

Plaisir(s) de visite

Enjoyment

Placer(es) de la visita

Edited by | Edité par | Editado por
Stéphanie Wintzerith

ICOM Education 31

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For reasons of linguistic simplicity and clarity of reading, and in accordance with common usage, the generic masculine is used in all articles. Irrespective of the original language of the articles, the generic masculine is used to refer to all persons without implying any gender distinction.

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Introduction

Introduction

Introducción

About enjoyment and enjoyments

Stéphanie Wintzerith

Context

On the scale of a country, museum-goers, our visitors, number up to several million people. Museums count their visitors, and the figures are eloquent: medium-sized and large museums reach hundreds of thousands – sometimes even more – visitors per year, the smaller ones tens of thousands. To be precise, we should count “visits” rather than the most commonly used term of “visitors”. The nuance is important, since it takes into account those who come for their first visit to the museum or exhibition as well as those who come back for further visits.

Here’s the interesting point: if they come back, one can assume that they liked at least one of their previous visits. If frequent visitors and museum-lovers keep coming back to see exhibitions, they must find a certain pleasure, or even definite pleasure, in doing so; in short, they must enjoy it in some way. More occasional visitors would not go to a museum either if they were expecting a boring or an unpleasant time, would they? As for organised groups such as school-classes for example, there is no reason why the participants should not enjoy their stay in the museum as well, even if they did not decide on their own about the museum visit.

We do of course acknowledge that not all visitors are enthusiastic or even satisfied with their visit. Some of them may be disappointed, despite the best efforts of the museums. In this case, the museum has failed meeting their expectations – however contradictory those may be. Nevertheless, this time we are not going to focus on those unsatisfied visitors or look for what went wrong. On the contrary, this issue of *ICOM Education* is dedicated to the audiences who had some pleasure while visiting an exhibition.

Thus, let’s focus on the positive aspect of a museum visit and try to understand why audiences like to come so much. Let’s explore the mysteries of the visit experience in order to find out what it is that makes it such a pleasant one, let’s ask the audiences what exactly it is that makes their visit so enjoyable.

Enjoyment – pleasures of visiting museums

The notion of enjoyment appeared so important that it was included in the 2007 ICOM definition of museums. Indeed, enjoyment is the third and last purpose of the museum, coming after “studies”, and “education”. Once again, the translation of the word into the other two ICOM official languages is a challenge: “*délectation*” in French is a quite outdated

term with an unfamiliar sing-sang. The Spanish term used is “*deleite*”. Even though it is the last word of the 2007-definition, it has always been an ill-loved one – maybe due to the unsatisfactory translations. There’s been more mocking it than sensible studies about enjoyment. Enhancing the scientific knowledge (“studies”), transmit this knowledge (“education”), those are considered as noble tasks. But enjoyment?

After much discussion, the term ‘enjoyment’ nevertheless found its way back into the new definition of a museum adopted in 2022 to characterise the experiences offered by museums, this time translated as “*divertissement*” in French and “*disfrute*” in Spanish. This proves that it is an integral part of what characterises, distinguishes and constitutes – and therefore defines – the museum.

Indeed, this is one of the main reasons for visiting, and therefore an important factor that justifies the existence of museums: we also go there in order to enjoy ourselves. We should never forget that a museum is one possibility among many others to choose an activity done in our spare time. The visit of an exhibition is – in the vast majority of cases, except for school-classes maybe – a voluntary activity without any compelling intrinsic necessity, but chosen precisely for the enjoyable prospect of leisure activity. This implies, in one way or another, that we hope to enjoy this visit. It is up to the museum to make this possible.

It is therefore high time to rehabilitate the notion of pleasure and/or enjoyment in the museum. As is often the case, the English term chosen here has no French or Spanish equivalent that covers all its meanings. The verb “to enjoy” means to have pleasure, to appreciate, to have fun, to feel joy. The term “enjoyment” is both the result (the pleasure felt) and the cause, the satisfaction of the moment, however fleeting. It may be an emotion or the way satisfaction is felt. It may be a positive feeling or the reaction to an expectation that is fulfilled or exceeded. Pleasure(s), delight, amusement, the joy felt, happiness in an exhibition, all this is included in our topic of “Enjoyment”, in the “*Plaisir(s) de visite*” in French or the “*Disfrute(s) de visita*” in Spanish, as we chose to translate the word.

It is the pleasure, first of all, that arises from a visit to the museum. Enjoyment as a feeling of pleasure (singular), an agreeable, all-encompassing and perhaps indefinite impression for those who experience it and who do not necessarily look for the deepest reasons for this impression – feeling it and appreciating it is enough. It could also be the lightness of a moment of relaxation, a beneficial cheerfulness, or a deep satisfaction. It could as well be pleasures (plural), manifold pleasures and enjoyments connected with the exhibited works of art or objects, with gained knowledge, with conversations, memories, discoveries and so many other things. The plural form also reflects the different meanings of the term enjoyment in order to preserve the richness of the debate – especially in French and Spanish, where the plural remains crucial to cover up many nuances of the English single word – and open up new perspectives.

Whether we consider the world before, before the pandemic and before museums were deprived of their visitors because they had to close for endless months, whether we consider this difficult period, or whether we consider the world after the pandemic – a time that we hoped would be different from the world before – the notion of enjoying a visit takes on a prominent role. The closure of museums in almost every country has shown how much we have missed our audiences, but also how attached they are to their museums and how eager they were to come back. This is a sure sign that they wanted to return and longed to feel the enjoyment of their next visit as soon as possible.

A mosaic of enjoyments

It is precisely this notion of “visitor enjoyment”, both singular and plural, that we propose to explore in this issue of *ICOM Education*. To this end, we wanted to bring together articles that shed light on the different aspects of the term “enjoyment” in museums and which, taken together, paint a picture of what makes a visit such a special moment for a wide and diverse audience.

We will first take a closer look at the concepts of enjoyment and the pleasures of visiting. Taking an empirical approach, we will attempt to identify the different forms that the enjoyment of visiting can take. How can we identify the forms of enjoyment, and how can we “measure” them, if at all?

First up is the National Museum of Beirut, a museum where the beauty of the venue in no way overshadows that of the works on display, encouraging contemplation. Next, the Art et marges museum reveals itself, showing how much visitors’ enjoyment is intrinsically linked to both art brut, its favourite subject, and the enjoyment of the entire museum team. The visit is conceived as a sharing, a permanent exchange between the team, the works and the public, to the point of producing works of art together and enjoying unforgettable experiences.

Talking about the team: it is the museum teams themselves who shape the style of exhibitions, education and everything else offered to their (new) audiences. This sometimes means taking significant risks. In other words: how to bring humour into the museum? The museums of the city of Turku in Finland have tried this approach with undeniable success. Their recipe: scientifically rigorous content presented with a large dose of humour, teams who enjoy implementing their crazy ideas at least as much as the public enjoys receiving and/or participating in them. The Natural History Museum in Neuchâtel has also taken an offbeat, playful, even hilarious look at otherwise very serious exhibition themes, with the active involvement of artists, songs, references to popular culture, puns and other wordplay. A resounding success.

Far from the outdated cliché of a dusty, boring museum, today’s exhibitions have long since embraced new technologies. Museums are responding to the demands of visitors who have become fond of digital offerings, are adept at using their smartphones and are hungry for information. Digital pleasures now play a prominent role in certain exhibitions, as demonstrated by the Shanghai Astronomy Museum. They are essential for sparking public interest and offering increasingly sophisticated and participatory visitor experiences. In many museums, digital technology also enables personalised, embodied and sometimes immersive mediation/education: virtual or augmented reality opens up countless possibilities for museum education, which is greatly appreciated by visitors and is therefore an essential factor in the enjoyment of a visit. Several concrete examples, developed from innovative projects to integrate digital technology into museum education, are presented in the same article.

New technologies are a valuable aid, including for museum outreach. In Tampere, Finland, the city’s museums reach out to older citizens, including those who are unable to visit the museum. They bring them small objects to stimulate their memory, activate their senses, keep them active, bring back memories and create opportunities for exchange and discussion. In short, they come to offer an increased quality of life to their senior citizens. In Graz, Austria, the restorative power of museums and art is being made available to people with mental health issues. The pleasure of contemplating or creating works of

art, the pleasure of immersing oneself in an exhibition, the pleasure of finding familiar objects in museum collections – all of this contributes to the well-being of the public.

However, there are circumstances in which pleasure is completely inappropriate. Certain themes, certain stories, certain places remind us of all the cruelty that human beings have shown at different periods in our history. There is no shortage of difficult themes, and they have their place in museums: it is so important not to ignore them, if only to contribute ensuring that they never happen again. But does this mean we should deliberately traumatise visitors who venture into these exhibitions? Or, on the contrary, minimise the scale of the catastrophe and evoke it in a pleasant, even light-hearted tone? Absolutely not. So how can we avoid any aspect of pleasure without scaring visitors away? Because without visitors, there can be no impact on collective memory. The example of the Wewelsburg Memorial Museum is a model of respect for the victims of Nazi barbarism. It has admirably avoided the pitfalls inherent in an exhibition that must both recount the suffering of the victims and show the system that produced it. It has done so in a key location of that system, which it nevertheless refuses to see become a place of pilgrimage for neo-nazis of all stripes.

But let's return to the pleasure(s) and enjoyment of visiting museums. We have discussed the perspective of the public, who comes in large numbers to enjoy the exhibitions, as well as that of the museum teams who organise the exhibitions, develop outreach programmes and also enjoy working with and for their audiences. Let us now consider the following perspective: what happens when museum professionals become visitors of exhibitions they did not design themselves? First of all, they view the museum from an individual perspective, like everyone else, appreciating (or not) certain aspects, admiring, criticising, learning and forming more or less precise memories. But they cannot shake off their professional experience and expertise, which influence their perception of the exhibitions. An individual and personal account sums up these two aspects very well: on the one hand, the person who visits a museum alone or with her son, and on the other, the teacher in a Mexican province who takes her students to the museum and uses these visits for educational purposes. Finally, it should be noted that museum professionals often gather with colleagues at conferences, meetings and other symposiums, as was the case at the annual meeting of ICOM CECA Belgium: in addition to the pleasure of exchanging ideas, there is the pleasure of discovering the host institution, including behind the scenes.

It's true that, as museum professionals, we also enjoy visiting them. I took the liberty of asking some of our colleagues to share their fondest memories, moments they particularly enjoyed, moments of pleasure linked to museums, moments engraved in their memory display of that remind us how much we love our jobs. It is a veritable festival of good times, a fireworks moment of happiness and joy, of success and achievement, which I hope will be as enjoyable to read as it is for them to recall.

The article that was awarded the 2021 Colette Dufresne-Tassé Research Award comes at the end of this volume of *ICOM Education*. The award had no specific theme, therefore this article does not focus on the theme of visitor enjoyment: rather, it explores the links and interactions between two cultural institutions – a cultural centre and a museum – and the population of the neighbourhood of Murcia in which they are located.

In keeping with CECA tradition, the articles featured in this issue of *ICOM Education* were submitted in one of ICOM's three working languages: French, English or Spanish. Thanks to digital tools, each article has been translated into the other two languages,

allowing us to present this publication in three monolingual versions. Careful proofreading of each translation is certainly necessary to correct small errors made by artificial intelligence, but we felt it was important to offer everyone the pleasure of reading all the articles in their preferred language – experienced speakers could always refer to the original text. Now is the time to enjoy reading and exploring the different dimensions of the pleasure(s) offered by our museums and exhibitions, as experienced by our visitors, developed by our colleagues, or anchored in our memories. Let us dive into the enjoyments of a museum visit.

Considérations empiriques

Empirical considerations

Consideraciones empíricas

Enjoyment – why else would they come?

Stéphanie Wintzerith

For those who love museums – and there are many of them – going to a museum to visit an exhibition or enjoy other cultural offerings is probably one of the best ways to spend their free time. It is a leisure activity in the noble sense of the term, (in principle) freely chosen and promising satisfaction. Can we really imagine visitors coming voluntarily when they expect, at best, a boring visit or, at worst, a very unpleasant experience? Or audiences returning again and again even if they did not enjoy their previous visits at all? Obviously not – or only in very exceptional cases. If visitors come to the museum, they expect to have a good time, they hope to find some satisfaction, some enjoyable aspect – exceptional objects, exciting content, captivating scenography, the beauty of the premises and/or the works, and so on – in short, because they hope to enjoy what a museum visit has to offer. This is probably not the only reason for their visit, but it is certainly one of the most important. Enjoyment is a fundamental expectation of exhibition audiences.

This article opens the opportunity to dive into the notion of enjoyment in museums and exhibitions. The English term serves as a basis for the reflexion, though in French and Spanish, other words are used, such as “*plaisirs de visite*” in French and “*placeres de la visita*” in Spanish, both meaning literally “pleasures of the visit”. Enjoyment encompasses many aspects that require several translations to capture its richness and nuances. First, it is worth looking at the meaning of the word and its importance in the definition of museums adopted by ICOM. We will then attempt to define what the pleasure of visiting is, what is the nature of enjoyment in a museum, and what form it can take. By opening up the toolbox of visitor studies, we will then gain an overview of the indicators and methods that can be used to gather visitors’ testimonials on the enjoyment they experienced during their visit. Finally, we will discuss certain aspects of what makes visiting an exhibition so enjoyable and attempt to understand which factors promote or, on the contrary, inhibit the degree of enjoyment.

Words and their meanings

Part of a definition

The definition of a museum formulated by ICOM in 2007 established that a museum fulfils several functions “*for the purposes of study, education and enjoyment*” (ICOM 2007). “Enjoyment” was translated into the completely outdated and strangely sounding word “*délectation*” in French, and into “*deleite*” in Spanish. Enjoyment was the last word in the definition – certainly not the central or most important term, but nevertheless very much present.

Ten years later, ICOM embarked on a reflection on what a museum is (or should be) and made an attempt at updating its definition. The word “enjoyment” disappeared from the first proposal for a new definition – together with another term dear to CECA, namely education. This first proposal was nevertheless rejected in 2019. As a consequence, ICOM developed a new method, a process of in-depth reflection and consultation with ICOM members was set up. This resulted in a second proposal, adopted in 2022 and consequently becoming the current definition of a museum:

A museum is a not-for-profit, permanent institution in the service of society that researches, collects, conserves, interprets and exhibits tangible and intangible heritage. Open to the public, accessible and inclusive, museums foster diversity and sustainability. They operate and communicate ethically, professionally and with the participation of communities, offering varied experiences for education, enjoyment, reflection and knowledge sharing. (ICOM, 2022)

The term “enjoyment” appears again, this time translated as “*divertissement*” in French and its Spanish equivalent “*disfrute*”.

Let us return for a moment to the results of one of the consultations carried out during the process of developing the new definition, a process comprising fourteen stages and four consultations. ICOM Define, the working group responsible for drafting the definition, compiled (consultation 2) a whole series of words, concepts and notions which, according to ICOM members, should be included in the new proposal. This was followed by consultation 3 with the various ICOM committees. The aim was to rank these words and concepts and thus identify the most important terms, i.e. the terms to be included in the definition. ICOM Germany’s response to consultation 3 is the result of a questionnaire survey conducted directly among its own members (Wintzerith, 2021). Among the questions asked, one is of particular interest to us here: what is the nature of the experience that visitors have in a museum? A list of terms was proposed, and respondents were asked to select the five that they considered most appropriate.



Picture 1 – Experience dimension: what do people experience at a museum?
Five answers possible – excerpt of the results.

On the left: results of the consultation 3, ICOM committees, n=88 respondents.

On the right: results of the survey of ICOM Germany members, n=319 respondents

Sources: ICOM Define 2021 p. 32-34 and Wintzerith, 2021 p. 25-26. Graphic: Stéphanie Wintzerith

The terms “enjoyment / entertainment” came fifth in the German ranking, with 37% of respondents choosing them (Picture 1). They were therefore among the five terms submitted

to ICOM Define by ICOM Germany – as well as by many other committees. In fact, the concept of enjoyment/entertainment tops the list of terms used to characterise the museum experience (ICOM Define, 2021), with 64% of committees selecting it as important – closely followed by the concept of education with 63%, but outstripping knowledge acquisition (52%), reflection (40%) and discovery / curiosity (35%). The enjoyment of a visit is therefore an essential element to include in the definition of a museum, both at the level of ICOM Germany and of most of the committees, and therefore also of ICOM, and more generally for the museum world.

This is how the word “enjoyment” made its way back into the definition of a museum. However, equivalent terms still had to be found in the other two working languages of ICOM, which was no easy task. As mentioned above, the French “*divertissement*” and the Spanish “*disfrute*” were chosen, even though they do not cover all aspects of what is meant by “enjoyment”. Nevertheless, both translations as well as the “original” term intrinsically evoke the notions of pleasure – even joy – leisure, distraction from everyday life, in short, a good time spent in a pleasant setting.

Pleasure of visits, enjoyment, what are we talking about?

If it is important enough to feature in the definition of a museum, how should we understand the term “enjoyment”, obviously in relation to visiting a museum, and therefore closely linked to the audiences? Because it is all about audiences, actually.

« *Enjoyment is the feeling of pleasure and satisfaction that you have when you do or experience something that you like* », says the English language dictionary Collins. The French term “*plaisir*” has the following definition in the Larousse dictionary: “1. *Etat de contentement que crée chez quelqu'un la satisfaction d'une tendance, d'un besoin, d'un désir ; bien-être. [...] 2. Ce qui plaît, ce qui procure à quelqu'un ce sentiment de contentement [...]*”. It relates to a state of contentment created in someone by the satisfaction of a tendency, need or desire; well-being. It also means the thing that pleases or gives someone the said feeling of contentment. In Spanish, the *Diccionario de lengua española*, mentions as definition of “*placer*”: “1. *Goce o disfrute físico o espiritual producido por la realización o la percepción de algo que gusta o se considera bueno. [...] 2. Diversión, entretenimiento. [...]*”, a treat, a physical or mental pleasure derived from the achievement or perception of something that is pleasing or considered good. It also includes the meanings of entertainment and amusement.

Enjoyment and pleasure: both the result, i.e. the emotion felt, and the cause of it.

To experience pleasure, to appreciate something, to have fun, to be entertained, to feel joy – all of this is encompassed by the verb “to enjoy”. The noun

“enjoyment” refers both to the result, i.e. the pleasure felt or the feeling of joy, and to the cause, i.e. what makes you feel satisfaction in the moment, however fleeting it may be. It can be an emotion in itself or the way in which satisfaction manifests itself. It can be a positive and pleasant feeling as well as the reaction felt when an expectation or hope is met or even exceeded.

A positive and pleasant emotion, enjoyment is closely linked to notions of delight, amusement, joy, fun, entertainment, happiness and well-being, among others. During a museum visit, this enjoyment can take many forms. Without claiming to provide an exhaustive list, it is nevertheless interesting to mention the main manifestations here. It

should also be noted that the pleasures of visiting are neither exclusive – one can easily experience several pleasures successively or even simultaneously during a museum visit – nor strictly distinct from one another, as there are many interdependencies between two forms of pleasure.



Picture 2 – Unexpected: the wasps have taken up residence on a designer chair and built their nest there.

Bavarian Natural History Museum, exhibition *Nature designs*, Munich, Germany.
Photograph: Stéphanie Wintzerith

The enjoyment of a visit can be linked to what visitors find in the museum itself and the experience they have there:

- beauty: the aesthetic pleasure felt when contemplating the beauty of a work of art or an object, admiring colours, seeking out and discovering beauty in the exhibition;
- familiarity: the pleasure of discovering something familiar, a sketch that brings back a memory, a portrait that resembles a loved one, an object from the past that belonged to our grandparents, a landscape reminiscent of the countryside where we spent our holidays in years gone by;
- the unexpected: the pleasure of being surprised, of discovering something we did not expect, the discovery of artists or works of art we did not yet know, the surprise of a touch of humour in the exhibition;
- the interesting: the satisfaction of immersing oneself in a theme that interests us, of finding the artists or works we wanted to see, of exploring fascinating themes, of finding exactly what we came for, of finding answers to our questions or of being drawn to new horizons that pique our curiosity;
- favourite works or objects: returning to the same room several times just for the pleasure of seeing your favourite work again, going to a particular museum or exhibition to see (or see again) a specific object, the pleasure renewed with each visit;
- learning: the pleasure of developing one's knowledge, satisfying one's curiosity, quenching one's thirst for learning, broadening one's horizons, consolidating one's knowledge, discovering new things or new themes, aspects that were previously unknown;
- pleasant setting: the pleasure of moving around in a space that appeals to you, where the infrastructure meets your needs – a seat ideally placed for you to sit down and better contemplate a work, a controlled noise level, a route adapted to reduced mobility –

and where the premises are as beautiful as the exhibitions or the works on display, with particularly successful architectural and/or scenographic features.

■ ...



Picture 3 – Sharing: three generations explore one exhibit together.
Le Vaisseau, Strasbourg, France.
Photograph: Stéphanie Wintzerith

Other sources of pleasure correspond to visitors' expectations even before they cross the threshold of the exhibition:

- sharing: some people come to the museum accompanied – as a couple, with family, friends or in (small) groups – and hope above all to have a good time with their loved ones, which involves sharing, conversations and exchanges, the pleasure of meeting people and spending time together, the pleasure of socialising in a suitable setting;
- calm: others come to the museum alone and intend to enjoy visiting at their own pace and according to their own preferences, to treat themselves to a break, a moment for themselves, away from the daily grind and the need to be productive, a moment to catch their breath and recharge their batteries, so to speak;
- passing on knowledge: the pleasure of taking one's child to a museum that one had already visited as a child with one's own (grand)parents, the pride of showing one's favourite museum to relatives visiting for the weekend, the pleasure of making others happy by introducing them to a particularly successful exhibition;
- particular interest in content: the choice of museum or exhibition is often based on the interests of potential visitors, the pleasure of talking (or hearing others talk) about things they love, the pleasure of an expert or knowledgeable amateur in seeing a museum dedicated to their favourite subject, the pleasure of seeing a connection established between the viewer and the object being observed, an object that will remain etched in their memory;
- tourist attraction: the pleasure of being able to say "I was there", the importance of having visited a renowned museum, the pleasure of seeing famous works and being able to talk about them afterwards, the pleasure of keeping a record of the visit through countless photos taken inside;
- showcasing oneself: the pleasure of putting oneself in the spotlight, taking selfies, commenting on and sharing one's impressions, communicating on social media, the egocentric pleasure of taking advantage of a "backstage" setting to show oneself off.

While the last two points mentioned above may not necessarily be to the liking of all museums, they nonetheless reflect a growing reality that cannot be ignored. This new form of visitor enjoyment will lead to others, as the concept of enjoyment is neither fixed nor exclusive: it evolves just as the society in which the museum exists is constantly changing.



Picture 4 – How important it is nowadays to make pictures in exhibitions.
Mamottan Monet Museum, Paris, France.
Photograph: Stéphanie Wintzerith

In the eyes of the audiences

Let's imagine: a museum is keenly interested in what characterises enjoyment in its exhibitions and the various factors that could influence visitor enjoyment. It commissions a visitor study. How will the researcher in charge of the study proceed?

As is often the case, there is not enough time for fundamental research, so we will have to settle for a quick and probably rather superficial review of the literature. However, the results are meagre (*ICOM Education 31* had not yet been published at that time) and are not yet sufficient to build the argument on a solid theoretical basis. In fact, a more empirical approach is needed. The first step is to look for audience studies that may have addressed the subject and see if it would be possible to draw inspiration from them. Here again, examples are rare – not necessarily because no one has ever looked into the issue before, but rather because reports on audience studies, surveys, observations, etc. are unfortunately rarely published.

The second step is to clearly define the objectives of the audience study and identify the indicators that best capture the concept to be studied. These indicators will determine the method to be used, depending on the available resources and the objectives of the study.

Indicators for enjoyment

The concept of visitor enjoyment is broad, as we have seen, and can take many forms. To understand the phenomenon of visitor enjoyment, researchers must identify indicators that enable them to characterise visitor enjoyment and, if possible, measure it. We will come back to this last point later.

In the museum, in the exhibition itself, there are unmistakable outward signs of enjoyment. Let us take a seat somewhere in the exhibition and observe what is happening there. Among other things, we see ...

- ... visitors with smiling faces;
- ... visitors who watch, listen, read, and carefully watch the videos, audio recordings, texts, and objects/works on display;
- ... visitors who follow the museum educator's explanations with genuine interest;
- ... visitors who handle hands-on objects, use interactive devices or digital terminals, or make use of QR codes, links and additional information provided; in short, active and engaged visitors;
- ... visitors talking together, exchanging ideas, showing each other their discoveries and sharing their enjoyment with those accompanying them. It is true that simply maintaining a conversation is not enough – conversations obviously also allow people to express their resentment. We are talking here about exchanges that can be described as positive and that an attentive observer could, either by seeing or hearing snippets of the conversation, classify as expressions of satisfaction.

However, the attitude and behaviour of visitors to the exhibition are open to interpretation. In the researcher's toolbox, a well-constructed observation protocol incorporating the indicators listed above can be used to establish an initial, albeit partial, assessment, which could then be refined through interviews with a small number of observed visitors. A qualitative approach therefore seems more appropriate, as it would be difficult to accurately "quantify" the degree of satisfaction based on facial expressions, for example.



Picture 5 – Using digital exhibits and diving into all explanations: high concentration is key
Augustinermuseum, Freiburg im Breisgau, Germany.
Photograph: Stéphanie Wintzerith

Other elements are more suitable indicators for quantitative approaches. Here we refer in particular – as there are others, of course – to four indicators that reveal a successful visit, which has therefore provided at least some form of enjoyment:

- spontaneous expressions of satisfaction during or after the visit, whether through entries in visitor registers (e.g. physical or online guest books, cards or comment forms), direct verbal exchanges with museum staff, or praise on social media (reviews and ratings, posts on their networks, etc.);
- the propensity to return to visit the museum, as only visitors who enjoyed their visit would be willing to return at a later date;

- the propensity to recommend the visit to friends and family, as visitors are more inclined to recommend something they themselves enjoyed;
- a high degree of satisfaction.

