

Holding a VanGoYourself Event

The aim of the VanGoYourself online game (www.vangoyourself.com) is to create a meaningful engagement between your visitors and your collection. Because of its inherent sociability, playfulness and photographic output, VanGoYourself supports the behaviour of a group of friends on a night out and so is perfect for an informal and fun evening event, whether it's a part of a larger programme of events or a special VanGoYourself night.



Johanne and Davide recreate Ambrogio Borgognone's Madonna and Child at Cercle Cité, Luxembourg

What will be VanGo'd?

Whether you already have examples of your collection on VanGoYourself or not, you will need to pick which artworks will work best to be recreated during a live event. There are a number of aspects to consider:

- **What best represents your collection? Add a few of your own paintings to VanGoYourself.**

VanGoYourself is a great opportunity to show off your collection, whether you hold renowned artworks or lesser known gems that you want to give a bit more love. Perhaps you have a famous masterpiece that you think visitors would love to try their hand at recreating. Or maybe there's a local artist you'd like to promote, or a new acquisition that you'd like to shout about.

We are always looking to add more images to be recreated. The process is quick and simple and involves you supplying us with a reasonable resolution digital image of your selected artworks. The only thing to remember is that the image needs to be public domain licenced. You can read all the details here: <http://vangoyourself.com/information-for-collection-holders/>

Although the majority of artworks on VanGoYourself are currently paintings, we welcome any artworks in any medium, so long as they can be recreated. If you have any figurative sculpture pieces in your collection, a live event may be a great opportunity to promote them on VanGoYourself. Visitors will be able to get a better sense of the piece in person than in a photograph, and thus create more interesting recreations.

- **Simply using the paintings that are already on the site.**

If you aren't able to add your own collection items, don't let this stop you planning a VanGoYourself event using the many wonderful paintings already on the site. These are all public domain licenced and you can use any of them you want to.

- **What is easy to recreate?**

For an event, it's best to choose paintings that are relatively simple to recreate and portray single people, pairs or small groups. Any more than three or four people is likely to become a bit too complicated to recreate.

Consider groupings – how many people are in the painting? Is it something that could be recreated by a couple or a family? Perhaps choose works that cover a range of ages or groups.

- **Do you need props/costumes?**

If you have an education/learning team or a handling collection you may want to consider using items from that. Remember that people may walk away with props on the night, accidentally or not. Don't use anything that you cannot bear to lose or which cannot be replaced. Make sure whoever is manning the event knows exactly what props there are and ensures that people return them when the recreation is complete.

Also consider buying things like wigs and false beards/moustaches from a fancy dress shop. Scarves and sheets can also be useful for creating robes and head coverings and so on.

Part of the fun of VanGoYourself is letting imagination drive the recreations, so don't worry about getting exact replicas of items. Sometimes more random and generic props can prompt some really creative and hilarious recreations – such as Catia, who used a rubber chicken as a lute in this recreation!



The Lute Player, Frans Hals (1582-1666) vanGo'd by Catia

Where will you hold the event?

The beauty of VGY is that it can be done anywhere and anytime; nonetheless, there are some things to consider:

- **The space should ideally be open but contained**

This of course depends on the layout of your institution, but if you have a large vestibule or open gallery, a corner in such a space would be ideal. You want people to be able to see what is going on and thereby encourage them to take part, but there also needs to be some containment so you can keep track of props etc.

- **Inside or outside?**

Try to be open minded when considering what space to use; perhaps your venue has an outside space that (weather-permitting, of course) might provide an interesting setting especially if your chosen images feature a tree or garden or square of some kind. If you have access to suitable public space outside the museum, it could also act as a draw towards your venue and event.

- **Is the artwork on display?**

If you are using your own collection and it is on display that you could allow recreations to take place nearby or even next to it. If there isn't room to hold the event in the same room as the painting, make sure you have signage from the event pointing to the painting and vice versa. However, if the artwork is in storage or can't be displayed near the event, you will need to have a projection set up, or a large screen displaying the artwork so people can create the most accurate recreations possible.

