Museums in the Caribbean

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Macrodata

What the hell were we thinking?

When the theme for the Heritage Jam was announced, Csilla decided that she *had* to submit something. After all, Csilla's PhD research is on museums in the Caribbean and she has visited 175 of them. She figured "I have tons of beautiful images and lots of information, about so many museums, there's got to be some way to visualize it."

But how?

How do you visualize the incredible diversity of museums in the Caribbean? How can you capture small private museums and big governmental museums in all the colours of the rainbow?

Then, with a flash of inspiration, Csilla recalled a postcard she had seen years ago in Dublin[1]
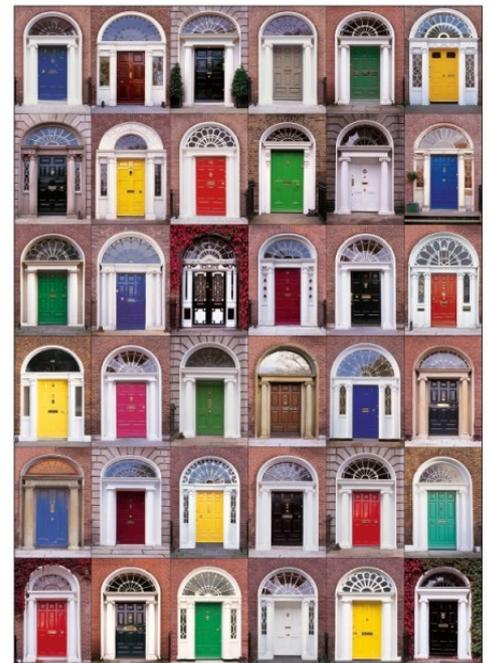
Doors of Dublin

Could she do something similar with her photos of museum facades? And how would she do it, by printing out the pictures, cutting them up and pasting them on a poster? There must be a better way. Of course! Computers! She decided to ask her friend and colleague Krijn, who is somewhat of a magician with Photoshop, for help. Luckily, Krijn was excited about the idea and agreed to put his magic to use for the Heritage Jam. We thought about adding a website or a digital extension, but realized we would not be able to get permissions from all the museums in such a short time frame. So we decided the image would have to stand on its own.

Csilla figured the image could be a postcard, but even better would be to make a poster. Then she could take it along to the Caribbean when she's presenting her research. Or use it as an image in a PowerPoint slide. Or use it as the cover image for her dissertation. Or use it whenever she wants to tell anyone in the Caribbean or elsewhere about these fascinating, beautiful museums. Really, the image could be used for a lot of things and by a lot of people. Maybe some Caribbean museums would be interested in selling it as a postcard in their gift shops?

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[1]
http://www.carrollsirishgifts.com/media/catalog/product/cache/11/thumbnail/920x880/9df78eab33525d08d6e5fb8d27136e95/s/p/sp02.jpg

Microdata

HOW THE HELL DID WE DO IT?

Csilla started by looking through all her photos of Caribbean museums and making a selection of museum facade images. Some pictures were too sunny, too tilted or too full of cars or other clutter. Some were just too close up or too far away. In the end, she selected 69 pictures to work with.

Then Krijn returned from fieldwork and conferences. We put on our thinking caps. Krijn quickly decided the original format of the poster was a bit boring. He came up with the idea to make the poster in the shape of the roofs of some buildings. So he traced a few images in Illustrator and boom! we had an amazing skyline. Then it was time to switch to Photoshop. We decided to settle on a poster in A1 width but roughly half the height. We were now working with a panoramic strip of paper that would have a skyline at the top. We briefly thought about making the ends of the poster fold-over so we would be able to glue the poster into a cylinder. In the end we decided it should just be flat with a cut-out skyline top. Once we had the shape, Krijn went to work on resizing and cropping each of the individual facades. Then all the 69 facades needed to be pasted into the poster in neat rows. Csilla made it into a game by having Krijn switch facades around until she was happy with the diversity in colours, museum locations and architecture.

In the end, we played around with adding colourful backgrounds and removing it again, adding borders to all the images and to the outline. Krijn made green grass and blue skies, then reverted everything to black to emphasize the colours of the museums. The black contrast worked out so well that we decided the sky-line no longer needs to be cut out, but that the poster could remain an intact panorama. In the end, there was a round of high-fives and smiles as we realized our image really did stand on its own and was better than we had imagined. It was done.