The first point mentioned above is ideal for a content analysis of guest books, comment cards/forms, posts, etc., depending of what the museum has to put at the disposal of the researcher. The prerequisite is of course that the museum has some form of structured and centralised collection or records of this type of information (for example: museum staff systematically take note of the content of comments made to them, guest books are kept at the museum, comment cards are processed at regular intervals, online content is regularly monitored, social media monitoring is structured, or whatever else might be relevant to the museum). This information is usually already available but is seldom used – and if it is, it is mostly for another purpose. Analysing this content through the lens of visitor enjoyment can be very informative for the museum. However, it is important to take into account the bias introduced in the sample: people who post comments on social media are not representative of all visitors, nor are those who leave a trace of their visit in a guest book, for example. It is therefore important to avoid generalising, even if the results of the content analysis remain valid for some visitors.



Picture 6 – The setting: when the exhibition venue itself is as beautiful as the objects on display, which are magnificently showcased.
Cluny Museum, Exhibition *Naissance de la sculpture gothique*, Paris, France.
Photograph: Stéphanie Wintzerith

The last three points in the above list, and in particular the degree of satisfaction, are often the subject of one (or more) questions in audience surveys and studies conducted at the end of exhibitions. Quantitative methods – the most common being questionnaires – allow for a more or less differentiated approach to measuring satisfaction, for example. Based on a large number of respondents, these methods provide an overview of the general satisfaction of audiences. They smooth out individual differences and highlight what could, at the audiences' level, positively or negatively influence the impression of success and satisfaction with the exhibition – and therefore also the enjoyment of the visit experience.

Measuring satisfaction

Although enjoyment and other pleasures associated with a visit cannot be equated with visitor satisfaction alone, the latter is nevertheless the most effective indicator, as they are quite close in their nature. How will our researcher go about measuring and analysing satisfaction? In case he has opted for a questionnaire survey, several questions will be devoted to the topic of satisfaction. He might first ask respondents to rate their overall satisfaction, for example on a scale ranging from very dissatisfied to extremely satisfied. Statistical analyses, particularly cross-tabulations if the sample size allows, will help identify the (sub)groups of visitors who are most satisfied and those who are less satisfied.

However, the overall satisfaction rating remains a rather vague indicator, as it provides few or no information about what causes or limits the said satisfaction. Our researcher will therefore add an open-ended (qualitative) question asking respondents to explain their satisfaction rating. Visitors' spontaneous responses give an overall impression, sometimes even focussing on what they particularly liked and, in some cases, on what they found annoying or is missing – all of which are clues to understand the factors fostering or inhibiting enjoyment in the exhibition. Our researcher can also include two additional open-ended questions in his questionnaire, one explicitly asking what the respondent particularly liked and the other asking what they did not like, thus gathering more precise information than with the previous question. Qualitative analysis (or even quantitative analysis after coding for large samples) and response categories provide very useful information to exhibition designers to reinforce aspects that enhance the enjoyment of the visit and to correct, if possible, those that tend to cause dissatisfaction.



Pictures 7-8 – The pride of discovering heritage from ancient times.

Left: National Museum Shanghai, China.

Right : National Historical Museum, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Photographs: Stéphanie Wintzerith

After gathering general satisfaction ratings and spontaneous responses to open-ended questions, our researcher can delve deeper into the subject and refine the analysis. Once more, the preferred method is quantitative: respondents are asked to evaluate specific aspects, again using a scale ranging from “very poor” to “excellent” or from “not at all” to “extremely”. This time, a handful of aspects chosen in advance by the researcher and the museum – and not formulated by the respondent – will be looked at. Of course, it would be important to include aspects that reflect certain forms of enjoyment during the

visit, for example whether visitors liked the scenography or had fun in the exhibition. This enables the researcher to verify whether some of the elements developed by curators and exhibition designers is actually something visitor enjoy – or not. Once again, a cross-tabulation analysis will help to differentiate the results according to various criteria and to determine, for example, whether younger visitors enjoyed the scenography more than older visitors, whether visitors accompanied by others had more fun than those who came alone, whether first-time visitors reacted differently from visitors who were already familiar with the museum, etc. Cross-tabulation analysis would also enable identifying which of those chosen aspects have an influence on the overall satisfaction.

Finally, our researcher can also formulate any targeted questions – still assuming the method remains that of a survey – directly related to one of the ingredients contributing to the enjoyment of the museum experience. The list is long, the possibilities are diverse, and the information gathered might provide answers to some specific points and question possibly raised by the museum itself.



Picture 9 – An exceptional setting: when the building itself becomes the main exhibit.
Vitra Design Museum, Weil am Rhein, Germany.
Photograph: Stéphanie Wintzerith

A corpus of survey reports

Surveys, evaluations and other assessments are becoming increasingly common in museums and exhibitions. It has also become a profession, my profession. During my professional career, I have compiled a body of evaluation reports, visitor studies and other audience research. I took the opportunity to review all these reports to see how the concept of enjoyment was taken into account or dealt with.

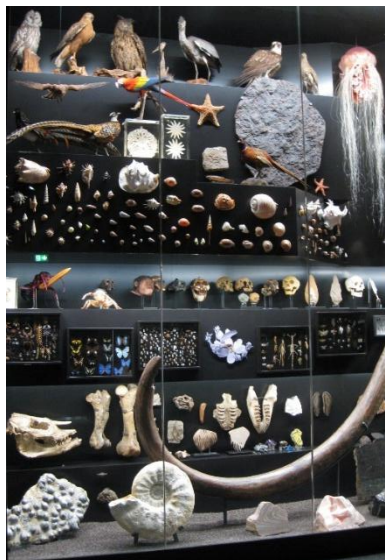
In twenty-five years of audience research and visitor studies, no survey has explicitly addressed the topic of visitor enjoyment, nor even directly asked the question. Enjoyment, however, is there, in each of the surveys conducted. It is often between the lines, in visitors' responses, all over the report. It is at the forefront of all questions related to satisfaction and visitor experiences, as expected. It is rather inconspicuous when it comes to the motivations and expectations of audiences, and implicit when we look at the frequency of visits or the propensity to recommend the exhibition to friends and family. It is an explanatory factor, the result of interpretation or a constituent element of the response. Enjoyment doesn't disappear from the analyses for long.

It would be tedious to repeat the results of each survey here – each one corresponds to a specific case that cannot be generalised. However, there are a few key points that recur regularly. While the exact percentages may vary and the wording may differ from one questionnaire to another, and from one (type of) museum to another, there are nevertheless certain similarities in many of the survey reports.

Indicator: satisfaction

We already mentioned potential methods to work with, let us now look at what those survey could find out on some of the indicators. First of all: satisfaction. In many cases, the visitors' overall satisfaction with the exhibition is rather high, cases with average satisfaction rates are quite rare – perhaps also because surveys and visitor studies are instruments used by audience-oriented museums who listen to their audiences and who strive to meet the visitors' needs and expectations. Looking at different aspects of the museum – as opposed to the overall satisfaction –, the satisfaction is sometimes more differentiated, some aspects doing well, others could do better.

Some elements are very often outlined as very appealing and have therefore a positive impact on the overall satisfaction. Among those great classics are the flagship works and objects in the collection – for example, the dinosaurs in a natural history museum, paintings by famous painters, the most famous sculptures, or collections of Egyptian antiquities – as well as less prominent works and objects that have nevertheless made an impression on individual visitors. Equally classic is the growing enthusiasm for interactive devices and, to a lesser extent, digital devices. When an exhibition engages multiple senses – sight, hearing and sometimes touch – through audio, video, interactive and other devices, the pleasure of discovering the works is enhanced and the enjoyment of the exhibition increased. Finally, for all visitors who are not fluent in the local language, the availability of translations can be a revelation and a significant source of enjoyment.



Picture 10 – Beauty: when scenography rivals the beauty of extraordinary objects in the collection.

Senckenberg Nature Museum, Frankfurt, Germany.

Photograph: Stéphanie Wintzerith

What often poses a problem, however, is the lack of seating areas where visitors can rest for a moment during their visit – again, a classic response in questionnaires. Another cause for disappointment, which varies depending on the exhibition, is that visitors often want more: more interactivity, more works, more unusual objects, more videos, or (more rarely) more information – in short, more of what they like and what makes their visit enjoyable.

Another recurring aspect of criticism that can be a source of dissatisfaction concerns infrastructure and buildings. Many visitors call for a better structured route that is more visible or easier to follow, better signage and other elements to help them find their way around. Many also note shortcomings in the infrastructure, particularly with regard to toilets (not enough, too far away, difficult to access or in need of renovation, etc.), cloakrooms (size or number of lockers, accessibility, space for umbrellas or pushchairs, etc.), lack of lifts, temperatures that are too low or too high, insufficient lighting, excessive noise levels, or who would have liked to have a café in museums where there isn't one. We should also mention here the usual discussions about the legibility (font size, contrast, etc.) and positioning (ideal height, lighting, etc.) of texts and labels.

These elements obviously depend on each museum, but they all have in common the fact that they affect the comfort and well-being of visitors. They are among the factors that can spoil the enjoyment of a visit, because one can only fully appreciate a visit when the conditions for comfort are met.

Indicator: motivation for visiting and expectations

In addition to analysing satisfaction, another approach can provide insights into what makes a visit enjoyable: understanding visitors' motivations and expectations in order to best meet their needs.

A trip to the museum is often a sociable activity. The proportion of visitors who come as couples, families, with friends or even in organised groups (largely) exceeds that of visitors who come alone – except perhaps for certain art exhibitions. The sociable aspect is one of the key drivers of museum visits.



Picture 11 – A moment spent together. They may be talking about the picture they see in front of them?
Pinacotheca de Brera, Milano, Italy.
Photograph: Stéphanie Wintzerith

Indeed, spending quality time with loved ones is the main motivation for visiting for many people, closely followed by wanting to introduce children or loved ones to the museum. Next come motivations related to the museum's content (a particular affinity with the exhibition's theme, raising children's awareness of the theme, recommendations, etc.), the museum's reputation (a must-see tourist attraction, a locally renowned museum that all residents of the surrounding area should visit at least once, etc.), or more external motivations (professional, study, research, school trip or organised group outing, for example).

Each person's motivations are associated with a certain number of expectations. It is up to the museum to develop appropriate offerings that will satisfy, or even delight, visitors. For a natural history museum, for example, it makes sense to set up an area slightly away from the exhibition where visitors, especially families, can freely settle down to take a break and eat a packed lunch. Another example: interactive devices, audio or video terminals, etc. that can be operated/used by two or three (or even more) people at the same time encourage interaction and enhance the enjoyment of visiting together, whereas devices with a single listening terminal, for example, have the opposite effect and contribute to fragmenting the visitor experience. While the principle is simple – every expectation should be met with one or more appropriate responses at the museum – its application is much more complex, as the expectations of some are sometimes at odds with those of others. It is obviously impossible to satisfy everyone, but the museum has everything to gain by taking a close interest in the motivations and expectations of its audiences.



Picture 12 – Contemplation: pleasure of a reverie in front of a Monet.
Marmottan Monet Museum, Paris, France.
Photograph: Stéphanie Wintzerith

Let us take another concrete example, which cannot be generalised to all types of museums: visitors to an art museum were asked about their expectations of an art exhibition. Respondents are particularly keen on discovery: more than 90% consider it important or very important to gain new impressions, more than 80% hope to find food for thought and questions to ponder, and more than 80% also consider it (very) important to develop their knowledge and understanding of art – three expectations intrinsically linked to art and the content of the exhibition, which the museum can meet through its programming, museum education programmes and the information provided, among other things. In addition, 80% are very sensitive to the beauty of works of art, and the same

proportion consider it important/very important to be able to immerse themselves in the contemplation of works of art with all their senses.

The more relational aspects are less important in this context: while nearly 50% hope to have a good time with their loved ones, more than 60% hope to be able to enjoy the exhibition in peace and quiet. It is therefore important for the museum to ensure a calm and serene atmosphere, conducive to individual contemplation as well as strolling around in pairs or small groups. However, flooding this exhibition with events and other happenings would be overkill: less than 40% find it (very) important to be entertained at the exhibition, so this is not the main focus – which does not, of course, rule out various activities related to the exhibition, especially in order to satisfy a portion of the audiences which remains, after all quite significant. Similarly, seeing familiar works of art or finding something familiar is much less important to visitors to this museum (less than 30% and less than 20% respectively), so this is not the main argument to put forward in communications about the exhibition, for example.

The expectations expressed by visitors to this museum are rather introverted in nature. Their enjoyment of the visit will likely be similar if the museum manages to create the right conditions.

Conclusion

Entertainment vs. learning, the seriousness of a museum vs. the light-heartedness of shows (meaning: entertainment, amusement), the contrast has often been outlined. Enjoyment, with all its different facets, has sometimes been mistaken for entertainment (again, amusement), an idea that seemed unworthy of museums, and the term was long banned from museum vocabulary. Can a museum truly fulfil its role, carry out its missions – noble ones, it should be remembered – conduct research, manage collections, transmit knowledge by organising exhibitions and publications, and at the same time entertain? Sacrilege, some people said. Offering its audiences enjoyable experiences, then? That was already more acceptable. Fortunately, things have changed, and the pleasure of visiting has made its way into museums and enjoyment into their definition.

The reality of a museum has to match the reality of its audiences, who literally have a say: it is for them that the exhibitions are put together, and it is also for them that the educational programmes, interactive devices and innovative features are developed – in short, everything that makes an exhibition much more than just a collection of disparate objects. Audiences' feedback speaks for itself: they enjoy visiting exhibitions. They find many sources of pleasure there, from the beauty of a work of art to the surprise of an unexpected object, from an interest in a theme to discussions with their loved ones, among many other things.

Museum educators have known this for a long time: we learn just as well, if not better, when we are having fun. Museum teams know that only satisfied visitors will return. Curators are increasingly attentive to the expectations of their audiences. Audiences can sense this: if the exhibition designers enjoyed developing it, if the museum educators enjoyed coming up with new concepts and implementing them, visitors will feel this too and will enjoy it all the more. Conversely, what could be more pleasing and rewarding for museum teams than to see happy visitors enjoying their time at the exhibition and enjoying the

content they find there? It is now time to fully integrate the notion of visitor enjoyment into our concepts, ideas and activities and make our exhibition truly enjoyable.

This text is a translation of the French original under the title *Pour le plaisir – sinon, pourquoi viendraient-ils?* published in *ICOM Education 31*, French version. Translation Stéphanie Wintzerith with the help of DeepL.

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The summary of indicators is based on a body of survey reports and audience studies conducted by Stéphanie Wintzerith, some of them in collaboration with other researchers, but which have not been published. They are therefore not accessible, especially since the contracts signed with the museums commissioning the studies usually contain a confidentiality clause. This is why no specific examples have been cited and no museums have been named directly.

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Le bonheur est au musée

Happiness is in museums

El placer está en el museo

The notion of pleasure at the National Museum of Beirut

Anne-Marie Maïla-Afeiche

*Pleasure is a song of freedom, but it is not freedom,
It is the fulfilment of your desires, but not the fruit,
It is a valley calling for a height, but neither an abyss nor a summit,
It is the prisoner taking flight, but not the space around him,
Yes indeed, pleasure is a song of freedom.*

Gibran Khalil Gibran
The Prophet (1923)

(Based on the French translation by Jean-Christophe Benoist)

Lebanon is currently going through a social, economic, political and financial crisis unequalled in the country's history. Despite the uncertain circumstances, it is imperative that we continue to preserve our cultural heritage. Observing the crowds that flock to our museums makes us realise that there is a real enthusiasm for our museums, whether national or private, despite the current difficult circumstances. As an example, the last session of *Museums Nights* in April 2019, which brought together seventeen museums from different regions of Lebanon, was a resounding success, with almost 14,000 visitors to the National Museum of Beirut alone during the night. Since then, no event on this scale has been planned. It is true that the number of visitors to museums in Lebanon varies according to circumstances and events. The aim of this essay is to present the reasons which, in our opinion, encourage visitor enthusiasm or satisfaction in a museum, and more specifically at the National Museum of Beirut.

Museums are places of culture, collection and conservation, as well as showcases for art and knowledge. They are also a space for change, an exercise in freedom, where people certainly want to learn, but also to be entertained, and thus a leisure zone linked to a certain idea of liberty. As an institution, the museum creates certainty in its narrative. Nevertheless, this does in no way prevent the presentation of this narrative from holding a strong power of seduction, of encouraging discovery and of beauty with sensory and emotional experiences.

The recent definition of a museum, as adopted at the ICOM General Assembly in Prague in August 2022, states that museums "[offer] varied experiences for education, enjoyment, reflection and knowledge sharing" (ICOM, 2022). So, in order to pay tribute to one of its functions, that of entertainment and pleasure, it would be wise idea to explore what causes the positive emotions that overwhelm us during a visit to a museum.

The place, the scenography

As you enter the Beirut National Museum, you are overwhelmed by a captivating, warm and welcoming atmosphere. In this ochre-coloured building built in the 1930s, the Art Deco style is combined with the yellow stone used, giving the whole museum an intimate yet majestic feel.



Picture 1 – Interior of the Museum

Photograph: Tony Farraj, © Ministère de la Culture-Musée national de Beyrouth

The bewitching atmosphere of this museum, where you move from the daylight of the ground floor to the half-light of the basement, instantly conveys a sense of well-being. This is probably the visitor's first impression of pleasure (Picture 1). The pleasure associated with an atmosphere of tranquillity immediately strikes the visitor, who is ready for an experience of discovery that is all the more enjoyable because it takes place in a serene environment. This immersive experience is visibly generated by the overall setting. The layout of the National Museum's galleries gives each work the latitude to be seen, admired and approached. Similarly, the arrangement of the works in the showcases means that they can be displayed without clutter and with sufficient distance to appreciate the beauty of each of them. As a place of enjoyment, the museum can be experienced in a way that suits everyone, for the duration of a journey through time. What's so special about a museum is that one can enjoy a range of different experiences, including being able to set oneself loose from the outside world for a moment and dive into the beauty of the surrounding objects.

The national archaeological collection is spread over three floors. Discovered exclusively in/on Lebanese soil, each object bears witness, in its own way, to Lebanon's ancient and recent history. The ground floor houses the large-scale pieces of the lapidary collection, including historiated sarcophagi, monumental sculptures, altars and mosaics. Seventy display cases on the mezzanine walkway on the first floor showcase the collection's smaller pieces, arranged in a both chronological and thematic way. The oldest works date back to prehistoric times in Lebanon, while the damaged objects on display in the last showcase of this tour bear witness to the years of conflict in Lebanon (1975-1990). Lithic tools, gilded bronze statuettes, ceramic and glass vessels, ornaments and jewellery from

all periods – these are all masterpieces that have been on display since 1999, when the National Museum was refurbished. Finally, the basement, opened in 2016, illustrates the theme of funerary art over the centuries (Picture 2).



Picture 2 – Overall view of the Museum basement
Photograph: Tony Farraj, © Ministère de la Culture-Musée national de Beyrouth

In presenting this new wing, I have often found myself referring to funerary art as the art of life. Indeed, it is the funerary objects found in tombs that are often the best-preserved and most evocative expression of daily life. Metal weapons, ivory combs, wooden spoons, glass flasks and a glassuentarium, all tell of the ordinary life of a person who lived before us on this earth.

Rich in information, these objects offer a variety of forms and decorations, developed over the centuries according to different tastes and stylistic influences. The objects express themselves. A gold and amethyst necklace speaks of the refinement of a lady from Baalbek in the 2nd century AD; another amulet from Byblos carries all the hopes of protection and good luck. Evidence of faith in a future life can be seen in the scarabs and other prophylactic symbols made of earthenware, stone or glass, placed there as a sign of piety. Hidden in the sarcophagi, the power of these images is all the greater. Finally, the crosses at the entrances to the tombs and the Koranic verses carved into the stone of the stelae reveal the beliefs of people like you and me, privileged to have lived in our land and blessed to have fallen asleep here (Maïla-Afeiche, 2016, p. 7).

The content, the works exhibited

The second source of pleasure comes from the quality of the exhibits. It's true that forms of beauty vary and respond to criteria of appreciation specific to each of us, but it's the collections that attract visitors. In our case, it's the unique archaeological pieces that captivate the public. For example, the National Museum in Beirut exhibits thirty-one anthropoid sarcophagi, the largest collection of this type in any museum today (Picture 3). These sarcophagi were carved following the contours of the human body in white marble imported from the island of Paros (Cyclades) and made in the workshops of Sidon

between the 6th and 4th centuries BC. The lids of the sarcophagi each feature a different sculpted portrait, either male or female. Polychromatic traces even remain on some of those sculpted faces. This exceptional collection has been masterfully showcased by the architect and museographer Antonio Giammarusti, with a judicious play of mirror angles.



Picture 3 – The anthropoid sarcophagi, Saida, 5th century BC.
Photograph: Tony Farraj, © Ministère de la Culture-Musée national de Beyrouth

Aesthetics speak to us and give us considerable pleasure. When we like a work of art, it meets our own criteria of beauty and appreciation, and "*the beauty of things exists in the mind of the beholder*", as David Hume (1711-1776) put it. The first pleasure is of sensorial nature, it's the feast for the eyes. Some visitors will be drawn to the finesse of a Roman sculpture, such as the statue of the goddess of health and hygiene, Hygeia, a marble sculpture discovered in Byblos and dating from the 2nd century AD (Picture 4).



Picture 4 – Statue of Hygeia, Byblos, 2nd century AD.
Photograph: Tony Farraj, © Ministère de la Culture-Musée national de Beyrouth

Others will be captivated by the beauty of the frescoes covering the four walls of a Roman tomb uncovered in Tyre and depicting scenes from Greek mythology (Picture 5). A statuette of an orant offering a gift to the god, or a Phoenician glass vase – each object tells its own story.



Picture 5 – Tomb of Tyre, 2nd century AD.
Photograph: Tony Farraj, © Ministère de la Culture-Musée national de Beyrouth

Unfortunately, some people will never (fully) enjoy the pleasure of seeing. A programme entitled *Doors Please Touch* was initiated by the Red Oak Association in 2018 with the aim of enabling visually impaired and blind people to enjoy the tour. People who could not see were invited to touch the sculptures with their hands. This initiative is in line with

the National Museum's vision of being open to all, with inclusive experiences that accept and support diversity, and are a source of joy not only for the visually impaired but also for the organisers. The discovery of the softness of the marble, the finesse of a sculpture or a bas-relief, is accompanied by the commentary of the guide who simultaneously explains the works, their particularities and their importance.



Picture 6 – Sarcophagus of King Ahiram, Byblos, 10th century BC.
Photograph: Tony Farraj, © Ministère de la Culture-Musée national de Beyrouth

Another object that is exceptional in more ways than one is the sarcophagus of King Ahiram, King of Byblos who lived in the 10th century BC (Picture 6). The front of this limestone monument depicts a funeral banquet scene with King Ahiram seated on a throne flanked by winged sphinxes, his feet resting on a footstool. He is dressed in a long robe, holding a cup in his right hand and a wilted lotus flower in his left. Facing him, and in front of a table laden with food, a procession of seven figures is advancing. Covered with reliefs carved in slight relief on all four sides, the sarcophagus bears a Phoenician inscription engraved on its right side and on the long side of its lid. The importance of the new consonantal rather than pictographic alphabet that was developing at the time, of which the Ahiram sarcophagus is the oldest witness, lies in its ease of use and the limited number of signs it comprises. This alphabet was most likely introduced by Phoenician navigators and adopted by the Greeks around 800 BC, who changed the direction of the writing from right to left by adding vowels that were absent from the initial alphabet. It was this alphabet that gave rise to the modern alphabets.

The narrative: discovering your story

The example of the sarcophagus of Ahiiram, linked to the story of the birth of the alphabet, transforms this masterpiece into an object to be read. And this is the third factor of pleasure, when the beauty of the work is combined with the message it conveys. Beyond the emotional charge, it is the information that is transmitted orally, textually or visually. There is always a story to be told in a museum, the story of a building, a collection, a passion or an individual. Everything deserves to be translated, commented on and explained. What's more, each of the objects on display lends itself to different readings, and so each one gives visitors a different kind of pleasure.

In the case of our National Museum, the archaeological artefacts on display are an essential stimulus to reading and understanding the civilisations that Lebanon has known. It is these witnesses to the past that evoke the values and customs of Antiquity. The dual approach of history and geography contributes to the discovery of national history and the different regions of the country. The primary purpose of the National Museum, built between 1930 and 1937, is mentioned as early as 1920, reflecting the prevailing feeling at the time to highlight national identity. Maurice Chéhab, the museum's first director and an eminent archaeologist, was in charge of developing the museum and its collections, most of which he discovered himself.

Recognising and passing on one's history became a source of shared pride and pleasure. By recounting the country's past, the national collection bears witness to diverse artistic expressions, provides educational learning and in a way guarantees the transmission of heritage.

Knowing and passing on our history is a source of pride and shared pleasure.

True to its mission of sharing knowledge, the National Museum exhibits historical and archaeological artefacts discovered exclusively in Lebanon. It tells the story of the different periods that have marked our past. For example, a series of textiles dating back to the 13th century was discovered by chance in 1988 by a group of speleologists in a mountainous region of Lebanon. The Assi el-Hadath cave (Qadisha Valley) also preserved several bodies that had been naturally mummified due to environmental conditions. Everyday objects, manuscripts, ceramic material and even food remains (nuts, onion skins, laurel leaves and bunches of grapes) were also well preserved. In addition, a collection of textiles including dresses, tunics, shawls and shrouds formed part of this exceptional find, bearing witness to the clothing worn by the rural population of Mount Lebanon in the medieval period (Picture 7).



Picture 7 – Dresses from Asso el-Hadath, Qadisha Valley, 13th century AD
Photograph: Tony Farraj, © Ministère de la Culture-Musée national de Beyrouth

In addition to the mummies, some of which are exhibited in the basement of the Museum, it is above all the story of these inhabitants who, around 1283, found refuge in a cave at an altitude of 1 300 metres, taking their personal belongings with them, that has been highlighted. The artefacts on display, and the story they tell, evoke a wide range of emotions. But the satisfaction also lies in the fact that we were able to preserve these textiles after entrusting them to the Abegg Foundation (Riggisberg, Switzerland), which, with great generosity and the professionalism that characterises it, was able to restore all the textiles between 2017 and 2023. These are feelings of gratitude that mingle with the pleasure of having succeeded in preserving, in the best possible conditions, a unique heritage.