You may even want to consider having some kind of projection so people can see their recreations on the big screen on the night.

- **Lighting?**

Is there adequate lighting in your chosen area to be able to take visible images of the artwork? Light levels vary in cultural venues depending on conservation needs. It may be that you will need to hold your VanGoYourself event in a more brightly lit area than the artworks you are recreating.

- **Do you have access to any tablet computers?**

These are extremely useful for a VanGoYourself event as you can use these devices to take the pictures and upload them to the VanGoYourself site immediately. Many people now do carry smartphones with them, which they may wish to use to VanGo themselves, but for those who don't, having access to a tablet or smartphone means that anyone can participate on the night.

How will you staff the event?

How many members of staff or volunteers you have to hand will of course depend on your institution, however, we recommend that you have at least three. As well as explaining VanGoYourself and the process to visitors, your staff/volunteers can keep track of any props or costumes you are using as well as live Tweet or Facebook recreations as they are done – remember to create a hashtag for your event to make tracking it easier on social media.

They can also provide some knowledge and context about the artwork, which may help motivate and direct visitors as they recreate it.

If you would like someone from the VanGoYourself team to be there, please let us know! Contact ben@culture24.org.uk.

How will you promote your event?

When promoting your event, don't forget to use your contacts at your local tourist information office.

Consider every angle when pitching to the press. As well as promoting your event, you can also promote aspects of the collection of which you are proud. Perhaps your chosen artworks are particularly loved in the area, or by a local artist. It may be that it is very famous and just a mention of it will bring people to the event. Alternatively, it could be a new acquisition that you want to let people know about.

Don't forget to invite local newspaper photographers along to the event, as well as any journalists you have had previous contact with.

VanGoYourself is an interactive event, so you can push this element into the PR. Perhaps organise a competition with a local newspaper or publication that will award a prize to the best recreation of the event. This will provide natural follow-up press when you announce the winner after the event.

And, of course, don't forget to let us know about it! We can promote your event via our own social media channels, offering a whole new international audience for your venue. Use @VanGoYourself / #VanGoYourself and let us know of any hashtags you are using.

After the event

Remember to follow up the event with the local press. If there were no members of the local press at your event, send them some pictures along with quotes from visitors and staff about how well the event went.

As well as considering follow up press, make sure you do your own follow ups with your own social media. Post your favourite recreations on your social networks and blogs.

You may want to consider leaving some form of signage next to the artwork to remind people of VanGoYourself – you could even keep a small selection of props close by to encourage visitors to try recreating it there and then.

Feedback

We'd love to hear how your event went! Contact us at info@vangoyourself.com or on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) with feedback of your event or if you have any other questions.

Case Studies

Below are three case studies from VanGoYourself events across Europe, including events aimed at children and adults. We hope this will give you some ideas of how a VanGoYourself event could work at your venue.

Case Study 1: Stadtmuseum Simeonstift Trier, Germany

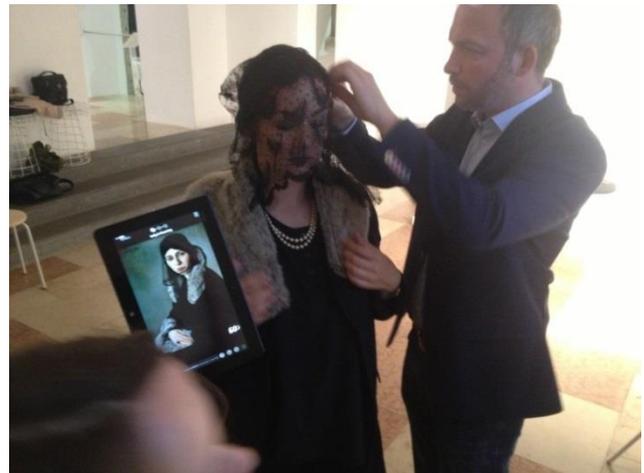
The Stadtmuseum (or City Museum) Simeonstift in Trier, Germany displays art and artefacts from the Middle Ages to well into the 21st century and include paintings, sculptures, textiles and furniture. The museum has submitted [seven works to VanGoYourself](#), including a photograph of Karl Marx, Trier's most famous former resident.