Reconstruction, a message of resilience and sustainability

The last point that concerns the pleasure of our museum institution is echoed in a long-term project that could be described as Herculean, and which was part of a reconstruction process that began in the 1990s after 15 years of destruction, between 1975 and 1991.

During these years of conflict, the Museum building, on the edge of the demarcation line that divided East and West Beirut at the time, was damaged. Maurice Chéhab and his wife Olga saved the objects in the collection that were on display or in storage. Small, easily transportable objects were first stored in the basement rooms, whose exits had then been sealed. Larger objects that could not be moved were protected by cement boxes. These two operations, which consisted of securing the storerooms behind partition walls on the one side, and the larger objects under concrete screeds on the other hand, saved the national treasures from barbarism.

Our aim here is not to go back over the detailed initiatives that contributed to the preservation of the national collection, nor to enumerate the stages that made it possible to cover it up and exhibit it again, but to highlight the importance of the reconstruction stage, the restoration of the works and the renovation of the building despite the scale of

Rebuild: restore the beauty of the place. Re-exhibiting the collections: restoring the works to their full beauty and meaning.

the destruction. The fourteen-minute documentary presented after the visit to the Museum perfectly expresses the positive experience of a small team. Bahige Hojeij's film shows the damages, the dismantling of the concrete layers, the emotion of rediscovering the collection that had been buried for years, and finally the

delight of exhibiting the collection once again.

Two floors of the National Museum were inaugurated in 1999 thanks to the fundraising and involvement of the National Heritage Foundation, an NGO whose mission was to restore our heritage, which was particularly badly hit at the time. The Museum's basement was not restored until many years later, in 2016, when a new scenography was created thanks to a grant from the Italian government. Transforming challenges into positive experiences, and exhibiting the results, turned out to be an absolute necessity.

The Good Shepherd mosaic is a good example of this. It was important to show how a Byzantine mosaic from the 5th century, on display on the ground floor of the museum, had been damaged by a gaping hole made in its lower left-hand side by a sniper, who had hidden behind the walls of the museum, and more specifically behind the wall on which the Good Shepherd mosaic was placed. From his hide, the sniper used to shoot at all passers-by who attempted to pass this area, then known to be extremely dangerous. Today, this mosaic, whose hole has been sealed but is still visible, tells the story of this constructive resilience. Informed visitors are gripped by a sense of contentment that outweighs the desolation of the looted work.

The return to Lebanon of five works that had been stolen in 1981 gave rise to a similar feeling, tinged with pride, when works that had been illegally exported were repatriated. Marble sculptures representing a bull's head and four statues of young men, dated between the 6th and 4th centuries BC, were effectively returned to Lebanon in 2017 following the Lebanese state's legitimate claim to the stolen cultural property (Maïla-Afeiche, 2018).

Conclusion

All in all, several factors contribute to the pleasure we derive from a visit to the National Museum: firstly, the beauty of the masterpieces on display and the sense of well-being we feel when the scenography is in keeping with the subject and the visitor is immersed in the narrative.

The satisfactions associated with learning and education are manifold. "*The museum speaks, the museum educates, the museum promotes*" (Nachtergaele, 2023, p. 15). For while it is true that the museum remains a place for disseminating culture, it cannot be reduced to a single role. It is a space where different sensory, affective and emotional experiences are engaged.

The desire to continue despite the obstacles and circumstances is also a source of pleasure, as we saw above: the satisfaction of having rebuilt after the destruction, of having enhanced and highlighted the archaeological collection and of having achieved the objectives in order to offer visitors a privileged experience at the Museum. The preservation of heritage, whatever the cost, is a source of comfort and gives meaning to the museum project.

And finally, to quote Jean de la Bruyère, "*the most delicate pleasure is to give pleasure to others*" (*Les Caractères*, 1696). Isn't that one of the purposes of our museums?

This text is a translation of the French original under the title *La notion de plaisir au Musée national de Beyrouth*, published in *ICOM Education 31*, French version. Translation with the help of DeepL, proofreading Stéphanie Wintzerith.

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Shared pleasures Experiencing a collaborative catalogue in an art museum in Brussels, the Art et marges museum

Alix Hubermont

Introduction

Is it so that each visitor to the Art et marges museum feels joy while visiting our exhibitions? There is no need for a deep research project to find it out: the numerous feedback we have from our audiences give evidence that the notion of pleasure is precisely what makes the Art et marges museum an outstanding one. It is acknowledged to be a place of shared enjoyment – enjoyment shared among those who visit it, shared also among artists and the museum's staff as if a series of pleasures would constantly swop from one group to the other.

First, of course, there is the pleasure emanating from the artworks of our collection. The latter consists of many works of art brut and outsider art. This kind of art is very often an expression of the vitality, inventiveness and pleasure felt by their creators. The spectator catches the playfulness, the liberty, the pleasure and the joy of creation that he/she can see in the artwork.

On the other hand, pleasure also lies in the way the exhibition is conceived. The starting point of each exhibition is an artwork or an artist that overwhelmed us. We intend to be surprising at each visit and to set up arrangements and mediation programmes focussing on the visitors' experience in a multisensorial approach. An exhibition at the Art et marges museum – be it the choice of the topic, of the exhibits or of the visitors' pathway – is always developed as a collective work involving our team. Our main intention being to pass on all the pleasure, joy and enthusiasm we felt while conceiving, preparing and producing it. We intend to generate sparkles in the eyes of our audiences.

And last but not least, there is a pleasure shared at the very moment of transmission or mediation. The latter is intrinsically connected with encounters. In this article, we will focus on one specific mediation experience, namely the collective creation of a catalogue involving the children living in the surroundings of the museum, a popular neighbourhood called Marolles.

The Art et marges museum, a very special museum

Located in the midst of Brussels, the Art et marges museum – art brut – contemporary art – outsider art is constantly questioning art and its borders. Collecting began around the mid of the 1980s, gathering works from self-taught artists, works produced in studios by people with handicap as well as works produced in workshops in psychiatric context.

Today, the collection holds more than 4.000 international pieces of art produced outside the well-trodden paths of “regular” art. It is presented in two to three exhibitions a year, bringing together artists from both sides of the border line and questioning the very notion of art.

The project of the museum: from a Research and Diffusion Center into an institution recognised as a museum

From its very beginning, it was all about pleasure and passion. Françoise Henrion was struck by the quality and the uniqueness of works produced in art workshops by artists with mental handicap – the art workshops are distinct from the occupational and therapeutic workshops, but always supervised by artists in order to foster creativity. In 1984, she founded a centre called *Art en marge* to research and make those artworks better known. The edge (in French: *marge*) is here understood as being “a place of reactions, annotations, rebellions and enthusiasm” (F. Henrion, quoted in Veress, 2020, p. 6). She sees the “art brut” as defined by Jean Dubuffet echoing in the edges, even though her followers at the time would not pay much attention to it then. This was still an unknown field and far from being acknowledged as a potential source of artistic creativity.

Nevertheless, Françoise Henrion saw both the quantity and quality of those works. Thus, she decided to give them a standing. “One of the greatest merits of Art en Marge was to be daring enough to tread on this field of creation without any theoretical framework, combining intuition, generosity and the passion to discover works of art of astonishing diversity and richness.” (Thévoz, 2003, p. 47)

As soon as 1986, *Art en marge* settled in its own premises for exhibitions and was organised as a non-profit gallery. Exhibition after exhibition, the collection grew and expanded, largely gathering artistic expressions which are – consciously or unconsciously – pushed aside the traditional artistic system. “Artistic creation, though present everywhere, deserves to be noticed even in unexpected places, even in places where it is expected to be missing.” (Leonardis, 2020, p. 9)

The significance of the collection gathered over the years was such that it accounted for a recognition as a museum institution. Thus, *Art en marge* became the “Art et marges museum” in December 2009. This new name is also a milestone reflecting the openness of the place: it is all about exhibiting marginalised artworks produced outside the well-known circuits of art – works that often reflect the marginality of their creators –, but always with an inclusive approach and an offer to dialogue with other artists considered as “insiders”.

The museum does not draw the borderline but it questions it, and by doing this, it also questions the definition of art itself.

We’ll never say it often enough, the Art et marges museum is a place for questioning, exchanging, encountering and sharing. A museum dedicated to art brut, outsider art and contemporary art at the same time, Art et marges managed to make a synthesis of those different visions and to suggest its own analysis of art. Art brut and contemporary art are

The museum, a place for exchanges and encounters, for questioning and sharing.

presented side by side and respond to one-another in a constant and necessary dialogue. It is not about dissolving art brut into contemporary art; it is not about strictly separating them either. It is about creating a dialogue, making this museum an experimental laboratory

in which research, presentation, conservation and protection of the works are intertwined.

Today, the Art et marge museum remains true to its original concept. It still is a space on a human scale, fostering dialogue and exchange rather than big debates, inviting everyone to express his/her emotions. It is a deeply human museum aiming at supporting marginal artists, putting a spotlight on their works and sharing their art. It is a museum that wishes to spread the enthusiasm and communicate the pleasure of discovery its team felt while choosing an artist and his/her works.

A museum for close friends and family

The Art et marges museum is said to be a place “where one feels well at ease”. This well-being is obviously related to the modest scale of the premises. The small size of the place fosters intimate encounters with the artworks and the enjoyment of watching them.

Though surely contributing to the fact that the Art et marges museum is relatively unknown, its limited size is at the same time one of its main assets. Since it is not one of those very impressive places, audiences feel at ease, the contact with the museum’s staff is easy as well and the dialogue can freely develop.

The atmosphere inside the museum also reflects the numerous and diverse links and connections that arouse and developed in the course of the years. There is an “Art-et-marges-family” encompassing frequent visitors, former and new staff members as well as artists.

Art brut and outsider art, an unfailing source of pleasures

Provided one accepts to consider that there is pleasure in vitality, inventiveness and liberty, then works of art brut and outsider art are illimited sources of pleasure and joy. As a matter of fact, this kind of polymorphic creation results from a crucial, a vital pulse. The aim is to invent something different, an “elsewhere” guided by a craving for liberty. Those unique artworks are overflowing with vitality and brimming over with the deep joy of creating, of breaking free of norms and conventions without even a look sideways or backwards.



Picture 1 – Pleasures of discovery
Copyright: Annabel Sougné

The artworks on display are as often the result of shared work in co-working studios as produced in the most solitary intimacy. They often nurture a strong tie to the life of their creator, they often were produced in a spontaneous way without much intellectual framing, and they often “speak” directly to the spectators/observers. They never accept to submit to any rules, not even when they try to comply with them. The Art et marges museum is a space where creation is a pearl discovered in the midst of the secret place it was born in, a space where creation is more than ever connected with the spirit of liberty.

Pictures without any discourse “*demand an absolute availability of the eye*” (Preszow, 1985, p. 5) while enabling emotions to arise. The artworks awake our emotions. They sometimes call at us directly, they sometimes unsettle us, they almost always jostle us around. There is a form of pleasure emanating from this setting into motion, since this motion shows that the artworks have an effect in us, they move and transform us.

Creating exhibitions

The available space is not large enough to allow for permanent exhibition galleries. Our collection is intertwined with temporary exhibitions, which always include some of “our own” artworks in the display.

Temporary exhibitions are shown twice or three times a year. Each of them is set to be surprising.



Picture 2 – Josselin Pietri at the opening of the exhibition
Guy Brunet, réalisateur – Josselin Pietri, karatéka (2018).
Copyright: Annabel Sougné

Exhibitions as team-work

At first, there is the pleasure of being free, free to think and design the exhibition, free to choose its topic and its discourse. As a team, we focus on what we enjoy and choose topics of exhibitions that we really like.

The themes of exhibitions to come are first the object of debates and discussions involving the whole team. A consensus arises, allowing each and every one of us to find something to enjoy in it. It might of course be that the proposed theme echoes directly to one or more of our colleagues just as it is. It might also be that the suggested theme would be transformed in some way or other by the discussions among colleagues, more or less amended or adapted. The decision is made collectively within the museum's

team, always relying on a sincere wish to do well and be accommodating. The kindness of the process gives each member of the team an opportunity to embody the topic of the exhibition, no matter whether it was his/her proposal in the first place or not. The pleasure felt is high, even more so for topics that are unknown or unusual since those topics encompass the intellectually stimulating dimension of discovery. In this case, taking up those themes is truly enjoyable.

Then comes the pleasure of elaborating and developing the exhibition around the chosen theme. There again, the process follows a path of consensus and collective intelligence: the team strives in one direction, while each colleague follows his/her own line of thoughts. The topic is shaped little by little until the exhibition reflects the tastes of each team member.

Selecting the artworks mainly means choosing works we like. While exhibiting artworks that made a strong impression on us and gave us pleasure, we hope to share this emotion with our audiences.

We are confident that each person passing the doors of the museum and visiting its exhibition will find something to enjoy, considering the diversity and variety of exhibited artworks.

This common approach among colleagues is a crucial element of the way we work. It shows in each exhibition we make. We also often heard our visitors pointing out that they noticed and felt the pleasure we had at making exhibitions. For the team, this is of paramount importance: if we manage to share with our audiences all the pleasure we had at thinking, elaborating and implementing the exhibition, then we've done it right. This is when the magic comes in.

Exhibitions at the Art et marges museum: an experience for the senses

In order to foster enjoyment, the museum sees it as crucial to offer much more than a simple presentation of the artworks. For each exhibition, it has to reinvent once again its scenography, its display and its identity. Each exhibition is a further attempt to be surprising for the audiences.

Moreover, there is a focus on original installations allowing each and every one to dive into a unique universe, to be part of creation and not only an external observer thereof.

This attention paid to immersive and participative aspects is one of the characteristics of exhibitions in the Art et marges museum. As a matter of fact, we hope our visitors will live a multi-sensitive experience where other senses such as touch and hearing might be activated, so that the enjoyment felt is as all-encompassing as may be.

Immersive, participative, creative and multi-sensitive are key to an enjoyable visit.

The museum thus becomes a space for withdrawal, a refuge, a place out of all conventions inviting to spend some time in a different way.

Finally, we constantly seek to arouse the creativity of our audiences and induce them to "be doing". At the end of the tour, we offer a creative space which can have diverse shapes such as for instance the creation of gris-gris, the building of a giant nest or the contribution to a collective weaving.

The jubilation incurred by the creative gesture emanates from the artworks and goes over to the visitors. The latter then feel urged to "be doing", to create. Being able to satisfy this urgent need is surely a source of enjoyment.

Enjoyment of the visit for “individual” visitors

Since no large-scale survey has been carried out, the enjoyment felt by the audiences has not been measured precisely. However, we reckon from all the remarks, comments and discussions that our visitor exchange coming back in the entrance hall at the end of their tour, that the visit of the exhibitions gives them pleasure.

The source of enjoyment most mentioned by our visitors is the pleasure of discovery, the surprise facing the unexpected. There lays the greatest strength of art brut and outsider art: it is a creation outside all boundaries.

Furthermore, “one feels well-at-ease” in this museum, as if having a break in a place outside the “usual course of the world”.



Picture 3 – The pleasure of discovery
Copyright: Annabel Sougné

Museum education / mediation and enjoyment – using emotions to reach out

One of the most central missions of the Art et marges museum is to give guidance to our audiences.

At the very heart of our educational work: the audiences and their specificities

Each group of visitors has its own characteristics and expectations. The museum educator – or “mediator”, as it is usually called in French (*médiateur/médiatrice*) – needs first to be able to listen to them and feel empathy in order to foster encounter as well as an enjoyable visit for the attendees.

Therefore, he/she relies on scenarios elaborated well in advance, but always adaptable to each situation, so that each visit becomes a unique experience. At the very heart of our concept is the fact that the singularity of each individual is taken into account. It allows to establish a feeling of trust which is particularly propitious for encounters and renders everyone, visitor as well as museum educator, fully open for exchanges.

The visit then becomes an encounter, or rather encounters: encounter with the museum educator, encounter with the artists – through their artworks –, encounter with the members of the group when discovering up to now unknown aspects in them, encounter with our own emotions and feelings.

The aim of the guided visit is to offer each participant some instruments that will help him/her to better see, to feel touched and addressed by the artworks. This is a prerequisite for him/her to take a kind of ownership of the works. The museum educator takes his/her position between the artwork and the audiences, though remaining as discreet as possible in order to allow for a personal and unique encounter.

Interactive guided tour

“A child could have done that!” / “This one, at least, is a nice drawing” / “There is so much distress showing from each of those works!” / “Which handicap does that one suffer from?” Whether they lead to resistance, extreme empathy or a search for sensation in front of artworks, prejudices remain strong while getting into touch with art brut or outsider art.

The museum educator / mediator helps visitors to get rid of their mindsets, their need for classification and their stereotypes. Doing this, the museum educator / mediator helps establishing a relationship between the artist’s sensibility and the person looking at his/her works. Lowering his/her barriers, the visitor then opens up for the joy and vitality emanating from the artworks.

Art brut is an art without discourse.

What we mean by this is that the artist seldom speaks about the intentions that led to the creation of the artwork. He/she seldom even comments his/her works. This offers us the opportunity to give full trust to our feelings – which, however, is not really easy to do, considering that we are very much used to see artworks together with a discourse about them or at least with some explanations about the works. As a consequence, audiences expect and demand to “understand” the artworks.

Here lies another prejudice to get rid of: no, a discourse is no prerequisite to enjoy an artwork.

A discourse is no prerequisite to enjoy an artwork.

Consequently, what is then the use of a museum educator? Well, he/she establishes a link, he/she guides the way audiences look, he/she helps them to trust their feelings. Obviously, there will usually be some information about the context of creation, but always starting with the artwork first.

The sensational elements of the artist’s personal life have never been the reason why we chose to collect or show his/her work. Similarly, a medical diagnose or the report of dramatic episodes of the artist’s life will never come to the forefront of our guided tours.

Those artworks can perfectly well do without comments and discourses. This is precisely what we want to transmit to our audiences. Thus, our discourse helps the latter to give a closer look and see: while questioning the group of visitors about technical features of the artwork, we aim at bringing them to talk about what this artwork would recall and evoke in them, what feelings they provoke.

Connecting to one’s own emotions is not an easy task. Learning how to let oneself be touched and moved by an artwork and how to find the words to express this emotion requires open-mindedness. It implies to pay attention to oneself as well as to others, to show empathy and to put one’s own sensibility at the disposal of that of another person.

We bet that visits to the Art et marges museum help to find this particular way

Because we understand this visit as a moment liable to leave a trace in the heart of the audiences. It was a time for exchanging, for laughing, even for crying sometimes, and for expressing oneself without fear. It helped to realise that one is capable of thinking, questioning, being addressed to, changing one's mind. It made our visitors realise that a work of art, be it a drawing, a painting, a sculpture, an entity of assembled pieces, has the power of moving and/or amazing them. Thus, we think that the seeds spread during the visit will continue sprouting and growing long after the visit, especially for our frequent visitors.

Over the years, we have developed partnerships with several schools and associations in our neighbourhood. Some of the children might have been here for a dozen visits between the age of three and twelve. We are convinced that those visits had an impact on the way they look at the world today. At the end of one visit, while giving feedback on what they enjoyed the most during the visit, an eleven-year-old said: "what I liked best, that was during the workshop, when you said that in art, there are no mistakes". This makes our museum educator's heart happy... Creation as a space of freedom – a freedom that obviously was identified as a source of joy by this young visitor.

A workshop

"In art, there is no mistake" ... Indeed, you won't find any rubber included in the materials we use during the workshops at the end of the guided tours. Instead, we invite our participants to use their "mistakes" and "errors" which we will always consider as valuable findings or opportunities to explore unexpected paths.

Most of the time, we dare to use materials and techniques very different from the traditional drawing. Experimenting is at the core of the workshop. It is all about manipulating unusual materials or using well-known techniques to produce something completely new: the participant dives into his/her creative potential without retention.

What could have been felt as challenging for those who state having no talent for drawing or who think of themselves as being deprived from creativity, very quickly becomes a playful and joyful moment. The spontaneity of the artworks seen in the museum sets the participants free from any inferiority complex. It is a time associated with the pleasures of touching, experimenting, discovering and being surprised by one's own capabilities and skills.

The pleasure felt during the workshop sometimes holds on while the created object can be either brought home, or included into a collective artwork that will remain on display in the museum for the pure enjoyment of other visitors.

Feedback after a guided tour

She [the museum educator] was incredible, because her explanations were very simple, very fluent and fascinating. She really sought out the residents and asked them questions. She really got to grips with each participant's answer, and adapted her speech to each participant. She gave a global presentation, but adapted according to attending persons. And I thought that was incredible, since because of that, they were completely captivated. We had a two-hour tour of the museum, and

they asked lots of questions. And it was really funny, because the way Art et marges was conceived, it's all about encounters. And so, the fact that we first were in this little airlock with them at the entrance was very warm-hearted and comforting. There was a welcome-time, where we heard about what we were going to do and what we were going to see. It is important to have this space before the visit. And then in the exhibition, the encounter with each artwork just happened, on each floor and in each place of the museum. It's funny, because it's a small museum, in absolute terms, and yet we still spent two hours making the most of every nook and cranny of the museum and really experiencing the different atmosphere in each one. I think that's why they really enjoyed it too. Then we went to the workshop, where we made Christmas wreaths. The wreaths were in response to some of the works in the exhibition. During the workshop, I thought it was really interesting that the participants could leave with a souvenir, and so make the visit a real one even outside the imparted time and outside the walls of the museum.

Feedback from Eva Mendoza, psychologist. She visited the museum in February 2021 with residents of the Foyer Aurore in Schaerbeek (ASBL Anais), a residential care for people presenting a mental handicap or psychic diseases (Detroy, 2021, p. 47-48).

A singular experience: creating a collaborative catalogue with the children from the neighbourhood

The history of art brut is the history of the way it is seen. The way we look at them is what creates the artworks.

Making the museum's collection grow also means feeding, archiving and recording the views, comments and encounters that occur during visits to the museum. It takes everything that comes out of the confrontation between the works and those who look at them, with no other expertise than that of their own perception, their memories and their singular trajectory.



Pictures 3-4 – Creative workshops during the project of a collaborative catalogue (2021).
Copyright: Alix Hubermont

Knowledge of an artwork grows with the exchanges that take place around and in front of it. Each guided tour is enriched by the previous ones, and fed by the comments and

impressions received. Thus, it increases the possibility of producing a discourse that leads towards the work, towards a rich, sensitive and emancipating reception, fuelled by the multiple gazes that rest on it.

Noticing and asserting this was the driving force behind an unprecedented project: the collective creation of a collaborative catalogue with the museum's neighbours.

Entitled *Nos regards* (our views), this catalogue is the first in a long series, in an attempt to bring together comments that are marginal but important to the history of the works and the history of the way in which they are viewed. *Nos regards* is an archive of glimpses from the margins.

Presentation and description

This editorial and curatorial project began in mid-December 2020 and ended on 22 September 2021.

The aim was to develop an editorial object in collaboration with our neighbours and to experiment with a way for the museum team to involve local people in a whole area of

Involving the neighbourhood: a participative, collaborative, creative and co-constructive edition project.

our activities from which they are usually excluded. In fact, partnerships are generally envisaged as giving participants the role of visitor (although the emphasis is always on interaction, this is a relatively passive attitude) and less the role of actor (discourse, creation of content, etc.).

This project drew on the museum's know-how and expertise in terms of audiences' support, curation and artistic expression to provide the tools and the space for developing a discourse on art. We emphasised the collaborative, participatory and co-construction aspects.

Inhabitants of the neighbourhood were encouraged to express the way in which the work resonated and opened up within them.

Through their written, spoken, sculpted or drawn comments, they were able to see that every individual is capable of perceiving, being surprised and challenged by a work of art. Every individual is able to build a discourse that is audible and interesting to everyone.

An exhibition celebrating the museum's tenth anniversary

This collaborative catalogue project took place at an important time for the museum, when it was staging an exhibition to mark its 10th anniversary as a museum institution.

The exhibition, entitled *Embrassez-vous!* (set yourself alight) took a fresh look at the museum's collection. For the occasion, the museum invited a dozen artists, friends and accomplices of the museum, to choose a work – or an artist from the collection – and to propose a dialoguing creation. These encounters gave rise to installations, performances and sound artworks, literary and culinary creations, all of them original commentaries that shed new light on some of the artists in our collection.

The mission entrusted to the inhabitants was therefore perfectly in keeping with that entrusted to the artists: to allow themselves to be touched by one or more of the works in order to give rise to a point of view, an echoing commentary.

The Marolles neighbourhood

Les Marolles is a Brussels district stretching from the Palais de Justice to the Chapelle church just below the Place du Grand Sablon. As a very touristy place, holding numerous

antiquity shops and neighbourhood inhabited by an underprivileged, multicultural population, this district has countless facets.

In 2001, the museum settled in the heart of the district in the Rue Haute. Since then, its constant action was to establish and nurture links to the people who live there. It developed partnerships with local primary schools, socio-cultural associations and cultural institutions (museum, theatres, cultural centre, etc.).

Following the health crisis, the links between Art et marges museum and its neighbours were somewhat weakened. The aim of this collaborative catalogue project was to re-establish the bonds with them, and to strengthen and maintain our collaborations. It was important to go on ensuring that the museum's neighbours become/remain familiar with the place, that they make it their own and identify with it.

Le Art et marges museum strives to be a meeting place, a network hub between the various partners in the area, so that encounters can take place.

The health crisis

The health crisis of Covid-19 has somewhat altered the initial plans. Although the original intention had been to create intergenerational encounters, the project had to be carried out almost exclusively with an audience of children and young teenagers.

The participants all came from two local socio-cultural associations located a few hundred metres from the museum, in the same street.

On the whole, we had 25 people participating once or several times, including a core group of twelve young girls who acted as ambassadors for the catalogue. But as the groups could not mix and therefore could not meet physically, the meeting took place via the artistic productions.

Despite these constraints, the project was able to be implemented. In these troubled times, the project can be seen as a joyful interlude of sharing and meeting.



Picture 5 – First editorial workshop for the project of the collaborative catalogue (2021).

Copyright: Alix Hubermont

Implementation

The project was introduced to the participants in the form of a guided tour followed by a workshop.

On five occasions, the different groups came to take part in artistic, creative and experimental workshops inside the exhibition rooms. These artistic workshops focused on creative and artistic experimentation, an approach that engaged and reassured the participants. Indeed, experimentation is akin to play, and without knowing it, learning takes place.

This phase of experimentation was an opportunity to start from what is created, sometimes without premeditation, to develop an artistic project and define intentions and perhaps a commentary, a discourse.

The results of the workshops, plastic creations and comments were carefully collected as they were created to serve as material for the publication. The collection was then analysed and organised during three editorial workshops. The museum enlisted the services of an external facilitator to formalise and support these workshops.

The first workshop brought together the most regular participants who, over the course of the project, had become very familiar with their tasks. After outlining the various stages of the project and defining the concept of the catalogue, they set about creating one.

The entire collection was laid out on the table, in the form of sentences (taken from the comments recorded during the visits and workshops), photographs of the works created (by them or by other participants), and works from the museum's collection featured in the exhibition.

Each participant, alone or in pairs, produced one or two pages of a catalogue. Together, they enjoyed combining the images and texts, while adding their own personal comments. They then built the railway by compiling the various contributions of their mates. After the workshop, their catalogue was printed.

The second workshop brought together the museum team. The catalogue devised by the participants in the first workshop was added to the collection of sentences, photographs and works used during the first workshop.

Shared pleasures: enjoyment of the participants, enjoyment of the museum's team, enjoyment of the project leaders.

Each member of the team was invited to draw up a draft catalogue, focusing on the form of publication (cards, leaflet, book, etc.).

This was a moment everyone liked very much, because it plunged the team into the question of discourse and the way we look at the works, but also because it was an opportunity to be delighted by the proposals made by the participants in the project.

The third and final workshop brought together the project leaders, and involved compiling all the contributions into a final railway design. This was submitted to the graphic designer, who in turn proposed formal adaptations.

Finally, when the catalogues were printed, we distributed them at a small party in the museum, before putting them on sale in our bookshop.

Encounters

We noticed that the children were quick to take on the role of commentator, and they easily got to grips with the exhibition. Their eyes became sharper, their confidence grew and they were able to express themselves more freely as the meetings progressed.

During the museum visits and workshops, the children were invited to choose one or more works from the exhibition. They were guided either by specific emotions: joy, disgust, fear, surprise, etc., or by a personal emotion – the idea was to choose an artwork that would move them.

Once they had made their choice, there was a time to explain it to the others, and then to create. Starting with the work, a formal detail, the subject or emotion or anything else, each child produces a commentary – poem, dance, drawing, collage, painting, sculpture, etc. At the end of the creation, he/she is invited to comment on what he/she has just invented.

Results and conclusions

All this material has been gathered and sorted into sixteen little cards, which can be handled in any way you may wish. They contain written and drawn comments without any caption, thus creating a confusion between the works in the collection and those created by the participants.

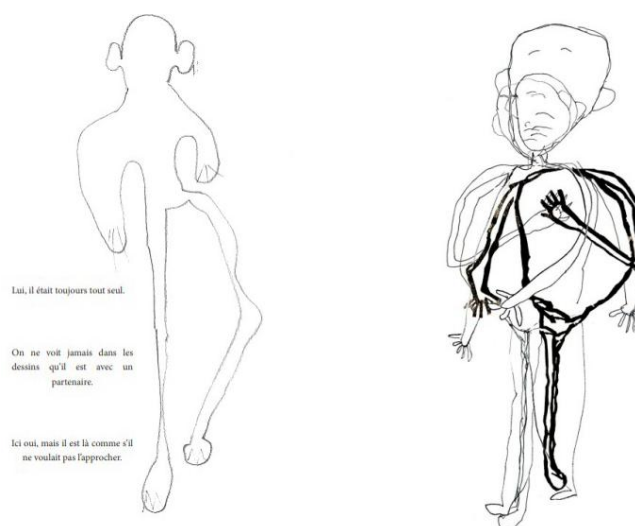
One of those cards shows a list of answers to the question asked about the artist's intention while creating the work, a list of "Because ..."

[...]

Because he wanted to have fun; because he wanted to avoid being bored (Collectif d'auteurs, 2021, card number 5).

Another card holds comments and observations about specific artworks.

That one, he was always alone. You never see in the drawings that he is with a partner. Here, yes, but he stands here as if he did not want to come closer to him. (Collectif d'auteurs, 2021, card number 7).



Picture 6 – Collectif d'auteurs (2021) *Nos Regards*, n°1.
Bruxelles: Art et marges musée. Card number 5 and 6.
Copyright: Marcelline Chauveau

Other cards deal with emotions, such as fear:

That one, he is scaring me, everything in him is scary, the feet, everything! It is frightening, because she has heads at her knees and because she has a strange look. (Collectif d'auteurs, 2021, card to unfold number 1)

Or anger:

She is annoyed, she is angry, she does it strongly, she even tears the sheet of paper.

Or also mixed emotions:

She often expresses her emotions, strong ones and soft ones, her anger. (Collectif d'auteurs, 2021, cards number 8-11)

We also have a card bringing to mind the topic of “making” and of comments graphically presented in the form of a path:

Out of this, I did my own forms. There, I just allowed myself to let go. Here, we drew one-another as we see one-another. I felt honest.

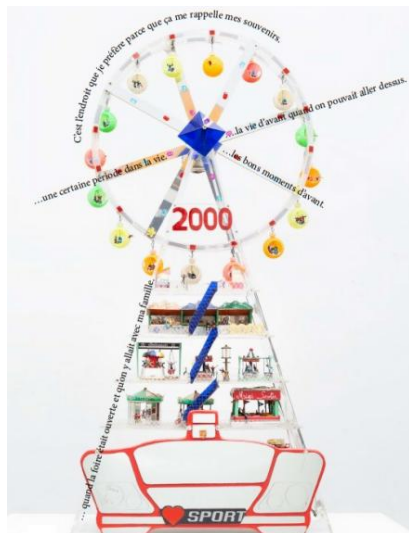
Since there was a bit of clay left, I made a small slipper. (Collectif d'auteurs, 2021, card to unfold number 2)

Another card holds memories:

This is the place I like best, because it reminds me of my memories. (Collectif d'auteurs, 2021, card number 14)

And finally, a conclusion:

The beginning is like a dress with braces. The end is like some chicken legs. It's beautiful, but I would not like to live inside it. (Collectif d'auteurs, 2021, card number 16)



Pictures 7-8 – Collectif d'auteurs (2021) *Nos Regards*, n°1.
Bruxelles: Art et marges musée. Card number 14 and card to unfold number 2.
Copyright: Marcelline Chauveau

Throughout the project, the pleasure was palpable. We can even say pleasures, in the plural: the pleasure of handling the materials (paint, clay, adhesive tape); the pleasure of the body, each with its own posture for creating, on the floor, in a corner, sitting, lying down or standing up; but also the pleasure of dancing in front of the works, of expressing oneself, of working together. And finally, the pleasure that comes from the pride of having achieved something.

Conclusion

In this article, we have tried to evoke the pleasure of a visit to the Art and marges museum. By tracing the different characteristics of the museum, we have brought out shared pleasures. Because it's always about sharing. Pleasure cannot arise without this little something that is exchanged.

There are pleasures at every level: from the museum's origins, in its collection of unusual artists, in its team's cooperative working method, in its multi-sensory exhibitions built around favourites, and up to its outreach missions.

Telling the story of the great adventure of our collaborative catalogue *Nos Regards* perfectly shows the concrete enjoyment of a visit to the Art and marges museum.

This text is a translation of the French original under the title *Plaisirs partagés. L'expérience d'un catalogue collaboratif dans un musée d'art bruxellois, le Art et marges musée* published in *ICOM Education* 31, French version. Translation: Stéphanie Wintzerith.

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Des musées pleins d'humour

Practicing humour

Museos llenos de humor

Curating joy

Susanna Lahtinen and Bengt Selin

In this article we show a few examples where we have successfully used joyful and engaging elements in our audience engagement. This article approaches audience engagement in museums through the lenses of edutainment.

Edutainment is defined as entertainment that is designed to be educational. Most often it includes content intended to teach which has an incidental entertainment value. Edutainment is to encourage entertaining learning with the way of interaction and communication. To put it simply, edutainment makes it possible for learners to have a good time with the way of creating and experiencing.

Turku Castle

Turku City Museums is one of the largest museums in Finland. It consists of six different museums and vast collections. We, the writers of this article, work at the audience engagement department. Our primary workplace, Turku Castle, is a medieval castle. It can be considered as one of the most well-known and important historical heritage sites in Finland. Many see the castle merely as an old symbol of power with hardly any soft values. People tend to have a strong image and preconceptions about the castle itself and as a museum. It is seen as reliable, trustworthy, prestigious and serious. It has been a place of power and politics, as the castle covers over 700 years' worth of history. Museums as such usually are also still considered as serious places; they are reliable and have the public's trust.

Some years ago, we started to wonder what museums could achieve when they would add a spoonful of sugar into the content design. We also feel that we need to plan our public program so interesting, that it attracts visitors again and attract new audiences. Being only well-known is not enough. When planning contents, it is vital to plan contents that you believe in. In addition, it is important to have fun while making fun contents, otherwise it will not work. You cannot force enjoyment; it must come naturally and then the joy will also reach the audience.

U Can't Touch This

Usually, the best ideas do not come to mind when you have a meeting and try to plan crazy ideas. They come at the lunchbreak and sharing thoughts in the hallways of the workplace. Good ideas can't be forced. Like our first joyful example shows.

At Turku Castle, our staff wears historical clothes and dresses that have been made for different events and occasions and depict different periods in the history of the castle. When a new early renaissance outfit was made, we joked about the clothes looking like the rapper MC Hammer's outfit from the early 1990's, with baggy pants and a jacket with wide shoulders. MC Hammer is best known for his hit from 1990, *U Can't Touch This*. We then realised that "*do not touch*" is a phrase often heard at museums, something that may also annoy visitors. So why not make something fun out of it? The music video of MC Hammer's song is also quite iconic with its dance moves. Almost everybody growing up in the 90's will remember the video, since it was on heavy rotation on MTV and other channels at the time.



Picture 1 – Video *U Can't Touch This Turku Castle Summer Edition 2018*
Photograph: Turku City Museums

We came up with the idea to try to make our own version of the video. In our version the clothes, late medieval and renaissance, that in some ways bear resemblance to the clothes in the MC Hammer video, played a big role. Before shooting, we asked for permission from Teosto, an organisation that manages the copyrights of music authors and promote music creation in Finland, to use the song. After we got the permission, we had a shooting day at the castle. Everyone was dancing almost without any planned choreography. It was one of the most fun days at work and it shows. So, this was also a valuable lesson to learn. If you have fun while making museums contents, it also reflects to audience. One can't force the fun.

After our video was released, many viewers commented that the outfits are basically the same, so they understood this point we were trying to make, many also seemed to get the reference to not touching museum items. And perhaps, or at least we hope, that the

viewers felt that history came closer to them and understood that the castle with its long and prestigious history can also be a fun place. Museums and the museum staff can also entertain, not only educate. You are allowed to dance, joke and laugh at and with the museums.

We realised that we took a chance (and a risk) when we made a music video because we could not possibly know how the audiences would react or what the outcome of the video would be. It could have ended up being a total humiliation and public embarrassment. By asking permission from the management to make this video, we also covered our backs. We felt that we would not stand alone if we would be caught in the crossfire of bad feedback. Luckily, the feedback was mostly positive, we were the worst critics ourselves.

We want to emphasize that *U Can't Touch This, Turku Castle Summer Edition 2018* was made by our entire staff and was a team effort. We invited many colleagues from different departments of the museum to join us in making the video. It was a valuable lesson for us to realise that a lot of colleagues were happy to participate, even though no one really knew (including us) what we were doing. Staff members from various departments of the organisation, guides, conservators, part-time workers, curators and even the museum director participated. Everybody felt it was important that they were able to participate and that this was not something only done by the audience engagement team. Many part-time workers felt huge pride to be included in this project and, in this way, welcomed to the work community. We realised that, with involving as many co-workers as we can into different projects, we can do our part to improve the working atmosphere and make everybody feel included.

Since the video received almost only positive reactions (well, of course some found it silly or dumb and maybe even inappropriate), it gave us the courage to follow our crazy ideas and add a little bit of fun to the content design. After the video was released, even those in our staff who initially had been sceptical to the idea seemed to like it and the idea behind it. The video was also later nominated for the Finnish Museum Association's Museum Communication award.

Follow crazy ideas and add a bit of fun to the content design.

With a twinkle in the eye

"With a twinkle in the eye" is one of our approaches in work. We want to show that many phenomena, events, and persons of the past can be brought to the public's awareness in a light way, even with a little bit of humour. Of course, this approach is not suitable for everything. There are cases and circumstances that need to be treated with a more serious approach. This leads to one of our guidelines: you must know the content well. Museums are seen as authorities and experts in the field they represent, so all the information we convey must be based on facts and all facts must be checked. However, these facts can be wrapped into experiential and inspiring forms. We consider all the contents in audience engagement as curated entities. Sometimes, the contents can be curated with a twinkle in the eye. And of course, light content doesn't have to mean fun or silly, sometimes it can just be a more popular approach to the subject.

Emotions as part of the museum experience

In recent years there has been a lot of discussion in the museum field about the role of emotions as a part of the museum experiences. Exhibitions are designed in a way that they will provoke emotions, make visitors feel they can identify with the lives of people of the past, understand their sorrow, pride, passion etc. We argue that the role of emotions is equally important when it comes to other contents, than exhibitions, in the museum as well.

Often, we engage emotions like sadness, abandonment, oppression or anger. We consider that happiness is an equally powerful emotion. Emotions like enthusiasm, awe and joy are also key ingredients to learning. Humour plays an important role in thinking, communications and social interaction. In studies, humour has also been found to ease psychological stress and protecting mental health. Studies also show that positive emotions as joy, pleasure and desire stimulate learning, even though it is not clear what the meaning of joy is in relation to learning.

Stories in a street scene

In the video series *History on the map of Turku*, we wanted to highlight the history that manifests itself in the names of streets and parks around our city, because we seldom come to think of which historical figures are behind the names of the many parks, streets, path etc. The aim of the video series was to communicate about history in a popular way. We also wished to get modern people to realise that throughout the ages, people have been basically the same: they experienced joys and sorrows, no matter if they were noble or everyman who made some impact in history.

Because all the stories were different, the videos varied as well. Some used the fun factor, but others evoked other emotions. We told tragic stories, about power struggles, love stories and other things relating to the persons after whom the places are named.



Picture 2 – History on the map of Turku
Photograph: Turku City Museums

Our goal was to film each location in such a way that the spirit of the places would be conveyed. We didn't try to beautify the place too much – the concrete architecture could

and should be visible, and the camera could linger even in rugged details. We wanted to have a small story in each video that would reflect the person in question or be related to the location in some way. It was fun to leave the museum and go to different parts of the city. At the same time, we made our work visible to the people in these areas of the city. The video shoots raised a lot of interest. We could talk about the history to passers-by and advise them to get to know the virtual contents of the museum. The stories increase the knowledge of local history and hopefully strengthen the local identity of the people of Turku; every streetwalker can feel that he/she is part of the continuum of the past and the present of Turku.

Curating edutainment – a balance between facts and entertainment

One example we want to show in this article is the guide battle between two equally known historical buildings and symbols of the city, Turku Castle and Turku Cathedral. Together with the staff from the cathedral, we came up with the idea to shake things up and make a video that would be fun to watch, as well as educational. The idea was to have a competition between our places, to try to convince the other and the viewer that our place is the most important to the history of our city. Both the cathedral and castle are seen as symbols of power, the church for religious power and the castle for secular power throughout the history. So, by making something with a twinkle in the eye, we knew we would take a risk. The staff of the cathedral was even more careful than we were. As a museum, we seem to be able to be bolder than the church.

In this battle, it was all about the facts, but the way they were told was different. It was not made as a traditional guided tour, but a battle between the guides. It took a massive effort to check different facts, to write a script and to place those facts in a way they formed a coherent but also funny outcome. A short funny clip can require days and days of work and going through various source materials checking for facts. This is something we think that even many of our colleagues don't understand. In museums, the term "to curate" is associated with exhibitions, but we think that also different contents in audience engagement require curating.

To find the right balance between proven facts and entertaining presentation, between staying trustworthy and being amusing is a real art.

There is always a fine balance between facts and entertainment: how to keep it all trustworthy, while still being amusing. We would not do anything to just enjoy our audiences or gather followers on social media. We still feel that our main goal is to educate and represent the values of the museum organisation.

The Museum Worker Eikka

A project we have done entirely on social media is the Museum Worker Eikka. He is a small wooden robot whose adventures you can follow on Instagram. The Museum Centre of Turku is a big organisation and we do not know everybody or are not sure what everyone does. We came up with the idea of this little robot who visits everybody and learns about the museum work. We send him from person to person, the colleague who

gets him in the mail takes a few pictures, talks about his or her work and we post it on Instagram.



Picture 3 – Our colleague Eikka, the Museum Worker
Photograph: Turku City Museums

As a museum worker, Eikka takes you behind the scenes. Eikka has an important message and role, but he tells it in a light and sometimes fun way. He is a robot, so that he can be amazed and also see that there are real people doing these jobs. He realised that a robot could not manage to do museum work. By time, we have even noticed that this small wooden robot has developed a kind of personality. Through him we can even say things we otherwise could not. Our main goal with Eikka was to get to know each other in the organisation. By doing this, it would in a small way increase the wellbeing at the workplace and create a feeling that we all share something in common. The robot does not look at hierarchies, for him every job done in the museum is equally important and we are all museum workers. At the audience engagement team, we are used to being silly and all have a playful side, and we have noticed that this small wooden toy has brought out the same playfulness and enjoyment in other departments as well.

Mixing the past and the present

Edutainment has been used as a main approach in two of our live events. The idea was to mix history and contemporary parties. *Baroque Disco – Party like it's 1648* was an event for adults and it was most of all a dance event. We transformed the renaissance halls of the castle into a disco with DJ's mixing club hits with Baroque music, mirror balls, party lights etc. We tried to get marketing message right, so that audiences would understand that it was not a masquerade ball, but one could dress in any way. People dressed in everything from accurate historical outfits to complete fantasy costumes or modern clothes for clubbing.

We wanted audiences to understand that people, then and now, love(d) to have a good time, enjoy(ed) parties and entertainment. The idea of the event came while thinking about the historical persons who have lived in the castle centuries ago: what would their parties look like today? What music would the duke listen to, would he be all about bling-bling and showing off? Old music has at some point been contemporary, so why not mix

what is contemporary to us with fashion and music that was contemporary to the historical persons of the castle? We received great feedback, one customer even said that the event was the best thing that has happened in Turku in the last 500 years! We reached a broad spectrum of visitors, those who came with an interest in history and those who came only for the party and the chance to dance and drink in the castle. We probably also managed to attract visitors who otherwise do not visit our exhibitions or events.



Picture 4 – *Club Rococo – Party like it's 1771*
Photograph: Turku City Museums

A similar event, *Club Rococo – Party like it's 1771*, was organised around the theme of rococo. We shared information in social media about the fashion of the 18th century and we encouraged to see the similarities with the 1980's fashion: broad shoulder pads, big jewellery, velvet and so on. During this party, we also organised a fashion show. While partying, the visitors got a big dose of education as well, maybe even without realising it. The *Club Rococo* was held during the Covid-19 pandemic, in a time when the restrictions were less rigorous. For the audience, it was a big relief to be able to go out again and see other people. For us however, it was nerve wrecking to organize the party at a time when you did not know how the pandemic situation would evolve, if new restrictions were coming and even if we might have to cancel the whole thing.

One valuable lesson we learned from both events was that even though we created the event, it was the audience that made it a success. Enjoyment was tangible, people truly enjoyed themselves.

In conclusion

We have learned that sometimes museums must take a leap of faith and have a courage to try. And be ready to make a complete fool of themselves.

One of the lessons learned is: the more you do these crazy things and execute the ideas, the easier it gets. You will get a confidence to trust even somewhat silly ideas. After a while, you get the rest of the staff behind you, because they trust your visions when they have seen that previous projects have been successes. However, you must believe in your idea, and to make something enjoyable, you must enjoy producing it. If you have fun while making fun contents, it will show to the public.

The feedback and reactions from the audience have been positive. Also, colleagues in many Finnish museums told us that we are daring in a good way, and they admire our work.

We have heard that many schools use our materials as a part of education. Like the *U Can't Touch This* video, it is an example that museums are fun places, they can laugh at themselves, but still there are some rules that must be followed in museums. The Guide Battles between the castle and Cathedral of Turku have also been used by schools for history lessons as well as the video series *History on the map of Turku*. This might help the school children understand history better and maybe they learn that history can be interesting, when told in a compelling way.

With the events *Baroque Disco – Party like it's 1648* and *Club Rococo – Party like it's 1771* we have learned that audiences appreciate opportunities to have fun in museums and have a chance to play, dress up and dance the night away.

The Museum Worker Eikka has showed our whole organisation how important wellbeing is at the workplace. In his own modest way, Eikka brings the whole staff together in the same project. For the public on Instagram, he educates about the different roles and work done at the museum, but for the staff he is a fun project and a good colleague.

Contents made with a twinkle in the eye can reach new audiences, even those who would not normally come, especially those who have preconceived ideas about museums being stuffy boring places. While approaching the contents from a different perspective, we can shake things up a bit and attract potential visitors in an engaging way.

References

Links to the videos and projects mentioned in the article:

U Can't Touch This - Turku Castle Summer Edition 2018

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P7-qL_QmI0E&list=PLjv1L3MBgATBdT9MhUBKmlgRuMVOI5VbU&index=27

History on the Map of Turku

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLjv1L3MBgATCHNG8t42gy6Q59IfcHgDY8>

Turku Cathedral vs. Turku Castle

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rt9hciLgABM>

The Museum Worker Eikka

<https://www.instagram.com/museoduunari/>

The uninhibited museum

Ludovic Maggioni

The words “museum” and “science” all too often resonate with “serious”, and “serious” cascades into “not funny”. Despite the diversity of communication approaches in science museums, humour remains marginal, if not impossible, for exhibition production teams. In 2018, in the *Lettre de l'OCIM* dealing with humour in exhibitions, Christophe Dufour (2018) concludes his article by quoting Serge Bouchard (2012), a Quebec anthropologist, writer and radio host:

Humour is a superior form of intelligence, it taunts reason, it is the lethal weapon against an overflow of clarity, of positivism, of empiricism, of causality, of realism, light and of rationality (...) The absence of humour is a symptom of certainty, dogmatism, intolerance, bad humour, bilious production causing paralysis of the human mind, which leads to necrosis of the empathic channels. (Bouchard 2012, quoted in Dufour & Aebischer 2018, p. 19)

Using examples from the exhibitions and scientific and cultural programming of the Natural History Museum in Neuchâtel (Switzerland), we will attempt to answer the following questions: Can a museum “have” humour? Can humour be used to bring pleasure to the audiences? What are its virtues and what impact does it have on the day-to-day life of the museum and its visitors?

Climate change and the Snow Queen

When it comes to talking about the impact of humans on the planet and climate change, audiences tend to feel eco-anxious or even depressed when they leave the exhibition. Numerous productions on this theme have appeared in recent years, but few of them are upbeat in title or content. A plethora of data is displayed, pointing to dark futures. In this context, how can we ensure that audiences can both access scientific information and enjoy receiving it? Finally, is it possible to smile about this worrying situation?

The solution explored in the exhibition *Pôle, feu la glace* (“Pole, the late ice”, playing with words, where the French word “feu” means “fire” as a noun, as well as “late, not alive any more” as an adjective) open to the public from September 2018 to August 2019 in Neuchâtel, presented the alarming scientific facts on the one hand, and proposed calling three major witnesses to talk about them on the other. Here, the guests were not glaciologists, politicians or activists, but the famous Snow Queen (from the motion pictures *Frozen*), Father Christmas and Jon Snow (the emblematic character from the series *Game of Thrones*). In a scenography that reinterpreted the ruins, they communicated

their views on these painful and complex issues through the specificities of their characters. The Snow Queen had to sign the Agreements of Arendelle while secretly dreaming of always being able to build an ice palace. Father Christmas was dressed in green and in need of sustainability to produce more and more toys. John Snow was a fan of geo-engineering. In short, these were highly unusual witnesses who, through the medium of fiction, were able to distance themselves from the subject and highlight the social paradoxes in which our society is immersed.



Picture 1 – *Pôle, feu la glace* exhibition: staging of the Snow Queen's testimony.
Copyright: MHNN

Far from being moralistic, the exhibition takes the moral out of the audience's equation, distancing them from any notion of perfection and playing on their humanity. At the end of the day, we are all human beings faced with the same paradoxes, and once we have identified and desacralized them, we can act with full knowledge of the facts. In this case, humour helps to ease tensions and in no way discredits science.

Are the elderly dinosaurs?

Yet another exhibition on dinosaurs in a natural history museum is sure to be a hit. So how can we explore new horizons? Could we find a way to surprise the audiences and at the same time use this topic to establish links between science and society? In the *Platéosaure, ceci est un dinosaure* ("Plateosaurus, this is a dinosaur") exhibition, on show from November 2023 to August 2024, the idea was simply to start with the definition of the word dinosaur, looking at both the literal and figurative meanings.

Dinosaur :

1. Male noun [palaeontology]: Member of a super-order of archosaurs that reached its climax during the Mesozoic (or Secondary Era), whose current representatives are birds.
2. Masculine noun [figurative sense]: A person who has been in power for a very long time.
3. Male noun [figurative sense]: An individual or company that was once mighty, now overtaken by modernity.
4. Male noun [figurative sense]: A device that is already very old by modern standards.

Given this diversity of meanings, the design team decided to make a film to showcase it in the exhibition entrance. To achieve this, a collaboration was set up with the Neuchâtel city council's delegate for the elderly. Volunteers were recruited to act as extras. The film script was developed in collaboration with the company “das playground”. A presenter provides voice-over commentary for scenes in which elderly people are seen in various situations to explain everything there is to know about fossil dinosaurs.