On Saturday 13 September 2014 the museum held its 8th Museum Night, where the Simeonstift Museum, Cathedral Museum, Karl-Marx-Haus and the Rheinische Landesmuseum opened between 6pm and midnight and hold lectures, tours, hands on activities for children and adults, live music and other entertainment for all to enjoy.

A member of the VanGoYourself team met with staff the museum to discuss which artworks would be best suited to VanGoYourself and which would also be easy and fun to recreate for the evening event.

A wide variety of museum staff were involved with the decision making process including curators, marketing and events co-ordinators and education officers.

Once the paintings had been selected, the museum got in touch with its local networks, including the tourist office (who in turn were able to promote the event on their networks) and local newspaper Trierer Wochenspiegel, who [published an article about VanGoYourself in general](#),



explaining the benefits of it to museums and galleries. The newspaper staff also created their own recreation, which you can see [here](#).

Nine days prior to the event itself, the newspaper [published another article](#) which gave details about the event (as well as another brief overview of VanGoYourself) and announced a competition. The best recreations from the night would be added to newspaper’s Facebook page and the one which received the most Likes would win a printed canvas version of their recreation.

A [third article](#) was published after the event, again encouraging readers to vote for their favourite recreation on the newspaper’s Facebook page.

Case Study 2: Cercle Cité, Luxembourg City, Luxembourg

Located in the Luxembourg City’s main square, Cercle Cité is a conference and reception room centre. In 2014, it hosted an after work event to celebrate National Museums Day in Luxembourg. This event provided lots of props for people to use in their recreations – including some very random ones like a rubber chicken! Props like these encourage people to have fun and use their creativity.

As an after work social event, the venue also sold drinks which in turn relaxed visitors – we even provided our own very special VanGoYourself cocktail! The primary spirit we used was Vincent Van Gogh’s drink of choice, absinthe, to really get visitors in the mood.

Visitors were also encouraged to use the space fully and given as few restrictions as possible. This combination of alcohol and freedom of movement allowed visitors to come up with some really inspired recreations – and have a lot of fun in the process!



Participants in a VanGoYourself event in Cercle Cité, Luxembourg get ready for their recreations

Case Study 3: Chippenham Museum, UK

Over the 2015 Easter holidays, Chippenham Museum put on two VanGoYourself events – even though they currently don't have any of their own collection featured on VanGoYourself!

The museum chose to hold a VanGoYourself event despite this because “it looked like the kind of thing the museum could get slightly older children involved with and worked well on social media to up our profile. It is the kind of event that you can only really do in a museum or gallery, not just another Easter activity making Easter baskets. It had a nice mix of historical interest and hands on activities.”

Because of the workshop element of the event, the museum chose artworks that had items the children could make to wear such as jewellery or head dresses:

- [King Henry, after Holbein](#)
- [A Young Prince, Muhammad Haravi](#)
- [Two Women from Naples, Guillaume Bodinier](#)

The event was organised as part of their Easter activities and made use of the museum's schools rooms and craft materials. The chosen paintings were printed on large sheets of paper and hung about the room, with making stations set up in front of them with materials and cloth. Once the props and costumes were made, the children were dressed in them and posed in front of a coloured background. The photographs could be emailed to them or printed off at the museum.

The children very much enjoyed making their costumes (which they were also allowed to take home with them), taking about an hour each to create them. The event was publicised on Facebook and Twitter, local radio, the museum's what's on leaflet and other town council sources.

You can see a Storify of tweets about the event [here](#) and a Facebook post [here](#) to get an idea of how the publicity on social media looked.



Two Women from Naples, Guillaume Bodinier (1795-1872) vanGo'd by Chippenham Museum