Film from the exhibition *Platéosaure, ceci est un dinosaure*: excerpt from the script

Scene 1:

A close-up of an elderly person drinking tea from a pretty coloured cup.

Voice-over: *Dinosaurs have scales.*

Zoom out: the elderly person is wearing a boa.

Voice-over: *Yes, but some also have hair and feathers.*

Scene 2:

Voice-over: *Dinosaurs are quadrupedal.*

An elderly woman enters the field on crutches.

She throws her crutches aside.

Voice-over: *Yes, but some are also bipedal.*

The film ends with: *And one day, we'll all be dinosaurs.* It's a video that makes you smile, and creates a link between the generations in addition to the palaeontological subject. The museum becomes a space where all generations find their place and where borders are lightly blurred.



Picture 2 – *Platéosaure, ceci est un dinosaure* exhibition: staging of the film
Ceci est un dinosaure, made in collaboration with elderly people.

Copyright MHNN

The museum as cultural agitator

These two examples show how, on very classic natural history themes, the Museum thinks about its scientific and cultural programming in an offbeat way, with humour, derision and even a certain provocation. Doing so, the Museum is shaking up both its practices and its audiences.

Over the years, the Museum has built up a relationship with certain audiences, and the audience study carried out by Marie-Sylvie Poli, Caroline Archat and Ambre Mendoza in 2017 identified a number of different types of audience, including the *“curious visitor, who is a regular visitor to the Museum’s exhibitions, and is in a sense on the same side as the design team, to whom he or she feels related”* (2017, unpublished survey report). In this case, humour, tone and state of mind are tools that help binding audiences.

Beyond the production of exhibitions, this state of mind is transposed throughout the programming. For example, it is possible to visit cemeteries not from the point of view of human history, but from a geological perspective: what are the funerary buildings made up from, where do the rocks come from? And other such questions.

The Museum's team is keen to explore unusual ways of using the museum, to come up with new kinds of experiencing things that will help us to question the interactions between humans and non-humans. For the *Sauvage* (“savage”) exhibition, a wilderness campsite was set up in the courtyard of the Museum. It was then possible to spend a night in the city centre. The campers very quickly realised that wild camping in the heart of the city could be much more unpleasant than camping in the wild amongst non-humans.



Picture 3 – *Sauvage* exhibition: setting up a campsite where visitors can spend a night in the heart of the city.
Copyright: David Perriard

A diversity of emotions

When developing the dramaturgy of the exhibitions, the design team, made up of scientists and creative artists, does everything possible to ensure that the visit plays on a varied range of emotions. Visitors may feel sad or disgusted, but may also to laugh or feel joy – one doesn't preclude the other. In all cases, something is happening. After such an experience, the Museum's objective is not necessarily for the visitors to become learners.

The aim is rather to create a way of raising awareness of the subjects, while nurturing the visitors' desire to continue to understand them.

In order to continue developing this type of experience, it is important for exhibition designers to put in place mechanisms for gathering the feedback and opinions of the audiences. Their views are not seen as a truth to be followed, but rather as a kind of barometer for measuring the Museum's relationship with its visitors. Various tools are used to achieve this:

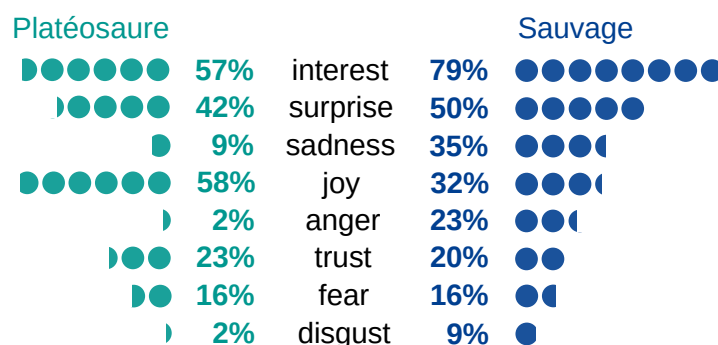
- the visitors' book, in which we find a multitude of messages that are sometimes published on the Museum's Instagram account:

Thank you for this beautiful exhibition that speaks to our eyes, ears, heart, always so pleasant and creative. (visitor to the *Pôle, feu la glace* exhibition, 2019)

I'm taking her to the museum for the first time in her life outside school for Valentine's Day (visitor to the exhibition *Emballer moi*, 2022)

- the *muse* application, developed by the Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne.

With this application, it is possible to set up interactive questionnaires inside or after the exhibition. These surveys can be used to assess the visitor experience, the impact of content, demographics, marketing and the social aspects of the visit. For the visitor experience, a part of the questionnaire is based on the study of emotions. This study was developed using the work of Robert Plutchik and his psycho-evolutionary theory of emotions (1980). Audiences are asked the following question: "What emotions did you feel?" They could choose between joy, trust, fear, surprise, sadness, disgust, anger and interest.



Picture 4 – "What emotions did you feel?"
Survey results for the exhibitions
Platéosaure, ceci est un dinosaure (survey in progress) and *Sauvage*.
MHNN data, graphic by Stéphanie Wintzerith

In the exhibition *Platéosaure, ceci est un dinosaure*, the responses were as follows (results based on an ongoing survey, to date 815 respondents): joy 58%, interest 57%, surprise 42%, confidence 23%, fear 16%, sadness 9%, disgust 2%, anger 2%. On the whole, the experience is a positive one for those who choose to respond to the questionnaire.

Alongside this type of question, another has been asked systematically for the past two years: "Did this exhibition make you feel better?" (in the sense of "improved your mood"). For the *Emballer moi* exhibition, the answer was "yes, very much so" for 85% of respondents and "no, not at all" for 15%. For *Platéosaure, ceci est un dinosaure*, 89% answered "yes, very much so" and 11% "no, not at all". Here too, the visitor experience was positive, even more so than for the *Emballer moi* exhibition.

Conclusion

As a conclusion, the exhibitions at the Neuchâtel Natural History Museum explore current issues in the biological and environmental sciences in relation to society and the general public. In this context, it is continuing its mission as a transmitter of science. It makes a point of proposing reflections that are not totally alarming and negative. True to Jacques-Yves Cousteau's famous quote: "*We love what we marvel at, and we protect what we love*", it focuses on building narratives to stimulate wonder and imagine exciting futures. In this sense, the Museum is a place where the audiences play an important role, where interaction is omnipresent. Over the years, a sincere relationship has developed in which many reactions have their place. The diversity of cultural activities also encourages many visitors to come in and see the Museum, and this helps to establish a lasting relationship. There's nothing wrong with having fun, treating subjects in a relaxed way and sometimes laughing about them. So, let's not hesitate to step out of our comfort zones, to think of science as a culture, to think of the pleasure and comfort of the audiences as essential.

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Plaisirs numériques

Digital Enjoyment

Disfrute digital

How can science museums attract more visitors in the Internet era

Ying Chen and Xian Song

Museums have spent a long time regarding themselves as institutions for learning. However, as we enter the 21st century, more and more museums begin to realise that they should meet people's lifestyle expectations by providing a high-quality social and recreational environment.

Graham Black, 2005

The 21st century has seen the rapid development of various disciplines and integration, with the depth and breadth of scientific research extending far beyond past boundaries. New disciplines are emerging and barriers between disciplines are being broken down. In this era of rapid change, it is no longer possible for science museums to maintain their attraction without updating their knowledge and information system. Meanwhile, the fast growth of productivity has, on the one hand, led to radical changes in life and rising demand for cultural products. On the other hand, it has had a major impact on the earth and environment. Biodiversity conservation, ecological restoration and the harmonious development of man and nature have become emerging issues of our time. The traditional way of exhibit displays and illustrations can no longer interpret complex, inter-connected and even abstract concepts. We need more diverse display vehicles to present and interpret these new topics. As Graham Black suggests, this is the “*Age of Participation*”, and to stay in touch with audiences requires a “*profoundly different, much more participatory, museum experience*” (Black, 2018).

Shanghai Astronomy Museum (a Branch of the Shanghai Science and Technology Museum) is a large-scale popular science museum invested by the Shanghai Municipal Government. Located in the Lingang Special Area of Shanghai near Dishui Lake, it covers a total floor area of 38 000 m², making it the largest astronomy museum around the world. Since its opening in July 2021, the museum has been full of visitors every day. With the vision of “shaping a complete view of the universe”, it inspires curiosity and encourages people to encounter the stars and understand the universe. The main exhibition area of the museum consists of three sections, namely *Home*, *Cosmos* and *Odyssey*, providing a panoramic view of the vast universe and creating a journey of multi-sensory exploration for visitors. This article discusses how museums can engage and bring more enjoyment to the public. Taking the Astronomy Museum as an example, it reviews the design of various exhibits that aims at creating a better experience for the audiences.



Picture 1 – Panoramic view of the Shanghai Astronomy Museum
(Shanghai Science and Technology Museum branch)
Photograph: Shanghai Astronomy Museum

I. Not only a “temple of science”, but also a “public forum”

The modern museum concept was inspired by the ancient “Temple of the Muses”. For science museums, their classic role is undoubtedly that of a temple of science, presenting “*science as a spectacle*” (Plunkett, 2018). Bernard Schiele has traced the history of science museums along the history of technology in the 19th century. Although the role and shape of science museums have shown how science has changed in different social contexts, their identity has always dictated that one of their most important functions is the dissemination of science and promotion of public scientific literacy (Schiele, 2021).

George Brown Goode, a former Deputy General Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, famously said: “*The essence of museum work is not only knowledge creation, but also knowledge dissemination and ultimately learning*” (Kelly, 2010). As a lifelong learning platform for the public, museums try to lead, engage, and help audiences to understand the trajectory of natural evolution from a developmental perspective, to examine scientific research methods from a forward-looking perspective, to discover new questions hidden in nature from an innovative perspective by stimulating their curiosity and interest in exploring the mysteries of science (Song and Gu, 2013). Based on such attributes, museum exhibitions should, in addition to the inherent body of knowledge, reflect cutting-edge scientific research through flexible and diverse forms of display, and provide a platform to showcase scientific progress. This allows the public to follow the latest academic developments. It is also necessary from the perspective of museum development, as museums need to keep up with the latest scientific development and update their displays promptly.

Nowadays, however, how science is discussed is increasingly an important issue. In this context, the “deficit model” in science communication has been reflected upon for years (Druckman and Bolsen, 2011), and bi-directional dialogue and participation have become the undertone of future-oriented museum exhibitions (Illingworth, Redfern, Millington and Gray, 2015). This reality is being exacerbated by the empowerment of technology. The visitor is moving from being a traditional “recipient” of knowledge to a “participant” or even a “protagonist” in its dissemination. This shift from cultural consumers to cultural producers is also prompting museums to think about how they can change the themes and formats of their displays from a public perspective, responding to social hotspots and looking at all areas of social life. Museums are responding to the needs of the public with efforts to attract more people to understand, discuss and participate in science. Such display themes

are seen as an effective way for museums to respond to social and cultural issues and to engage with society (Chipangura and Marufu, 2019), which have led to another major development in museum culture over the last century of socialisation: it is no longer just a sacred and solemn temple of science, but also a public forum where diverse opinions are presented.

In this role, science museums should build an academic community in the Internet age, with both scientific elites and the general public. This shall allow science to be communicated in a timely and effective manner, and to hear different perspectives and challenges, leading the public to respond to controversial scientific issues and fostering a scientific spirit in which the public learns to criticise and question.

The Shanghai Astronomy Museum has created the *Cosmos Newsroom*, for example. When there is a major research development or event in the field of astronomy, the *Newsroom* invites scientists to have face-to-face conversations with audiences, which will also be livestreamed online. The *Newsroom* also welcomes public discussions on controversial scientific topics.



Picture 2 – The *Cosmos Newsroom*
Photograph: Shanghai Astronomy Museum

The *What If Theater*, a streamlined double screen cinema, echoes the shape of the *Life* exhibition area and is a metaphor for the universe giving birth to life. It responds to the various hypotheses of the astronomical community about the universe. “What would happen to the universe if the fundamental constants that make it up were to change slightly?” In the theater, we see the universe become either bland and boring or completely collapsed, and amaze at how lucky we are to live in such a “just right” universe by chance.



Picture 3 – The *What If Theater*
 Photograph: Shanghai Astronomy Museum

II. Not only “scientific logic” but also “artistic aesthetics”

In the age of the Internet, information of all kinds is growing at a furious pace. It is no longer difficult for the public to access information. Therefore, the social responsibility of science museums is more than disseminating and popularising scientific knowledge that is readily available to the public online, it is also to stimulate public interest. They shall guide audiences to understand the scientific method and the relationship among nature, man and technology, with an emphasis on the integration of science and humanity. How to better express this integration? This requires science exhibitions to show not only the logic of science, but also the aesthetics of art.

We know that cognition is always contextualised. A sufficiently diverse and layered environment, “*an aesthetically potent environment*” advocated by Gordon Pask (Gage, 2006), provides a special scaffold for the public’s cognitive process (Yan, 2020). A science museum that aims to be “aesthetic” is often a better way to stimulate public interest in exploring science, isn’t it? What could be more strikingly beautiful than the birth of the universe? What could be more mysterious than the billions of years of biological evolution on Earth? What could be more exquisite than the delicate structures made of atoms in the nanoworld?

Compared to various online media, the unique and rich collections of museums form a dialogue between science and art, led by scientific logic and artistic aesthetics, to achieve a true combination of the two. Museums should make proper use of these resources and experiment with different expressions to immerse the public, constantly transforming the public’s conventional perception of science exhibitions and pushing museum-style cognitive approaches to the public, so as to cultivate a sense of cultural identity and passion for museums as a fashion of life.

For example, the *Home* exhibition hall of the Shanghai Astronomy Museum focuses on themes such as the Sun, the Earth, the Moon, the solar system and the Milky Way. Instead of displaying models of the three in the conventional way, the hall creates a whole and immersive space. Taking the starry sky as entry point, visitors will find themselves immersed under a wonderful starry sky as soon as they enter the hall, and witness trajectories of the celestial bodies forming rhythmic lines and partitions. Visitors step into

the sky to marvel at the immensity of the Earth, the Moon and the Sun, and get to know features and connections of the three celestial bodies most closely associated with us. Walking through the “planetary family” is like walking through the solar system, exploring the solar system and its beauty and wonder. Finally, visitors will be guided out of the solar system to the *Flying across the Galaxy* section, where they can view the magnificent Milky Way in a large-scale video and 4D motion theatre, and learn about its structure, composition and our place in it. This immersive presentation enhances the audiences’ sense of enjoyment, stimulates curiosity and promotes active and sustained learning.



Picture 4-5 – The *Home* exhibition hall
Photograph: Shanghai Astronomy Museum

Another example is the *Star Concert* created by the Shanghai Astronomy Museum and the Shanghai Grand Theater, which presents a musical feast combining science, art and culture under a vast starry sky. The starry sky here is not the natural one, but astronomical images displayed in one of the museum’s circular-screen cinema. With this breathtaking “floating planet”, immersive high-definition images, dazzling laser shows and musical performances of various styles create a realistic audio-visual effect, giving the audiences a strong visual impact and 360-degree sensory experience. The audiences will feel like they were in the middle of a musical feast under a vast starry sky, delving into the astronomical film and letting their imagination fly. Such an artistic atmosphere greatly enhances the enjoyment and pleasure of learning astronomical science.



Picture 6 – The *Star Concert*
Photograph: Shanghai Astronomy Museum

III. Science communication should not be “self-indulgent”, but “fun with the people”

In the age of big science, the division of labour in science is becoming increasingly detailed and specialised. Even scientists can feel at a loss when faced with interdisciplinary knowledge, let alone the public. In particular, descriptions of scientific principles tend to be much less moving than literature and far less shocking than hot political news, let alone as compelling as a World Cup football match. Thus, in the age of the Internet, the challenges of science communication are tremendous. How to make the language of science communication in museums as interesting and lively as possible? How to incorporate scientific information into a narrative framework that is recognisable to the public? How to make scientific knowledge a part of popular culture and easily accessible to the public?

“Scientists are too important to just work on science. Science is too important to be left to scientists” may point to a potential solution in science exhibition planning. Scientists play an extremely important role in the process of science communication, but their roles are undoubtedly diversifying. Open access has changed the game rules of scientific publishing (Brossard, 2013), and public media are even redefining the professional identity of scientists. Some young researchers are more willing to consider communicating with the public online, in addition to their academic careers (Ke, Ahn and Sugimoto, 2017).

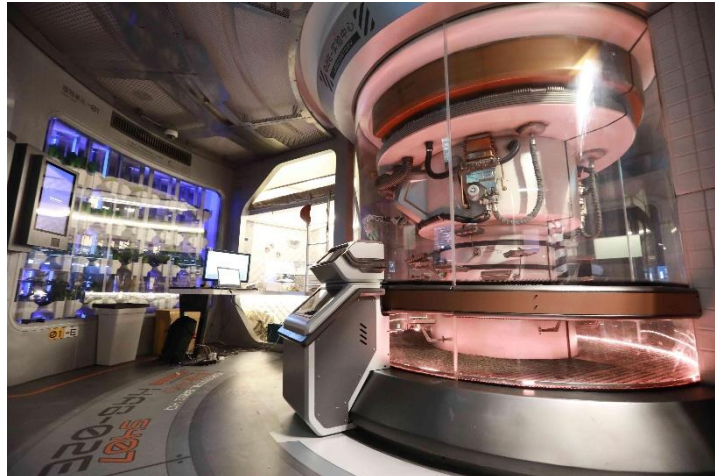
However, their participation alone is insufficient to make science exhibitions exciting and interesting. Science exhibitions need to spice up the science content to make it alive

Science exhibitions need to spice up the science content to make it alive and interesting.

and interesting. For curators, it is important to remove professional barriers, find the combination of science communicators and receivers, think from the position and perspective of information receivers, and adapt to the changing ways of receiving information in the Internet

environment with an open mind (Kelly, 2010). The planning of a popular science exhibition is like making a product: only when it enters the consumption process and is accepted and understood by the public can its value be reflected. Therefore, science communication should not just entertain itself, but should entertain the people, and gradually move away from the small circle of subculture and towards popular culture.

For example: The Shanghai Astronomy Museum has a special exhibition called *Journey to Mars*, which is a new experiment. A theme park format is incorporated into the display, condensing a journey to Mars into a space of less than 300 m² to tell the story of a rescue flight to a Martian base 50 years into the future. Inside the exhibition hall, the cockpit and large screen combined with the game engine show spacecraft rendezvous and docking, and the landing module shows the descent to Mars. Once inside the Mars base, a Mars miniature sandbox depicts the surface of Mars and describes how to survive and thrive on this planet. This inspires curiosity and enthusiasm for space and Mars exploration.



Picture 7 – *The Journey to Mars*
Photograph: Shanghai Astronomy Museum

Another example: The Shanghai Astronomy Museum has a 65cm diameter solar tower for solar observation and research. It is also the world's most advanced Educational Adaptive Optics Solar Telescope (EAST). The equipment is open to the public. Visitors can witness a ray of sunlight descending from the sky and transformed by an advanced adaptive optics (AO) system into a high-resolution image of the Sun in three wavelengths (visible, $H\alpha$ and Ca lines). Through this set-up, audiences can see how the AO system works. The mysterious scientific equipment becomes more approachable to the public to enhance science education on research methods.



Picture 8 – *Solar Tower*
Photograph: Shanghai Astronomy Museum

IV. Diluting the “density” of knowledge and increasing the “viscosity” between the public and science

The 21st century has seen the rapid development of various disciplines and integration, with the depth and breadth of scientific research extending far beyond past boundaries. New disciplines are emerging and barriers between disciplines are being broken down. The fast growth of productivity has led to radical changes in life and a major impact on

the earth and environment. Biodiversity conservation, ecological restoration and the harmonious development of man and nature have become emerging issues of our time. The traditional way of exhibit displays and illustrations can no longer interpret complex and abstract concepts. We need more diverse display vehicles to dilute the knowledge “density”. The aim of this dilution is not to reduce communication, but improve it for greater effectiveness, so as to enable audiences understand at least part of the scientific content.

In the age of the Internet, new media technology has the advantages of being interactive, interesting, low-cost, transcending spatial and temporal constraints, easy to disseminate

Scientific contents are often “dense” and complex. New technologies make it possible to display them in a “viscous” way, enabling communication between the museum and its audiences.

and replicate, and easy to update. On the one hand, it can communicate science across time and space constraints. On the other hand, it provides more diverse display methods for the interpretation of science. For example: Specimens are removed from their natural environment for display in a museum setting. Through augmented reality technology, exhibits are virtually “returned” to their original environment. With expert research and curatorial interpretation, science becomes vivid and

interesting, and the public is able to have a new visiting experience.

New media technologies also improve communication between the public and museum, increasing the “viscosity” between the public and science, and improving audiences’ trust and loyalty to museums. In a study of museum visitors, Russo, Watkins and Groundwater-Smith found that young visitors are more eager to experience exhibits through new lenses and to enhance, filter and share their experiences through social media (Russo, Watkins and Groundwater-Smith, 2009). Museums can also benefit from an inquisitive and creative audience (Budge, 2017). The Smithsonian Institution, for example, excels at incorporating secondary user-generated content into its *Learning Lab* programme and various digital exhibitions.

For example, the *Cosmos* exhibition at the Shanghai Astronomy Museum does not simply interpret the universe from the perspective of cosmic objects, but creatively presents the universe and its laws in five dimensions: *Spacetime*, *Gravity*, *Light*, *Element* and *Life*. In order to immerse the audiences in the journey of discovery and to enhance the sense of enjoyment and motivation, we have transformed the abstract physical laws into perceptible design elements, shaped the space with a space-time grid and incorporated them into the thematic decoration of the exhibition hall. In addition, through easy-to-understand interactive exhibits, we take the audience on an exploration of the evolution and laws of celestial bodies to learn about astronomy and a complete view of the universe.

Take the *Gravity* theme area of the *Cosmos* exhibition as an example, where the *Black Hole* exhibit is located, which visitors are keen to visit. The black hole is a very sophisticated scientific topic. Our display has been designed to dilute the “density” of knowledge and increase the “viscosity” between the public and science, so that visitors can have an intuitive experience of gravity and black holes. Here, under gravity, the whole exhibition area is surrounded by a twisted web of space-time, with twisted gravitational lines stretching from the floor, walls to the ceiling, converging to the end. We can see two black holes pulling on each other. Various interactive installations are set up in the exhibition area to represent fantastic cosmic phenomena that help visitors understand gravity as the fundamental driving force of the universe evolution and how it affects the laws of celestial motion and the evolution of life. For example, in a large black hole installation,

a constant stream of aerosol is ejected from the middle of the sphere, forming an air vortex that simulates the swallowing of surrounding matter by the black hole. The closer to the centre, the faster the airflow. The beam from the centre represents the jet, demonstrating the spectacular accretion phenomenon under the strong gravitational force of a black hole.



Picture 9 – Gravity Theme Area
Photograph: Shanghai Astronomy Museum

V. Knowledge marketing requires “social mindset” and “internet thinking”

In the 21st century, the core audiences for museums have gradually shifted to digital natives. They are more tech-savvy, seek intellectual challenges and expect higher quality personal experiences (Prensky, 2001). The understanding and awareness of knowledge and technology are key to the content setting and presentation of science venues, with the aim to attract audiences. From this perspective, popular science education clearly bears the feature of knowledge marketing. The current Internet environment is full of entertainment elements. Even a good exhibition needs careful packaging and promotion to broaden its public reach. Otherwise, the attractiveness of the exhibition is bound to be greatly reduced. Therefore, effective knowledge marketing determines the audience reach and popularity of science exhibitions. This requires museums to have a “social mindset”. In the planning, design, production and promotion of exhibitions, emphasis should be placed on collaboration with experts, social actors, mass media and other organisations to find the right combination of exhibition content, display highlights and visitor attractiveness. Emphasis should also be placed on interdisciplinary cooperation among science, technology, culture and creative industries to make science exhibitions lively, interesting and fashionable. Make good use of social media and start promoting various “selling points” at the beginning of the exhibition planning, so as to achieve the effect of “reaching the hearts and minds” of target visitors and enhance the popularity of the exhibition.

We should be fully aware that we live in an age of the Internet: *“User-centric is key. Without agreement there is no contract”*. Popular science exhibitions are no exception. This requires us to have “Internet thinking”, which focuses on the “user”, i.e. museum audience. Popular science exhibitions should, under the premise of ensuring their scientific nature, adopt the “user” thinking such as “experience first” and “promoting a sense of participation”.

For example, new media technologies can be used to promote crowdsourcing and public participation in the planning and promotion of exhibitions. At the same time, there should be a detail-oriented mindset. In addition to the exhibition itself, there should also be micro-innovations in terms of derivatives development, mobile applications, educational activities and so on. Science exhibitions that integrate internet thinking can help to attract and expand potential groups, while also fostering social demand for museums.

For example: The *Smart Museum Tour* WeChat mini-app developed by the Shanghai Astronomy Museum team is a smart guide and interactive software that includes a guide map, voice guide, route and punch card with the help of precise positioning, voice navigation and intelligent sensor.



Picture 10 – Visitors use the app to participate in interactive activities
Photograph: Shanghai Astronomy Museum

In the Internet era, science venues have various opportunities for development, but they also face huge challenges. Science museums should take the initiative to grasp the development of knowledge and technology, timely transform them into popular science products for marketing, use the concept of knowledge marketing to guide museum science communication, and emphasize on public participation. Museums should not only be halls of science but also forums for the public. Integrate science and culture, so that museums show not only the logic of science but also the aesthetic of art. Make the language of science more readily understandable, so that science communication is no longer self-indulgent, but fun with the people. Emphasize on the fun nature of science communication, dilute the “density” of knowledge and increase the “viscosity” between the public and science. Work on knowledge marketing with social mindset and internet thinking, so that audiences can enjoy the fun of knowledge!

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Enhancing enjoyment in museums with digital mediation

Silke Krohn

Museums have traditionally been viewed as repositories of knowledge, art and culture. They were often formal and intimidating spaces, focused on preserving and displaying collections, rather than engaging with visitors. However, in recent years, museums have transformed, becoming more interactive and focused on informal learning opportunities. As society has undergone significant social and technical developments, visitors' expectations of museums have changed. Museums are adapting to meet these changing expectations, with visitors now seeking a more immersive, participatory and enjoyable visit. Digital tools have played a crucial role in enhancing the visitor's time by providing a range of multimedia experiences that cater to different interests and needs. Visitors can now explore collections, cultures and histories from multiple perspectives using digital guides that incorporate audio, video and interactive features. Furthermore, digital tools can offer visitors access to perspectives that might have been previously overlooked or marginalized. For instance, museums can incorporate the voices of underrepresented groups, providing visitors with a more inclusive and diverse view of the collection.

However, museums must ensure that their use of digital technology considers the needs and preferences of all visitors. Not all visitors may be interested in or comfortable with using digital technology, and museums must ensure that their use of digital tools does not exclude or alienate these visitors. In addition, accessibility and equity issues must be considered to ensure that all visitors can fully participate in the museum experience, regardless of ability or access to technology. To create a successful visitor journey, museums must carefully consider the role of digital tools in relation to other media, including analogue. By thoughtfully integrating digital tools into the visitor journey, museums can create a more seamless and engaging experience for their visitors. However, museums must also be mindful of the need to keep their digital tools and interfaces updated and relevant to avoid frustration and disappointment among visitors.

To me, enjoyment in a museum means creating an immersive and engaging experience that not only enhances the visitor's understanding and appreciation of the exhibits but also leaves them feeling satisfied and eager to return. This can require incorporating innovative technologies and interactive elements that stimulate their curiosity and encourage them to explore further. To effectively use digital media to enhance the museum experience, it is important to understand the different motivations that drive visitors to museums. John Falk's research on motivation types offers a useful framework for this purpose. In the following chapter, we will explore the five motivation types proposed by John Falk and their impact on the museum experience when digital media is used. With this understanding, we can then examine various forms of digital mediation, such as personal devices,

personalization, gamification, augmented reality, multi-user experiences and mixed reality, and assess their potential to enrich the museum experience.



Picture 1 – VR installation in the Alte Nationalgalerie Berlin.

Photograph: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin / Ceren Topcu.

Source: museum4punkt0.de, license: CC BY 4.0.

Motivation types by John Falk and their impact on museum visitors' digital experience

As museums continue to explore new ways to enhance the visitor experience, digital media has become an essential tool for increasing engagement and enjoyment. However, simply adding digital components to exhibits is not enough to ensure success. To truly leverage the power of digital media, museums must also consider the different motivations that drive visitors to their institutions. This is where John Falk's research on motivation types can be particularly helpful. By understanding these motivation types and their impact on the visitor experience, museums can tailor their digital media strategies to better meet visitors' needs and preferences. John Falk, a researcher in museum studies, proposed five motivation types that affect visitors' museum experience: explorer, experience seeker, facilitator, professional/hobbyist and recharger. These motivation types can have a significant impact on the enjoyment and use of digital media in museums.

The first motivation type is the explorer. This visitor is typically driven by curiosity and a desire to learn new things. They enjoy discovering new information and exploring different areas of the museum. Digital media can be particularly useful for this motivation type, as it provides access to a vast array of information and resources that can satisfy their curiosity and allow them to delve deeper into topics of interest.

The experience seeker is the second motivation type. This visitor seeks out unique and engaging experiences that are both entertaining and informative. They are often looking for experiences that are immersive and interactive, and digital media can be a powerful tool to help create such experiences. Using digital media, museums can create engaging and interactive exhibits that are sure to captivate experience seekers.

Facilitators are the third motivation type. These visitors are interested in sharing their experiences with others, be they family, friends or online communities. They often use social media and digital platforms to share their experiences and engage with others. Museums can use digital media to encourage and facilitate this type of engagement,

providing visitors with the tools and resources they need to share their experiences and connect with others.

The fourth motivation type is the professional/hobbyist. These visitors have a particular interest or expertise in a specific subject area and are often seeking more in-depth information and resources related to that topic. Digital media can be particularly useful for this motivation type, as it provides access to a vast array of information and resources that can satisfy their curiosity and allow them to delve deeper into topics of interest.

Explorer, experience seeker, facilitator, professional/hobbyist and recharger: five motivation types to be taken into account.

The final motivation type is the recharger. These visitors are seeking a break from their daily routine and are looking for a peaceful and relaxing experience. These visitors may prefer to disconnect from technology altogether and simply enjoy the museum's peaceful ambiance without any digital distractions.

Thus, museums should consider offering a mix of digital and non-digital options to cater to the different preferences of their visitors. In conclusion, understanding the different motivation types proposed by John Falk can help museums design and implement digital media strategies that cater to the needs and interests of their visitors. By considering the different motivations that drive visitors to museums, the latter can create experiences that are more engaging, informative and enjoyable.

Optimizing the museum experience with personal devices and preferred channels

Improving the visitor's interaction with museum exhibits can be achieved through digital media, specifically personal devices like smartphones and tablets, in a "bring your own device" (BYOD) approach. Museum apps can be downloaded by visitors to provide audio tours, augmented reality experiences and interactive exhibit information, allowing them to engage more deeply with the exhibits. For example, visitors in an art museum can scan a painting with an app and receive instant information about the artist, time period and inspiration behind the artwork. This makes exhibit information more accessible to a wider audience. In addition to personal devices, utilizing visitors' preferred communication channels can enhance their engagement. Social media, email, and messaging apps can be used to engage with visitors before, during and after their visit. For instance, social media can be used to share sneak peeks of upcoming exhibits, behind-the-scenes photos or interactive content that visitors can engage with before their visit. During their visit, museums can encourage visitors to share their experiences on social media and use hashtags to create a sense of community and engagement.

After their visit, museums can use email or messaging apps to thank visitors for their visit, provide additional information and encourage them to share their feedback. By leveraging personal devices and preferred communication channels, museums can offer visitors a more personalized and interactive engagement with exhibits, leading to a more fulfilling experience. Moreover, this can help museums to reach a wider and more diverse audience. The SMK, National Gallery of Denmark's *Fall of the Titans* augmented reality app is a great example of how technology and social media can create an engaging and immersive experience for visitors. This app uses Instagram to bring the largest painting

of their collection by the artist Cornelis Cornelisz van Haarlem to life in 3D. It allows visitors to explore the artwork from different angles and perspectives, and see the figures in the painting move and interact with each other. By leveraging a social media platform that visitors are already familiar with, the museum seamlessly integrates technology into the visitor engagement and provides a more accessible and engaging way for visitors to interact with the artwork.

The power of personalization: using dialogue to enhance visitor enjoyment

Museums are no longer static spaces filled with objects that visitors simply observe. With the rapid pace of digital innovation, museums have started using technology to engage visitors in more interactive ways. One such technology that has transformed the museum

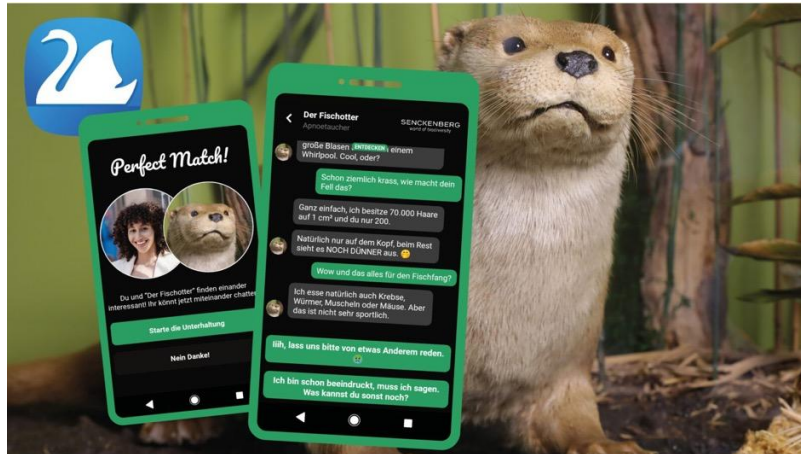
Digital innovation helps turning a museum visit into a truly personalized experience.

experience is digital apps, which allow museums to offer personalized experiences and enhance visitor enjoyment.

One of the digital apps, *Ping! Die Museumsapp*, uses dialogues to personalize visitor experiences. This app was developed by the Stiftung Humboldt Forum im Berliner Schloss (Berlin, Germany) as part of museum4punkt0 project, and was initially called *Mein Objekt*. The Badisches Landesmuseum in Karlsruhe (Germany) further developed it and renamed it *Ping! Die Museumsapp*. It has since been reused by several other museums, including the Senckenberg Museum für Naturkunde Görlitz (Germany) as *Mein Objekt – Senckenberg*.

The native app offers audiences an immersive and interactive experience by enabling them to engage with objects in a playful and interactive way. Visitors can select objects of interest and have conversations with them using a Tinder-style interface. Each object has its unique story to tell, ranging from humorous to melancholic, and even some that require assistance. Visitors' conversations with the objects are based on the user's decisions, allowing for a personalized journey of discovery. The app's use of chats is the key to its success. The branching dialogue structures allow for dynamic dialogues that can be tailored to the user's interests. These chats are created in two steps, using a special workshop method.

In the first step, personalities for the exhibits are developed, providing a different form of object approach than scientific facts. In the second step, dramaturgical tools are used to write the dialogues. This results in a wide variety of chat dialogues that lead to different target groups finding a suitable personal approach to their museum objects. These co-creation workshops with curators or citizens are an excellent way to develop these chats, resulting in an engaging experience for museum visitors of all ages and backgrounds.



Picture 2 – “It’s a match!”: the App *Mein Objekt – Senckenberg* from the Senckenberg Museum für Naturkunde Görlitz (Germany).
Photograph: Lisa Janke. Source: museum4punkt0.de, license: CC BY 4.0.

The app can be used before, during and after a museum visit, allowing visitors to plan a personalized tour, explore the collections, revisit encounters with objects, or plan future tours. Through the app’s use of chats and its playful and interactive interface, visitors can engage with objects in a unique and personalized way, making their visit to the museum more enjoyable and interacting.

Another digital app that has transformed the museum experience is ASK from the Brooklyn Museum, which was active until 2023. This app allowed visitors to connect with experts and receive tailored responses to their queries about objects, artists and the museum. Visitors could ask specific questions and obtain detailed answers, which helped them understand and appreciate the exhibits more fully. This created a stronger connection between the visitor and the museum, as the visitor felt engaged with the experts sharing their knowledge and expertise.

The ASK app provided a personal touch that further enhanced visitors’ sense of connection with the museum by including a brief introduction of the expert with a photo, assuring the visitor that they were not talking to an artificial intelligence. Additionally, the app offered a safe space for visitors to ask questions without fear of embarrassment or judgment, as their anonymity was preserved. This fostered a welcoming and inclusive environment that raised the overall enjoyment of the museum experience.

Both *Ping! Die Museumsapp* and ASK provide outstanding examples of how to offer visitors unique and engaging ways to interact with the museum’s objects and experts. By creating personalized experiences that cater to the interests and needs of individual visitors, these apps make the museum experience more enjoyable and meaningful. Their success underlines the importance of tailoring the museum experience to the individual visitor. In conclusion, apps with dialogue functions are revolutionizing the museum experience and creating new opportunities for visitor engagement.

Gamification in museums: playing the role of a historian for a memorable experience

Gamification continues to transform the way we interact with museums, creating a more immersive and memorable way to learn about history. By using games and interactive activities, museums can enhance visitor engagement, foster social interaction and provide personalized content, making the museum visit more enjoyable and rewarding.

Museums can use gamification to engage their audiences with history in an interactive and enjoyable way. One example of such a game is *Leipzig '89 – Revolution reloaded* from the Deutsches Historisches Museum (Berlin, Germany), developed in 2022 as part of museum4punkt0 project (2017-2023). It uses digital storytelling to create an immersive experience for users.

The app is designed as a serious game to explore the pivotal events of 9 October 1989 in Leipzig – a crucial step towards the German Reunification in 1990 – through the eyes of seven different real and fictive individuals. By allowing users to make decisions that affect the outcome of the demonstration, the app creates a sense of agency and

Gamification and storytelling offer entertaining and memorable ways to learn.

involvement that traditional museum exhibits may not provide. The use of gamification and storytelling offers an entertaining and memorable way to learn about complex events, and helps visitors to better understand and appreciate historical figures and events. This approach

is particularly effective for younger visitors, who may be more inclined to engage with interactive digital media.

The app also offers a personalized experience by allowing users to choose a character, take up his/her role and make decisions that affect the story's outcome. This personalization creates a sense of ownership and investment in the story, which encourages an interest in exploring history through play. By allowing users to engage with history in a way that is tailored to their interests and learning style, the app can help spark curiosity and a passion for history.

Another example of gamification in museums is the *Secret Seekers* game at the Victoria and Albert Museum (London). The game brings to life fascinating characters from the museum's history, such as the royal founder Prince Albert, his wife Queen Victoria, the first restaurant manager Madame Céleste, the chief engineer Captain Fowke, the famous designer William Morris, the Museum's first Director, Henry Cole, through original illustrations and animations, adding an extra layer of immersion to the experience. This helps players become more invested in the story and feel a sense of connection with the museum and its history. Gamification can greatly enhance the enjoyment of museum visits, especially for groups of friends and families. The game turns the museum visit into a treasure hunt adventure, encouraging players to explore and engage with the collection in a more playful and interactive way. The game features challenges that require players to interact with different parts of the museum and uncover little-known facts and features. By completing these challenges, players receive a sense of accomplishment and progress, which can be very rewarding. By turning traditional museum visits into interactive and engaging experiences, gamification can make learning about history more accessible and enjoyable for people of all ages.

In conclusion, gamification is revolutionizing the way we learn about history by making it more accessible and enjoyable for visitors. By using games and interactive activities,

museums can provide personalized content, enhance visitor engagement and foster social interaction, creating a more immersive and rewarding experience for museumgoers. The *Leipzig '89 – Revolution reloaded* and *Secret Seekers* examples show how gamification create a personalized and memorable experience for museum visitors.

Discovering museums in a new way with augmented reality

Augmented reality (AR) has become a widely used tool that continues to enhance how we experience museums. It provides an immersive and interactive way to explore art and culture. By integrating digital objects and information into the real world, AR creates an extra layer of interactivity and engagement that enhances learning, creativity, and thus enjoyment.

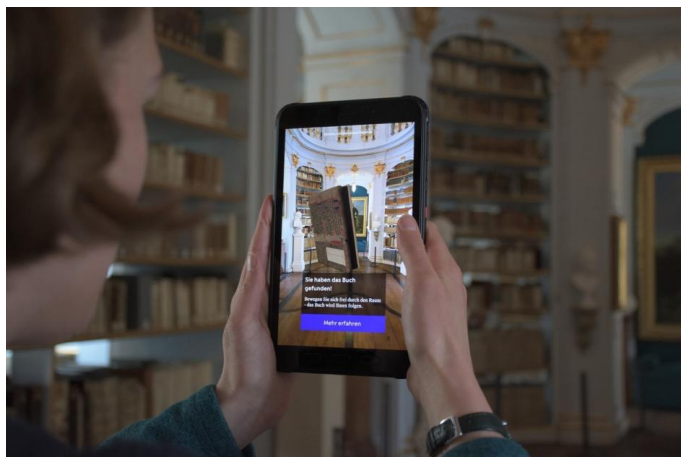
AR technology has several advantages in museums, including the ability to access digital content through visitors' smartphones or tablets while still seeing and interacting with the physical environment. This means visitors can explore 3D models of exhibits, access additional information about objects and participate in interactive games and activities that make the museum experience more fun and engaging while at the same time still keeping an eye at the "real object".

Personalized experiences can also be created using AR technology, tailoring the museum visit to visitors' interests and preferences. Museums can offer customized tours or experiences that allow visitors to connect with exhibits in a more personal and meaningful way. This is especially beneficial for visitors who may feel overwhelmed or intimidated by the size and scope of some museums. AR can also make the museum visit more accessible and inclusive for everyone. By providing audio and visual cues through AR, museums can make the experience more welcoming and enjoyable for visitors, including especially those with disabilities. Compared to virtual reality (VR), which requires special equipment and can replace the physical environment entirely, AR provides an enhanced museum experience without completely replacing the physical environment. AR is accessible through visitors' smartphones or tablets, making it more user-friendly and practical.

Augmented reality enables a tailoring of the visit according to the visitor's interests and preferences.

Many museums have already adopted AR technology to enhance the visitor experience. The *ArtLens* app from the Cleveland Museum of Art (USA) is an excellent example of how AR can enhance the museum visit. The app provides a range of features that makes it easier for visitors to navigate the museum and explore its collection. For example, the collection search feature allows users to search for specific artworks or explore themes in the museum's collection, making it easier for visitors to find the pieces they're most interested in.

One of the key features of the *ArtLens* app is its use of AR to provide audiences with an extra layer of information and interactivity. Visitors can use it to explore 3D models of selected artworks from different angles, giving them a more detailed and nuanced view of the pieces. The app also provides users with additional information about exhibits, including animations, audio-visual content and other multimedia features bringing the artworks to life. Using artificial intelligence to identify and provide information about artworks in the museum, it makes it easier for visitors to learn about the pieces that interest them.



Picture 3 – Augmented Reality app in use in the Klassik Stiftung Weimar (Germany).
 Photograph: Klassik Stiftung Weimar / Johanna Weichard
 Source: museum4punkt0.de, license: CC BY 4.0.

The *Max Ernst AR-App* from the Max Ernst Museum Brühl des LVR (Germany) is another excellent example of how AR can enhance the museum experience. This app is specifically designed to provide an immersive and interactive experience that combines learning and creativity. Visitors using this app can step into the shoes of Max Ernst and explore his artwork in a funny and engaging way. The app uses augmented reality to take visitors on an interactive journey through the Max Ernst Museum, where they can learn about how the artist constructed his sculptures using everyday objects, natural materials and mathematical shapes. It encourages visitors to engage with the artworks and become artists themselves by designing their own virtual figures and giving them a unique name and title.

One of the key features of the *Max Ernst AR-App* is the scavenger hunt, which challenges visitors to collect twelve hidden shapes and everyday objects from over 70 sculptures in the collection. This adds an element of playfulness to the museum experience and encourages visitors to engage more deeply with the artwork. Overall, both the *ArtLens* app and the *Max Ernst AR-App* are excellent examples of how AR can enhance the museum experience. They provide visitors with an interactive and immersive experience that enhances learning and creativity, making the museum visit more engaging and memorable.

Enjoying a visual experience together: multi-user experiences

The use of technology to create immersive environments in museums has become increasingly popular in recent years. This is exemplified by *The Story of the Forest* exhibit at the National Museum of Singapore (2016-2024), which showcases the potential of technology to create engaging and interactive exhibits. The exhibit transported visitors to a virtual world that featured animated animals and historical elements, allowing them to explore a unique and captivating environment. The installation was based on 69 drawings from the William Farquhar Collection of Natural History Drawings, which have been transformed into three-dimensional animations. This provided visitors with an opportunity to experience a fascinating glimpse into Singapore's colonial past, contrasting it with its modernity. Visitors could enjoy this visual experience together, lying or sitting on the floor to fully immerse themselves in the exhibit. While some visitors may prioritise absorbing

the content, others may focus on appreciating the aesthetic, as the exhibit reached a delicate balance between both. It blended historical themes with cutting-edge technology, providing a unique experience that was both entertaining and educational.

Multi-user installations like *The Story of the Forest* are becoming more common as museums strive to enhance the visitor experience with new technologies. The integration of immersive technology and historical elements creates a dynamic and engaging environment that is sure to capture visitors' attention. As museums continue to adopt new technologies, it is important to carefully plan and execute their implementation to ensure the content is engaging, relevant and effectively delivered through technology. Digital enhancements should complement and enhance the physical artifacts on display, rather than replace them. Overall, multi-user immersion experiences such as *The Story of the Forest* represent the potential of technology to create engaging and immersive exhibits in museums. As technology continues to evolve, it will be interesting to see how museums integrate these technologies to enhance the visitor experience further.

Technological innovations are developed to create immersive environments for a multi-user experience, fostering a sense of togetherness.

Mixed reality: the future of enjoyment in museums?

One notable example of mixed reality (MR) in action was *REVIVRE*, an augmented reality experience presented in the *Grande galerie de l'évolution* at the Paris Natural History Museum. This experience used Microsoft's HoloLens technology to enable a truly interactive and informative encounter with the animals on display. The HoloLens allowed visitors to observe the animals in 3D, providing a level of engagement and detail that cannot be achieved with traditional exhibits. With this technology, visitors could see the animals from any perspective, investigate their unique characteristics and actions, and learn about their habitats and ecosystems in a way that traditional exhibits could not provide. This created a more immersive and interactive experience that raised visitor engagement and enjoyment.

In addition, *REVIVRE* was designed to be a user-friendly encounter that anyone could enjoy, regardless of age or background. Visitors could simply put on the AR headset and begin exploring the animal species with the assistance of a virtual tour guide. Furthermore, *REVIVRE* had an educational component that encouraged visitors to contemplate the impact of human activities on animal species and their habitats. The experience raised awareness about the causes of extinction and encouraged audiences to reflect on their own role in safeguarding endangered animals and their ecosystems. This educational side of the experience enhanced enjoyment by providing visitors with a deeper understanding of the importance of environmental conservation. However, the question arises as to whether visitors are primarily attracted to the experience of using MR or whether it is the content being conveyed that truly captivates them.

Mixed reality evolves rapidly and has proved efficient to enhance visitor engagement and enjoyment.

While MR technology continues to evolve rapidly, it has already proven highly effective in enhancing visitor engagement and enjoyment in museums. By combining elements of the real world with digital content, MR offers a unique and interactive experience that cannot be replicated with traditional exhibits or even virtual reality. As MR- technology continues to advance, we can anticipate seeing more museums adopting this technology to create memorable and engaging experiences for visitors. The interesting part will be which kind of concepts they develop to integrate the museum themes and objects into the MR-experience.

Ongoing: the challenge of balancing tradition and innovation in the museum experience

In conclusion, digital mediation can greatly enhance the museum visit and increase visitor enjoyment. With the use of personal devices, personalization, gamification, augmented reality, multi-user interactions and mixed reality, museums can provide a more interactive, immersive, and personalized experience. John Falk's research on motivation types offers a useful framework for understanding the different motivations that drive visitors to museums and tailoring digital media strategies to meet their needs. However, as museums strive to incorporate new technologies, they must also maintain an emphasis on the exhibits themselves. The focus should always be on the objects on display, and technology should be used to enhance their presentation rather than putting them in the shadow or distracting the visitors' attention away from the exhibits.

Finding the right balance between traditional museum exhibits and new technological tools remains an ongoing challenge for museums. However, by dealing with this challenge with careful consideration and a thoughtful approach, they can create a more meaningful, engaging, and memorable visit for all. As museums continue to adapt to the changing needs of audiences, we can expect to see more innovative and sensible uses of digital mediation in the future, for the great enjoyment of their visitors.

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Le musée bienfaisant

Wellbeing and healing power

Cuando el museo hace bien

Bringing museums close to the elderly

Lila Heinola

How is it possible to dance in an art museum, to bring a briefcase full of nature and culture to one's bedside or to peek into a museum exhibition in the trunk of a car parked in front of a grocery store? In my article I discuss how museum experiences are had both inside and outside of museums, and how they affect the health and well-being of the elderly in multiple ways. They activate the senses and awaken emotions as well as the imagination. Things are done together and shared, new and old skills are put to use.

If you know how to breathe, you know how to dance

When a large taxi arrived in the yard and a group of a dozen seniors climbed out, we awaited anxiously with museum employees and a dance artist what the next hour would bring. Employees of the service centre came along to assist the group, some of whom used a walker or a wheelchair, and some of whom suffered from memory loss disease. The Sara Hildén Art Museum in Tampere (Finland), which focuses on modern contemporary art, was presenting a retrospective exhibition of artist Kimmo Kaivanto's works. We had planned a special exhibition experience for this group where they took in the artworks in multiple ways: by listening, looking, talking and dancing. We conducted these events using the method of community dancing with five different service centres.

Dance artist and choreographer Marjo Hämäläinen alleviated the remaining shreds of tension right at the beginning. We were all standing in a large circle holding hands with each other. Marjo told us about community dancing and consoled the anxious by saying that if you know how to breathe, you know how to dance. When a person is given permission to be himself/herself, it makes even an elderly person without any dancing ability or one hunched over in his/her chair feel accepted and safe. We had consciously opted for a communication approach where we did not reveal the exact content of the tour before the participants arrived at the museum. We relied on the participants to trust the instruction and play along, as long as the situation had been made safe and with a sense of togetherness even before leaving for the museum.

During the visit, we moved from one room to the next at a relaxed pace. Some patrons sat on the seat of their walkers or the light chairs that we carried with us from room to room. We discussed the artist and how his colour palette and visual expression had changed in certain aspects and remained the same in others over the years. With some of the works we listened to music. Marjo instructed the group to find the movement in their body, foot, hand, fingers, stomach or head that the music and the artwork brought

to mind. People moved and danced – softly, angularly, slowly, quickly! The dance brought the participants together. They focused on the movement and enjoyed the music, the space, the colours and the relaxed atmosphere. They smiled and encouraged each other with words and facial expressions. No movement was wrong, and everyone expressed themselves freely.



Picture 1 – Experiencing an art museum exhibition with the help of music and motion awakens the senses and enables wordless self-expression.
Photograph: Lila Heinola

After the dance-filled tour, the group sat in the museum's cafe. The discussion bristled with amazement. "What did we just do? I have never experienced something like this at an art museum." The experience reinforced the ideas that an art exhibition could be fun and that art could be viewed and interpreted for oneself, and one could even invent a movement to go with it. The opportunity to express oneself through community dancing was an empowering experience.

The shared taxi ride from a familiar environment to an art museum on the other side of town, assistants who provided a sense of safety and the special reception at the museum were all part of this successful museum experience. It required cooperation between the museum and the service centre, planning and communication, as well as skills and knowledge in working with elderly people and those afflicted with memory loss disease. The effects of the experience lingered for a long time afterwards. In the following weeks several service centres put photos taken at the events on display and residents used them to reminisce on the shared experience and plan the next one.

Museum packages for lending out

As visits to nursing homes were banned in the spring of 2020 because of the Covid-19 pandemic, artists, musicians and actors were also kept from visiting. Especially during the 2010s, various cultural programmes had gotten their feet in the door of nursing homes, and these programmes had become an important part of the everyday lives of the elderly. The staff's ingenuity came in handy in ensuring that days and weeks did not become repetitive over the course of months. Fortunately, museum services for the elderly already included a service suited for the situation: museum packages that could be lent out.

We at the City of Tampere have been producing these museum packages for several years now. Our motto has been that if elderly persons cannot go to the museum, the museum will come to them – in a package form. We consider it important that the museum packages bring variety and increase interaction. We receive valuable feedback from nursing staff and the elderly. A doll from a package containing childhood outfits and toys was given to an old man to hold in his lap. He petted and talked to it for a long time. Emotions were awakened and he told others about how happy he and his wife had been when they had finally been given an adopted child after a long period of childlessness. Even though sharing a memory to others is a major endeavour, it was possible in a safe community. Shared memories reinforce the feeling of togetherness.

We have compiled several themed packages from the handling collections and photo archives of museums in Tampere. The elderly yearn to see, hear and discuss the past and the modern day that the museum materials open up to them. They are interested in local history, changes to professions, old coffee cups and textiles, public art and a woman's purse and its content in the 1960s. The materials are packaged in handy boxes and suitcases and come with museum pedagogical materials, tips and instructions. We want the use of the packages to be effortless and to bolster nursing staff's courage to spend time together with the seniors.



Picture 2 – A suitcase full of beautiful bedlinen.
Handmade lace works and beautiful embroidery amaze people of all ages.
Photograph: Laura Happonen

To test our packages, we annually hold educational curator's museum moments at several day centres around the city. Museum materials are a great tool for reminiscing and discussion. A single item, photo, sound, smell or surface can give rise to an experience.

When seeing an old photo or item, even a non-communicative person with memory loss disease can suddenly express in words and motions that they recognise it.

We have developed a lending service with the idea of giving the packages on loan for an agreed period of time free of charge. The materials have been marketed to nursing homes at events, via email and on social media. Over the years, the word has spread across the city and we have made the staff of many nursing homes our regular customers. When they return one package, they pick up the next one.

We can proudly say that, through museum pedagogy, we have also advanced the cultural methods employed by professionals, trainees and students of health care and social services. We have organised training sessions for them on the use of various methods of artistic expression and recollection and encouraged them to develop these further in their work. This has made an impact on their occupational well-being and broadened their view of the opportunities provided by their work.

This service already existed before, and its significance only grew during the pandemic. We have received new customers and rejoiced in the activation of nursing homes. We have seen on social media how our packages have been put to use. The ingenuity and enthusiasm pleasantly surprised us. An exhibition had been assembled in a glass cabinet in the lobby of a nursing home that contained not only items from the museum package, but also old items and recollections from tenants and staff. Everything about it brimmed with tremendous joy and doing things together, with a sense of community and meaningful interaction.



Picture 3 – An elder lady focuses on the details of a sculpture by working on a jigsaw puzzle.
Photograph: Susanna Lyly

The *Sound Museum* is a briefcase full of archived sound and photos

The elderly and people with memory loss disease who live in nursing homes or participate in open group activities at service centres like to reminisce on old events along their life path together with others. Reminiscing refreshes memory and the mind. It helps reflect on the kind of paths each person has taken to reach the current situation. Memories shared together reinforce self-esteem and increase the feelings of safety and togetherness.

In Tampere, we have developed special *Sound Museums* for lending out that contain digital sounds and photos from our archives. We have prepared three separate *Sound*

Museums for the elderly. The materials are packaged in briefcases, and they contain sounds of animals, nature and human activities, music, the voices of well-known Finnish radio hosts and actors as well as sounds of mechanical house appliances and tools. Some sounds are from the past, meaning that they are now rarely or never heard in everyday life.

The original idea for the *Sound Museum* dates back to 2011 when the Media Museum Rupriikki and media artist Matti Niinimäki designed a digital sound museum in the shape of a table – the *Sound Table*. The wooden *Sound Table* with its miniature sculptures still works today. It inspires the tenants of a large nursing home to reminisce on the sounds of work and leisure in the countryside and in the city. In the next design phase, we focused on content variation and making the museum a handy size so that the *Sound Museum* could be lent out to nursing homes, clubs and groups.



Picture 4 – The natural material of the *Sound Museums* is pleasant to the touch.
Photograph: Laura Hoppo

The *Sound Museum*, carried in a briefcase, contains a beautiful wooden audio unit with a computer and speakers. It also includes 30 “records” made of plywood with a hidden RFID tag that produces digital sound. Each *Sound Museum* also contains written historical material and tips and instructions. Clear texts and photos support and encourage nursing staff to use the material together with the tenants. One *Sound Museum* even contains instructions for chair exercises to be done in step with the sounds, meaning the *Museum* can also be a tool of physical therapy.

Staff has thanked us especially for the ease of use and meticulous finishing of our museum packages. They have not had to spend any time on the instructions of a technical device; all they needed to do was to plug it in and adjust the volume. The written material provided historical information to go with the sounds. In addition to the content that gave rise to a lot of discussion, the elderly were also interested in the technical solutions. How on earth can a plywood record play sound? When they hear it is all based on information technology, they are proud and happy about the method developed for them.

Experience of nature at home

Even though it might not be possible for an elderly person to physically go into nature that often, it is important that they get to reminisce about their experiences in nature with others and even have new ones. Finns often have a close relationship with nature, and radio and TV programmes relating to nature are popular. In cooperation with the Natural History Museum of Tampere and the media artist behind the *Sound Museum*, we compiled the *Moment in Nature* (*Luontotuokio*) material from archived digital sounds and photographs that allow the elderly to have an interactive nature experience indoors. This material is also a museum package that can be borrowed and elderly people can use it in their home, service centre, nursing home or club.

In the design phase we conducted our background work diligently. We read articles and studies about the effects of nature on a person's mood and relaxation. With the help of nursing staff, we interviewed elderly people about their experiences and preferences regarding nature. The idea of enjoying nature via different senses became highlighted in the answers. Exercising, berry and mushroom picking and observing the flora and fauna of nature were also brought up repeatedly. The most preferred descriptors of nature were the colours of the landscape, the sounds of animals and birds, the scents of trees and plants and the sparkle and lap of waterways. The elderly yearned for a peaceful forest, a shoreline view and the song of birds. It is worth noting that people hoped to be able to see scenery that changes with the four seasons from their own windows even when they get older and have to move closer to healthcare and well-being services and spend a lot of their time at home.

The materials we chose were wood and plywood that the elderly had already taken a special liking to with the earlier *Sound Museums*. The *Moment in Nature* material is carried in a briefcase and contains equipment packaged in a wooden case and small “records” made of plywood. The shape of the case resembles a computer. On the inside of the lid there is a screen that is like a window into nature.



Picture 5 – The *Moment in Nature* material consists of 25 digital sounds and photos of birds, waterways, forests and meadows. The Nature Cards (47 pcs) contain photos of plants, mushrooms, animals, trees and the sky.
Photograph: Saana Säilynoja

When an elderly person places a record on the base, the speakers play clear sound and a beautiful photo of nature appears on the screen. They can then listen to birds singing

and to the sounds of water, forest and meadow. They can reminisce about their favourite places in the shade of trees or in the open landscape. In their memories, they row a boat or swim in the lake, and observe animals and natural phenomena. Perhaps the nursing staff has brought them a plant or berries from nature that they can touch, smell or taste.



Picture 6 – Listening to the *Moment in Nature* material can bring back memories of one's own domestic animals. Väinö Järvenpää, born in 1924, brought out a wooden horse that he had carved himself (below right of the picture). It was modelled after his own horse that had died in the war.

Photograph: Laura Happonen

In addition to digital materials and wooden items, the briefcase also contains Nature Cards made of cardboard. When looking at these round cards, the elderly person kind of peers into the forest with a telescope and sees colourful berries and flowers, mushrooms, trees and animals. On the backside of the cards there are bits of folklore and poems about nature. The Nature Cards also contain a clever pedagogical aspect: a dozen exercises that the elderly can complete with the help of the sounds and photos, either by themselves or together with others. The exercises may give rise to new exhilarating experiences that stem from previous experiences and observing the natural elements of the cards.

A miniature exhibition in the trunk of a car

Let's bring a museum exhibition to the yards of the townsfolk and invite tenants to join and reminisce together! We wished to enable museum experiences for those elderly people who cannot move far from their home for one reason or another. We designed two small museum exhibits from the museum's handling collection and photo archive around the themes of leisure and work. Each of the exhibitions could be easily assembled in the trunk of a car. This is why we call the exhibition the *Car Trunk Museum*.

Over the years and through various iterations, the concept has become clearly defined. Each year we agree on a tour schedule with nursing homes, service centres, day centres and clubs in Tampere. The tour stops at yards, closed courtyards and parking areas all over the city. We promote and advertise the tour together. These exhibitions reach especially the elderly, but since we are outdoors in a public space, e.g., the parking area of a grocery store, we have also been visited by passers-by of different ages and daycare groups, for example.

Even before the *Car Trunk Museum* arrives, the staff of the nursing home has prepared for the event and included it in their daily schedule. The tenants are escorted out safely to see the exhibition and they often sit in a circle on chairs or wheelchairs next to the exhibition. The presenter of the *Car Trunk Museum* serves as the visitors' guide to the contents of the exhibition. The items can be picked up and viewed from up close.



Picture 7 – The staff is just as excited about the visiting *Car Trunk Museum* as everyone else. Educational curator Lila Heinola (centre) shows an old cigarette box and talks about the health impacts of smoking.

Picture 8 – The *Car Trunk Museum* plays old tunes on an old gramophone from 1939.

Photographs: Lila Heinola

The focus of the *Car Trunk Museum* is on meeting and interacting with the visitors. The stories brought to mind by the items and photos that the visitors share with each other take centre stage. If the visitors' memory loss disease is well advanced or they find speaking difficult, the memories roused by the exhibits and being together with others may be a great experience for them. We have witnessed surprising situations at the exhibition where an item brings a word or memory to the mind of a person suffering from memory loss disease that they have not spoken about to their loved ones for a long time.

The setting of the exhibition is unique. We are outdoors in the weather of the day. We hear and feel the wind, sense the presence of other people, sunlight or the coming rain, and the surrounding buildings and traffic. The event is a unique moment, a deviation from the everyday schedule and environment. We have also experienced how visitors participate in the content and flow of the event of their own initiative and bring with them an item from their home to show and tell others.

The *Car Trunk Museum* is very informal. When a random passer-by sees it, they might at first mistake it for a car trunk flea market. This is why the presenter of the *Car Trunk Museum* stays alert and calls and entices people to see the free-of-charge museum exhibition. This piques the passer-by's interest and they focus on the exhibition for ten minutes and talk about their memories with other strangers before going on their way. What happened? They had a surprising experience, a museum intervention in the midst of everyday life.

Video phone connects to the living room

Visitor restrictions brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic resulted in a crash-like reduction in the number of public cultural events and the elderly withdrew into their homes. In 2018, the City of Tampere had introduced video calls in its home care services so that nursing staff could call the customers directly in matters related to their care. Now they have also wanted to use this technology to provide a cultural offering. The pandemic significantly increased programme production and the number of remote customers.

We design and produce museum moments that are brought directly into the homes of the elderly via video calls. Our team contains experts in nursing, technology and culture. With the video calls we can offer people a safe way to interact with others. The participants are able to discuss and share thoughts with each other. They have signed up for the museum moment in advance, and as the event begins, a shared video call is made to the tablet computers of all the participants. We limit the number of participants to ten or so persons to facilitate interaction as much as possible.



Picture 9 – Video call with items from the handling collections of museums in Tampere.
Photograph: Lila Heinola

We have produced museum moments lasting some 30-45 minutes utilising museum exhibits and items from handling collections. The themes of our museum moments have been the 100-year-old Finnish common school, or how each boy and girl received a basic education, old tools and customs, preparing for a night out (curling of hair, putting on make-up, choosing clothes, refreshments, etc.), reminiscing about experiences in nature and the sharing of Christmas food traditions.

An educational curator has written a script for the programme, but the participants' comments and memories steer the event flexibly into new directions. Therefore, the live broadcast requires that the presenters have the ability to read the room and facilitate discussion. The challenges have been technical, e.g., there might be distracting background noise in someone's home, the quality of the internet connection might not be good enough and some people might be unable to see or hear the call. Fortunately, the software we use has been constantly developed and improved over the years. We have also paid attention to image and sound quality.

It is important to reach a level of interaction where the participants feel that they are an important part of a successful museum moment and that their participation is also

meaningful to the other participants. Even if people are not able to leave their homes and go to a museum, they can still participate in current exhibitions and museum moments remotely with other people in the same situation. The experience of participation and interaction with other humans is important for people of all ages, and with the museum moments we strive to specifically reduce the feelings of loneliness and detachment in the elderly.

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A case study: The Atelier New Gallery Graz

Monika Holzer-Kernbichler

In the new definition of museums that ICOM defined in Prague this year, “enjoyment” plays a key role. Within that new definition, it is probably even the most difficult word to translate into other languages, well at least I observed discussions for the languages German and French.

In my paper I focus on health and wellbeing, which is very directly related to enjoyment, pleasure but also entertainment. For me, enjoyment at the museum means forgetting time and diving into a very personal flow – alone or together with others. Enjoyment at the museum allows me to be quiet and observe what is there to be discovered, to immerse myself in the art that is shown. Art in museums means a lot to me, it even opens multiple and diverse forms of conversations in nonverbal ways.

If art is an expression of sensations, its reception is like an intuitive and emotional understanding. If something touches me on that level, I would feel the need to get behind and learn more about it. For some people creative and artistic expression is a way to recover from mental illness and a possibility to heal.

The “Living Museum” concept

In this essay I devote myself to “The Atelier”, a project of the art education department in the New Gallery in Graz (Austria). It was developed in collaboration with art therapists of the psychiatric hospital aiming health and wellbeing for people in special situations.

Inspired by “The Living Museum”, we started a discussion about the collaboration of art therapy and art education in 2018. The art therapists of the hospital already noticed people’s needs of creative engagement in their recovery process. But once they were discharged from the hospital, the possibility to be artistically active was gone, even though it was beneficial to their health. In Graz, a plan to realise a “Living Museum” was already developed and there (even) were (political) discussions about specific locations, but it still seemed too far away to be realized. At this point, it was up to us to find a quicker and more practical solution. But what exactly is a “Living Museum”?

In comparison to traditional museums with a collection, the “Living Museum” provides a community space for producing creative expressions of life. The first one was founded by Dr Janos Marton, a psychiatrist and artist from Hungary, and Bolek Grezynski, a polish artist living in New York. They got inspired by the European Art Brut scene, for example the House of Gugging in Austria near Vienna. They established the first living museum in New York about 40 years ago. Since then, many living museums were founded all

over the world. The idea is simple: the Living Museum provides space, time and materials for mentally ill people to improve their quality of life or even heal themselves through artistic activity. In the provided rooms – so the idea – people can not only find community and support, but also new ways of artistic expression.

In this safe space, people can change their identity “*from a crazy person to a crazy artist*”, as Alexandra Pettenberg says. She is a curator based in New York who also worked for a Living Museum in Switzerland. As an Austrian, she was the person who could have also implement these ideas in Graz. I met her once at the psychiatric clinic in Graz, where she presented her idea of a living museum in connection with the clinic in Graz. It was a very inspiring meeting. We learnt about their studio, that is used for art therapy in the clinic, and got little insights about the methods of art therapists. In exchange we invited them to the museum to show our studio and the methods we usually work with. Our directors gave us the green light to develop a pilot-project to experience collaboration.

When the concept becomes a real project

We agreed that we should provide space and material like the Living Museum does. But while in the Living Museum people can come whenever and for as long as they want, we are bound to certain opening hours in the museum. The advantage of our museum, however, is that we provide actual exhibitions at any time and choose the artworks to talk about. This situation was new for the art therapists, but for us, it is part of our everyday work. The collaboration turned out to be very fruitful and enriching for all of us. The art educators could see how art therapists prepare settings and talk to people. The art therapist learnt about the advantage of integrating artworks in discussions, in order to transform such situations into inspiring moments.

The participants are always free to choose if they would like to work strictly on their personal plan or if they feel like interacting with other people, artworks or exhibitions. One afternoon per week is saved for a registered and fixed group of participants, maximum ten people. As it is necessary to keep the setting stable, new registrations take place once a semester. In the beginning we did not spread the project at all, we started as a very intimate group in February 2020. Very gently, we connected with each other. But as you know, in March 2020 the first lockdown interrupted everything. We overcame the difficult period of lockdowns and Covid-related restrictions by keeping in touch regularly and sending out work inspiration as a so called “studio to go”. As a consequence, the team of art education invented a series of great ideas for the Atelier in times of social distance.

How could one imagine the Atelier?

In the studio, people are connected to their own energy. They appreciate the space without thoughts of jealousy and envy. As some feedback confirmed, it is important to set a focus on the possibility to simply be. Stress is reduced and the environment is calm. We focus on friendliness, respect and freedom. We are not interested in therapy itself, but independent work using the possibilities of art. We offer the materials, sometimes provide support in techniques, but in general we are just framing an open and mindful setting. In that way,

some people with mental health problems can express themselves in fantastic visual ways. Wonderful works of art are created. As we know from art history, mental illness and modern art could really overlap.

The primary goal for people is to express themselves and to spend time meaningfully, not only to produce art, even though sometimes that results in something more special. That was also the reason to give our participants the chance to be part of a very small exhibition. In 2022 the first exhibition took place in a small public space at the New Gallery.

It was a big step for the participants to leave the safe space and make their months of work visible for the public. Together, we presented their works, produced a small booklet and invited a limited number of people, thus respecting the very strict Covid-19 rules. It was a very positive experience for all of us. Even though we didn't do any advertising in the beginning of our project in order to ensure the protected space, this show of work has set a new course for the future. We are planning a next show in 2023.

Why are we doing this?

As team of art education, we always want to bring people and art together. We want to let them know that engaging with art can always have a personal benefit. In 2017, the case study *Creative Health. The Arts for Health and Wellbeing* was published. This study has three key-messages that are worth keeping in mind in the context of our project:

- The arts can help keep us well, aid our recovery and support longer lives better lived.
- The arts can help meet major challenges facing health and social care: ageing, long-term conditions, loneliness and mental health.
- The arts can help save money in the health service and social care.

Though no "Living Museum" has been implemented in Graz yet, our project "The Atelier" is still ongoing. Art on a medical certification – as mentioned in the above-mentioned study – still seems to be utopian, although the study confirmed the benefit of visiting an art museum. I think that one must be very careful in choosing art to reach positive benefits. Like the wrong pill, art could also trigger fear, could provoke panic or other emotions. Thus, when we are talking about the healing effect of art, we must be very careful in prescribing it as medication.

Nevertheless, being completely in the moment, working on a personal project over a longer period of time and being able to share the experience in a group means a special pleasure for our participants. A pleasure that brings about well-being, enjoyment and perhaps even a bit more health.

The goal of our special project in this collaboration is to support mental health, to face mental illness and, ultimately, to avoid further clinical stays. By working together on ideas and possibilities of expression, by thinking about and discussing art, selected works and exhibitions, something new could be created. That gives space to the unexpected, both in terms of formal expression and in mental development.

In my opinion, our project is more than a cooperation between two institutions. It follows the logic of collaboration, requiring a very trusting relationship between the interacting parties. While cooperating partners mostly split the tasks, in a collaboration there is no focus on these fixed roles. In our understanding of free working, the collaboration leads in a hierarchy-free space that primarily benefits the participants.

Acknowledgement: the project has been developed in cooperation with the art therapy department of LKH 2, location South.

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Quand le plaisir de visite
n'est pas le propos

When enjoyment is out of place

Cuando el placer de la
visita es inapropiado

Maybe there is joy in historical enlightenment and demystification? The Wewelsburg memorial exhibition *Ideology and terror of the SS*

Markus Moors

The Kreismuseum Wewelsburg is the historical museum of the district of Paderborn situated in the southeastern part of the German federal state North Rhine-Westphalia. The museum consists of two departments, one of them being the Historical Museum of the former Prince-Bishopric of Paderborn. It is dedicated to the regional history from the Stone Ages until the very beginning of the 19th century, when the secularisation of the clerically reigned principality Paderborn occurred in 1802 during the twilight of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation. This museum department derives from a local heritage museum that was opened in 1925 within a mighty triangular castle called Wewelsburg. The castle was built between 1603 and 1609 as a secondary residence for the Prince-Bishop of Paderborn. During the 19th century and until 1925, it was owned by the Prussian State, followed by the then district of Büren that established the museum.

A heavy historical burden

The *raison-d'être* of the second museum department is to be found in the years of the National Socialist dictatorship in Germany between 1933 and 1945. In the beginning of 1933, the chief of the National Socialist paramilitary squadron “*Schutzstaffel*” (SS), Heinrich Himmler, ordered delegates to search for a castle-like building for his self-appointed “elite”-organisation SS. They had to seek in Westphalia near to the monument for “Herman the German” – i.e. Arminius, leader of the victorious Germanic troops in the battle of the Teutoburg forest against Roman Legions in 9 AD – and the rock formation called “Externsteine” which Himmler considered as an ancient Germanic sanctuary. Initially he was looking for a place to set up an ideological school for young SS-officers suitable to reinforce the aspired self-image of a new racist and soldierly “knights order”.

When Himmler himself was led to Wewelsburg for the first time in November 1933, his personal plans had already changed. He then wanted to create an exclusive, hidden venue for the highest officers of the SS and their selected guests. When Himmler became chief of the German police in 1936, this aim became by far the primary one. The SS took over Wewelsburg castle some 50 kilometres southwest from the above-mentioned monument and rocks in September 1934.

During the following four years, the construction work was mainly done by forces of the German Labour Service. These workers were removed in 1938. In order to replace them, the SS carried the first concentration camp inmates as forced labourers from Sachsenhausen near Berlin to Wewelsburg in May 1939. A year later, a fortified camp

was built on the outskirts of Wewelsburg village in a local sub-district called Niederhagen, some 400 metres away from the castle. 3 900 men were imprisoned in this camp until 1945. 1 229 inmates and at least 71 other persons were brought to death by the SS guards of camp Niederhagen. Between September 1941 and spring 1943, it was administratively a main camp – like Dachau, Buchenwald, Neuengamme or other much bigger camps.

None of Himmler's gigantic architectural plans for Wewelsburg was implemented before he gave order to blow up the castle. On 31 March 1945, only two days before US troops reached the village and liberated the last 42 prisoners in Niederhagen, this order could only partially be executed. Himmler's encompassing secrecy regarding his personal favourite project Wewelsburg created the breeding ground for many more or less affirmative myths and legends that arose after the end of this mass murderer and the most disgraceful regime he stood for.

During the Nazi period the collections of the local museum were relocated to the district capital Büren. They returned to the reconstructed castle when the latter reopened as a museum (and a youth hostel) in 1950. Since then, it has been modernised and expanded several times. In March 1982, after years of controversial discussions, the district of Paderborn opened the first permanent documentary exhibition about the history of the SS-project in Wewelsburg and particularly for the commemoration of its victims within the former guardhouse of the SS at the forecourt of the castle. Its title was *Wewelsburg 1933-1945. Cult and Terror site of the SS*. This display was focussed on showing copies of contemporary historical photos and documents to undeniably demonstrate what had happened in this small Westphalian village in the very midst of Germany. Very few three-dimensional historical objects were presented in this exhibition.

After the turn of the century, the museum staff began to work on a concept for a completely new developed exhibition. Obviously, Himmler wanted to turn the castle and the village Wewelsburg as a whole into a place of ideological and mental self-assuring for the supreme leaders of the SS. Keeping that in mind, the new display was designed as a descriptive and analytical integration of what had happened locally in Wewelsburg into the frame of the increasingly violent history of the SS in general. The focus of the presentation shifted from copied papers and pictures to original remains of the victims

Focus of the presentation: original remains of the victims and of the perpetrators. A courageous choice.

as well as of the perpetrators and their organisations during and after the "Third Reich". This current exhibition called *Wewelsburg 1933-1945. Ideology and terror of the SS* opened in April 2010. Thus, the Kreismuseum Wewelsburg was one of the very first museums or memorials in Germany and beyond which dared to put

ideologically affirmative objects, originally made or collected to bolster and enjoy the commanders of the most murderous terrorist organisation of the Nazi regime, into the centre of a museum presentation.



Picture 1 – Wewelsburg Castle (left) and the former guardhouse of the SS (top right)
Photograph: Kreismuseum Wewelsburg, Photo Archives.

The enjoyable part of the Kreismuseum Wewelsburg

It is evident that the two different departments of the Kreismuseum Wewelsburg demand different approaches to what could be meant by “enjoyment”. The regional history museum provides many programs even for young children at the age of kindergarten kids. They can celebrate their birthdays within the museum castle, searching for a “treasure” and dressed up as medieval knights, damsels, “witches” or alchemists – and of course the main intention is to laugh and to have fun. If the kids thereby become curious about the history and maybe urge their parents to come back again, all the better. Older children (or more precisely actually their school teachers) and adults can book special participative guided tours where they can learn more about how living was like in ancient times at certain social levels, without electricity etc. They can take hold of at least some (reproduced) objects. Sometimes the guides are dressed as historic types of persons (noble woman or man, maid, blacksmith etc.). The aesthetic dimension of displayed objects in this department is something we often try to underline by exposing, separating or illuminate them. Visitors shall have a chance to learn something about the historical coherences – this of course can be a kind of an intellectually joyful experience – but they can also go through this museum department with sensorial delight or joy for each and every single object.

A heritage not suitable for enjoyment

The target audience of the exhibition *Ideology and terror of the SS* starts at the age of fourteen. We appeal to visiting parents to consider it thoroughly if they want to go into this department with younger children. This is not because we would expose our visitors to (possibly even enlarged) pictures of SS-atrocities that might offend especially the minds of the youngest. But in our opinion, the visitors should have some historical knowledge about National Socialism and fourteen is usually the age when pupils in Germany begin to learn at least something about it in their schools. Nevertheless, we also offer a very

popular educational program called *Die Hingucker* (The Attentives) aimed at children in primary schools in which they can learn playfully to become more aware of the dangers of racism and discrimination.

According to Himmler's general idea, SS men and their families should exist in a special all-embracing environment, that should express the racist and violent principles of National Socialism in an even more extreme manner than the rest of the "*Volksgemeinschaft*" (national community) should do. Wewelsburg should become an exclusive place for the highest officers of the SS. Here in the environment of their castle-like officer's mess, they should have been affirmed in their belief to be the "elite" of the SS. The latter in turn should be recognized as the "elite" of the German people who again should be drilled to be as aggressively militant as racist. Wewelsburg is a unique historical place where you can encounter both on one spot: the vision of a National Socialist "brave new world" in which the SS would rule over everyone in an unlimited "Germanic" empire and also the inseparably linked reality of the National Socialist SS way of ruling by alienating and dehumanizing people, suppressing, incarcerating, torturing and in the end killing them.

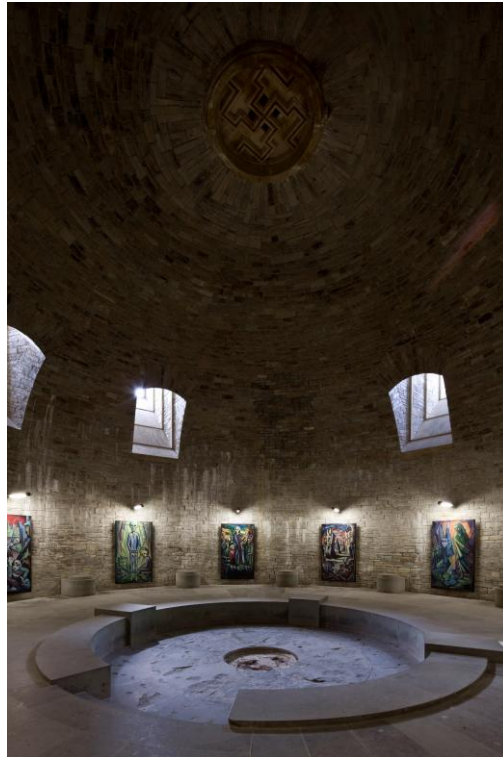
Because of the castle's history during the Nazi-dictatorship, Wewelsburg is famous all over the world. Since 2010, there was no year without having some requests from filmmakers, often from anglophone countries. They all wanted to make recordings for documentaries about Heinrich Himmler and the SS. Their interest was almost always focused on the exterior view of the building and on two rooms within the circular north tower at the peak of the triangular castle. These are the only two rooms constructed under the SS rule between 1939 and 1943 that survived the attempt to blast the castle at the end of World War II.

One of those rooms is the so-called *Gruft* (crypt) in the basement of the tower presumably planned for some kind of SS funeral events. It is a domed hall made of concrete with natural stones facing and a kind of swastika as the capstone ornamentation. It appears like an imitation of ancient Greek – Mycenaean – burial sites. On the floor above is the other room, the so-called *Supreme Leaders' Hall* (*Obergruppenführersaal*) for which the intended purpose is absolutely unknown. Its architectural impression is somewhat medieval Romanic. In preparation of the shootings, the museum staff often spends hours and hours of explaining to the filmmakers that we know just very little about the real intentions

Never allow for the myth to take the lead, always thwart any kind of fanciful legend.

Himmler had for the castle – probably because he himself had almost no or just a few detailed ones –, but very likely it should not become a place for an occult, pseudo-religious cult. Nevertheless, in most cases this old mythic interpretation remains the tendency of the broadcasted

documentaries. The fanciful legends of Wewelsburg as the "Grail castle" of the SS emitted after the war by former SS-members, novelists, journalists but also by the first scientific historical approaches (look at the title of the exhibition of 1982) still seem to be more attractive or satisfying (or enjoyable?) even for many serious minds rather than sober contextualisation or the confession of pure historical ignorance. Just to mention it: every kind of historical re-enactment in Wewelsburg regarding the Nazi period is an absolute no-go for us.



Picture 2 – The Crypt (*Gruft*)
 Photograph: Matthias Groppe, 2010
 Kreismuseum Wewelsburg, Photo Archives

In the middle of the floor of the *Obergruppenführersaal*, there is an inlay ornament consisting of twelve intersecting spokes shaped like inversed “Sig”-runes encircled by three rings. Since the early 1990s, this ornament gained a special popularity as a distinctive mark within the neo-Nazi-scene all over the world. At that time, the ornament, unnamed until then, was designated by an extreme right-wing novelist as “the Black Sun”. As such it is used since then for example for T-shirts and tattoos, CD covers, as an inlay of wristwatches etc. You could see the so-called “Black Sun” from Wewelsburg on shields at the “Alt Right”-March in Charlottesville (Virginia, USA) 2017, on the clothes and on the pamphlet of the mass murderer who killed 51 Muslims in Christchurch (New Zealand) 2019, on an early sleeve badge of the nationalist Ukrainian Asow militia (2014); supporters of the Greek neo-Nazi-party “Golden Dawn” carried “Black Sun”-flags while attending soccer-games and so on and so on.

Refraining enjoyment

Empirically, the rooms within the north tower have a certain attraction for neo-Nazis, satanists or different types of esoterics. While the latter two believe they can experience strong natural powers there, the first hope to find some kind of a pure “spirit” of National Socialism. Particularly to preserve the dignity of those who suffered and lost their lives while they were forced to build these rooms, and to give as little space as possible to any kind of inhuman or undemocratic ideologies, the museum staff was inclined to exert certain design measures to diminish the extent of “joy” for those kinds of visitors as much as possible.



Picture 3 – The Supreme Leaders Hall (*Obergruppenführersaal*)
 Photograph: Matthias Groppe, 2010
 Kreismuseum Wewelsburg, Photo Archives

Therefore, we put a lot of orange and grey bean bags into the upper *Obergruppenführersaal*, which gives this room quite the opposite of a stand-to-attention attitude. You can rest there halfway through the exhibition, but simultaneously you can get more information about the historical background of this room from the museum books accessible for inspection or from our tour guides. Within the lower *Gruft*, we have placed the reproductions of ten paintings on the wall. The originals were made in the late 1940s as a first, regrettably unsuccessful attempt to establish a memorial for the victims of Nazi-war and violence at this spot. Thus, the special atmosphere in this room created by architecture, lighting conditions and acoustics that maybe someone may perceive as some kind of auratic, is inevitably related to a thwarting artificial expression of human suffering caused by the Nazis. The north tower rooms are the only parts of the whole Kreismuseum where visitors are not allowed to make photos.



Picture 4 – Display units showing biographies of members of the Wewelsburg SS castle administration in the first exhibition room
 Photograph: Matthias Groppe, 2010
 Kreismuseum Wewelsburg, Photo Archives

From all that we know, our actions seem to work. There are reports about undercover visits by extreme right comradeships who were anything else but enjoyed about the “destruction” of the plain National Socialist impressions they wish to find within the north tower. On the other hand, many other visitors were pleased exactly because of this.

The same guidelines we provided for the two rooms in the north tower – so to say two of our largest objects – are effective for the presentation of all realia from the SS realm of experience. To quote from our exhibition catalogue (English version): we

agreed that the objects should be exhibited in a bid to inform the public about the ideology of the SS and to demystify the objects. At the same time, it was deemed necessary that affirmative objects not to be shown without comment and that the educational intent of the exhibition organizers be made clear. A responsible contextualization would be needed to help prevent not only fetishization, but also a naive de-historicization of the objects. It was therefore necessary to develop responsible presentation strategies that considered the original objects as well as their interplay with neighbouring objects and their position in the room. (Kirsten John-Stucke, in: Brebeck et al., 2015, p. 23-24)

The applied principles are:

Storage Facility Arrangement

The showcases resemble storeroom cabinets covered with panels in different shades of white. This kind of storage shall strip the objects of any hint of a supposed “magic of the mysterious”. Silver jewellery as well as original documents or photographs are placed on light grey acid-free cardboards with no accent light highlighting them. The “mother of all discussions” about appropriate presentation manners dealt with the death’s head ring of the SS. In 1938 Himmler had said that he wanted to have a shrine at Wewelsburg castle for those rings whose SS-bearers were dead or have been killed in action. Within the exhibition, a genuine specimen is combined with a post-war fake one without any emphasising accessories. The collection of sculptures from the SS porcelain manufactory Allach, showing ideologically charged figures, is arrayed in a muddle or like in a magazine.



Picture 5 – The display units showing SS objects resemble storage cabinets

Photograph: Matthias Groppe, 2010
Kreismuseum Wewelsburg, Photo Archives

Obscuring, not Concealing

Certain objects like pieces of SS uniforms, SS daggers or Wewelsburg furniture with swastika emblems are partially covered in their showcases by frosted screens in order to hinder an unobstructed view of the artefacts. The iconic black SS uniform is not put as a whole on a display dummy but all their pieces (trousers, coat, cap) are presented separately. The portrait painting of Oswald Pohl, head of the SS Economic and Administrative Main Office, depicted as a medieval knight in splendid armament, hangs within its display case in a way that you can look at it only from the right or left side but not frontal. Thereby the picture cannot fascinate or impress.

Massification

If possible mass-produced National Socialist everyday objects, such as badges of the Winter Relief Agency, are shown in large quantities in archival cardboard boxes to give each single item as little value as possible.

Contrasting

Objects that show the self-promoted claims of the SS are contrasted with the everyday reality during the “Third Reich”. The Allach porcelain figure of a mother with two small sons represents the intended role of women within the SS community of kin as the bearer of many children. Contemporary statistics inscribed on the glass of the display case show that, against all declarations, the birth rate in SS families was below the average.

Responsible Contextualisation

Ideologically charged objects are displayed with documents and photos to prevent their glorification. For example, the Yule Lantern – a ceramic candle holder with runes – was given by Himmler to married SS men. It was part of the efforts to replace the Christian imprint of SS members and their families by a SS-like pagan one. Even today, neo-Nazi online shops sell reproductions of it. But many of the originals were made by prisoners in the brickworks of Neuengamme Concentration Camp, which is documented on the glass of the showcase. So even this candlestick is entangled in the criminal character of the SS.

On the contrary, the presentation of the remaining artefacts and documents from the victims of the SS shall underline their value. The storage-style arrangement is abandoned. Warm accent light emphasizes special items. The listening and video stations with statements of contemporary witnesses contain only conversations with former prisoners of Niederhagen Concentration Camp but no oral testimonials from former SS men.



Picture 6 – Illuminated document drawers showing contemporary letters of prisoners of the Niederhagen concentration camp

Photograph: Matthias Groppe, 2010

Kreismuseum Wewelsburg, Photo Archives

Enjoying to know about historical facts

All these measures shall deter present-day followers of Nazi-like ideologies from having fun and obtaining self-affirmation in Wewelsburg. The vast majority of visitors wants to get familiar with the historical facts of what happened there between 1933 and 1945. They shall become enabled to be aware of the educational point of view taken by the exhibition organizers, but also to form their own judgement. The architecture and the design of our exhibition shall not be overwhelming for them and it shall not give the impression that the appearance of the exhibition furniture or media devices would be more important than the depicted history. We do not think that an exhibition about the “dark” unjoyful history of the Nazi period must take place in literally dark rooms. But we do not want to overload this museum department with colours neither. There is as much daylight as possible. While the showcases and panels are all in some kind of white, each of the three main thematic parts of the exhibition is marked by one certain wall colour: The depiction of the ideology of the SS is linked with blue, the history of the concentration camp is surrounded by walls in mauve, while the rooms dealing with the postwar period are indicated by orange.

Wewelsburg is a small village in a rather rural part of Westphalia without considerable transportation possibilities, quite far away from metropolitan areas. Normally you do not come there coincidentally. In non-Covid-years, we can regularly count more than 100 000 people visiting the Kreismuseum Wewelsburg, more than half of them exploring the *Wewelsburg 1933-1945* exhibition. For many secondary schools in North Rhine Westphalia and beyond, the visit in Wewelsburg is a steady element of their curriculum in contemporary history. For their pupils and for other groups we offer diverse guided tours and educational programs. But the majority of the visitors discovers the history of the SS and its victims in Wewelsburg individually. We hope that all our guests are happy, or rather thankful about the local opportunities to learn more about the mechanisms and deadly dangers of ideological self-superelevation, even though we must disappoint some of their

expectations based on mythological narratives about Wewelsburg in literature and mass media.

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Acteurs professionnels au musée

Professionals in museums

Profesionales en el museo

Variables that influence the enjoyment of a visit to a museum

Graciela Beauregard Solís

Introduction

In this paper I will present different points of view that, from my experience as a tourist, as a mother and as a university professor, are related to the enjoyment of a visit to a museum. The dictionary of the Royal Spanish Academy defines the verb “*disfrutar*”, among other ideas, as “*to perceive or enjoy the products or utilities of something; to enjoy, to feel pleasure*”. In the case of a museum, the products or utilities are those that the institution offers to society for its wellbeing and through the development of its intellectual capacities. Because what is offered is related to several variables, this is as ambiguous as one could like to imagine. On a general level, it could be considered that these are linked to:

1. the material, human and financial resources that the museum allocates to be considered as a “museum for everyone” (see the CECA poster *Museum for everyone*, ICOM-CECA, 2021) and all that this implies. This, in turn, is related to the various areas of work that make its operation possible, involving all the staff from the cleaning personal to the Management;
2. the specialisation of the staff that makes the experience rewarding or pleasurable;
3. the indoor, outdoor or virtual infrastructure, which can make the visitor feel at ease, consciously or otherwise; and
4. the content, i.e. its collections, together with the material and virtual resources and discourses – whose existence does not depend on themselves – to communicate about the collections.

At the same time, enjoyment and pleasure can also be related to age, health, gender, education, family influence, culture, time available, as well as the personality and interests of the museum visitor. Moreover, one should similarly mention here the terrible frustration felt when, after being in a city or even in the museum itself, someone notices that he/she could have seen a certain object, but failed to do so due to a lack of information prior to the visit.

On the other hand, the context and some circumstances seemingly unrelated to museums can provoke or refrain the desire to visit them. For example, the cost, the location, the time and means of transport and, in my country Mexico, the feeling of public safety or insecurity in the area where the museum is located. The sum of all of the above causes such an effect that a museum visit may or may not remain pleasantly in the memory (forever). The following are the most salient features of some of the pleasant experiences I have had throughout my life in these institutions in different circumstances.

Enjoyment as a tourist

In 1994, I visited the Natural History Museum in London for the first time. It was unforgettable for two reasons: what I learned about the world of nature and what I experienced as a visitor. I remember very well that I longed to return. This desire to come back one day was not only because of the beauty of the building, nor due to the fact that all its attractive museography was perfect, nor even because the staff was kind to me during all the course of my stay. After all, a tourist like me could find such things in any other attraction or gallery.

What caught my attention was the fact that I felt at home, free to walk everywhere and see all the facilities the place offered, free also to sit down whenever I felt tired, I could easily find a place to eat if I felt hungry as well as a place to store my heavy coat. By the way, there was no need for it because the temperature was very pleasant, but it could have been a useful convenience. I sensed this because I have lived in the tropics for most of my existence. I could even lie down on the floor in a rest area without fear of being squashed by someone or being noticed by a custodian.

Even today, I perfectly remember where I did this. Lying down, I felt there was no need to rush to see everything and accepted I was missing many things. I realised that I could come back more often – despite of the fact that the financial cost was high for someone like me. Besides, there was a metro station very close by. I then became a Museum Member, since I found out that the Museum offered more services and more things to see, learn and buy – I always thought its shop and bookshop were fantastic – for its members. And like other members, I felt proud to belong, in a way, to the Museum.

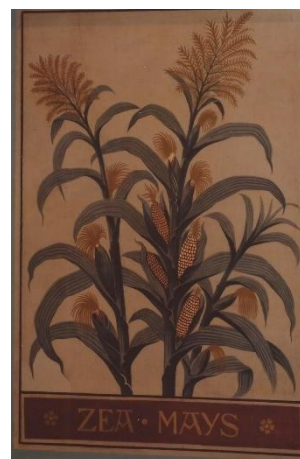
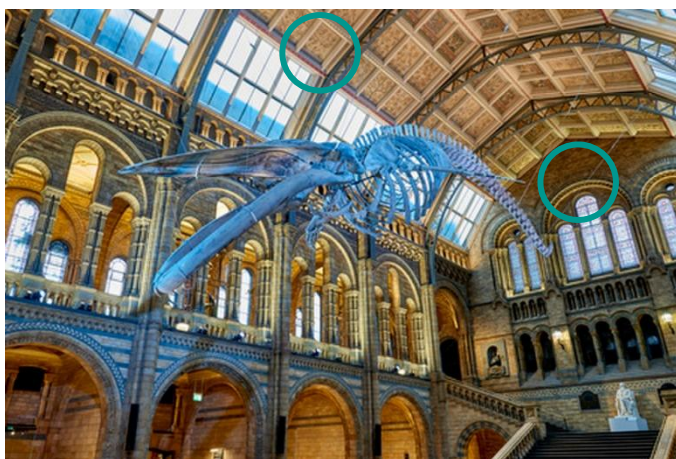
Enjoyment as a parent

Time passed. In 2009, 15 years later, I returned with my eldest son to the Natural History Museum in London. I wanted to show him the dinosaur remains that are on display in the Museum by the bucketload, as he was at the age when these witnesses to our planet's past attract a lot of attention. My perception of the place changed. It didn't feel the same. On the contrary, it was crowded. You couldn't walk. It seemed very noisy. To make matters worse, it was the year of the H1N1 pandemic (swine flu). This meant I

Even in a museum you really love, there is no guaranty for enjoyment.

didn't have much time for enjoyment. My idea of a nice place was completely transformed. Despite all this, I seem to have been able to show my son three things that were very meaningful to me, which I had discovered on my solo visit, the first day I was there years earlier: the trunk

of a giant sequoia, a blue whale showing impressively the difference in scale between the size of this animal and the one of a human being, and a drawing of a corn plant on the ceiling. I was very flattered that the Museum gave Mexico, my country, a place in its museography. There, among the most famous and important useful plants in the world, my cultural identity is beautifully represented (pictures 1 and 2). I always enjoy that memory with gratitude.



There are elements that provoke joy when the visitor feels represented, like the picture of maize (*Zea mays* L.), a Mexican plant, on the ceiling of the Natural History Museum in London, UK.

Picture 1 – Ceiling of the Natural History Museum in London, showing some of the world's flora. The circles indicate the places where Mexican plants are depicted.
Copyright: with kind agreement of NMNH London¹.

Picture 2 – Close-up of the maize (*Zea mays* L.) picture on that ceiling, 1995.
Photograph: Graciela Beauregard Solís.

On the other hand, in 2019 and during the lockdown period due to the Covid-19 pandemic, I was visiting many museums through their websites. There was one in particular, the Museo Amparo² in the City of Puebla de los Angeles, Mexico, that caught my attention. Regardless of the visitor profile, it offered workshops to be enjoyed remotely as a family, both synchronously and asynchronously. I identified three factors related to the pleasure of learning while enjoying its educational offer:

1. the diversity of the activities offered, such as storytelling, conferences, workshops, talks, virtual tours, etc. I even found something to do together with my 19-year-old son: we took self-portraits;
2. the expertise of the instructors and the materials they asked for, which were very easy to gather given the conditions at the time; and
3. the adequate technology. The quality of their transmission signal was perfect. You wouldn't want to imagine the staff worrying about any failure in the course of their work. In fact, nowadays certainty about technical quality can become indispensable for enjoyment.

Enjoyment, not thought of, as a teacher

Since 2006, I have very often been visiting some of the museums of the State of Tabasco with students from the Universidad Juárez Autónoma de Tabasco who study for degrees in biology, environmental management and environmental engineering. The subjects taught, first Environmental Culture (2006) and years later, Human Rights, Society and Environment (2016), are part of the General Training Area of all the curricula of this university. These programmes require students to be familiar with the concept of sustainable development in order to apply the principles that define it in their future professions.

¹ Source: <https://nhmimages.com/search/?searchQuery=13842>.

² See <https://museoamparo.com/>

There is therefore a strong need to train those people who, during the exercise of their duties, will influence research, protection, conservation and communication of the representativeness of the elements that make up the natural and cultural heritage of Mexico. The museums of the State of Tabasco have become an indispensable instrument for this training.

The methodology for learning through enjoyment that was not part of a teaching plan.

Though it was not part of the original plan, I eventually developed a methodology for learning through enjoyment.

I first went to the library of the 4th UNESCO Regional Committee to design the didactic sequences of the themes included in the course programmes. At that time, I did not yet think of taking into account the enjoyable aspect of the teaching in my preparations, meaning provoking pleasure or enjoyment in the students during the visit to the selected museums. My interest was focused on meaningful learning, critical thinking and other requirements of teaching methodology.

In this library, I was given a copy of *World Heritage in Young Hands. Knowing, Treasuring and Acting. Teacher's Resource Pack* (UNESCO, 1998; 2005). I have been using it for the last 15 years or so because of its effectiveness in achieving transformative learning.

When enjoyment in museums also helps teaching...

Implementing its methodological principles, I noticed that such learning can be generated in a fun, enjoyable or pleasurable way. The results of the application of one of the strategies proposed in the *Pack* demonstrate this.

Moreover, it is applicable not only in the museums and their outdoor areas, it is also very useful in protected natural areas (Beauregard and Macías, 2012, p. 80-81; Beauregard and Cámara-Córdova, 2021, p. 17-22).

As for its content, the format used suggests organising the visit to the museum in three moments: before, during and after the visit (UNESCO, 1998, p. 46-47; UNESCO, 2005, p. 26-27). The first moment takes place in the classroom. The second one is dedicated to the tour in the museum or in the representative cultural or natural heritage site. The final part consists of sharing the information as a group in a session after the field trip – this is the way we refer to this type of extra-mural activity at the host university. The content of the material is reproduced below, to be completed by each student before, during and after the visit:

Part I: Before the visit

Explain what expectations you had about the visit (what you expected to learn, discover, etc.).

Part II: During the visit

1. Draw or describe a feature or area of the site that particularly caught your attention. Please use a separate sheet of paper.
2. Record facts and figures you learned associated with the site. Please write on the back.
3. Write down sensory discoveries. For example, describe what you heard, smelled, saw, felt or tasted. Also describe the characteristics of the space or place that made the biggest impact on you. You can do this on the back of this sheet.

Sound:

Smell:

Sight:

Touch:

Taste:

Part III: After the visit

1. Was your visit to the site what you expected? Explain why:
2. Do you think this visit to this place is important? Do you think it has any link to your professional life? Why?
3. Final comments, if you think it is necessary:
4. Signature:

It is worth mentioning that, before visiting the museums, an activity is carried out in the classroom prior to the encounter with the evidence of the heritage to be seen. The purpose of this is to relate the excursion to the subject of the syllabus. This work also awakens an interest in knowing or perceiving what is known in a different way, which may be related to the presence or absence of pleasure in the near future.

Regardless of the qualities of the person in charge of the tour – the guide –, it is advisable to take advantage of activities already programmed by the museums such as talks, video projections, films etc. These can help to fulfil the objectives of the visit. However, whether they are enjoyable or not will depend both on the mediation art of the person carrying them out as well as on the willingness of the person taking part. At the same time, interactive and playful activities are highly recommended, such as touching reproductions of pieces, making them in different materials like plasticine, plaster, mud, etc. This is surprising and gives good results (pictures 3, 4 and 5).



Picture 3 – Grinding cocoa beans with a *metate* to make chocolate.
Activity at the Cholula cocoa farm, Comalcalco, Tabasco, Mexico. The *metate* is a pre-Hispanic object, common in rural areas and in Mexican museums.

Picture 4 – Playing with plasticine is not exclusively for children.
Regional Anthropology Museum Carlos Pellicer Cámara.
Photograph for pictures 3 and 4: Graciela Beauregard Solís.

Picture 5 – Contact with reproductions of the millenary heritage of ancient civilisations in Mexico. Regional Anthropology Museum Carlos Pellicer Cámara.
Photograph: Odemaris Cobos Murcia, 2006.

Compared to the recommendation of the *Pack* concerning Part III, a question was added to the questionnaire for the case of the visit to a public market or a museum: “Do you think this visit has any relation with your professional life? and Why?”. This was asked to help the participants to develop a sense of identity as well as academic and professional responsibility, both with the heritage represented and with the site where it is located

(Beauregard, Cámara-Córdova, Macías, Cámara and Rivas, 2009, p. 238). They are also used in the case of museum.

Evidence of enjoyment

In many cases, someone's enjoyment can be perceived by observing his/her attitude or analysing his/her memories (pictures 6, 7 and 8). Especially for the teachers, enjoyment can also be identified through reading the work reports of those who participated in the activity. Some evidence as a result of the educational interventions is transcribed below.



Pictures 6 and 7 – Students at the archaeological zone and site museum of Comalcalco, Tabasco, Mexico.

Photographs: Graciela Beauregard Solís, 2003 and 2006.

Part II. Format *World Heritage in Young Hands. Knowing, Treasuring and Acting. Teacher's Resource Pack* (UNESCO, 1998, p. 46; 2005, p. 26). Selected responses to the question "Draw or describe a feature or area of the site that particularly caught your attention":

Tour of the archaeological zone and site museum of Comalcalco, Tabasco, Mexico: feedback from the students

There was a part of the tour in the archaeological zone, where we entered a jungle place. This particular site attracted my attention because it was like separating myself completely from the hectic and meaningless life of a city person, in order to get in touch with nature. It was there that I was able to appreciate an infinity of plant species. I was able to realise that there is still a breath of oxygen on our planet in the midst of so much pollution created by ourselves. Even the atmosphere that prevailed in that place was one of peace and tranquillity, the smell of wet earth and the beautiful sound of the singing birds, the curious chirping of the crickets, the sound of the leaves as I walked, and even the sound of the wind made harmony with Nature to create a perfect atmosphere in which I was immersed. It was a moment of mixed feelings, of courage, of sadness and happiness at the same time, because it is difficult to recognise that we are ending with the most beautiful thing that life gave us, our Nature, and we forget

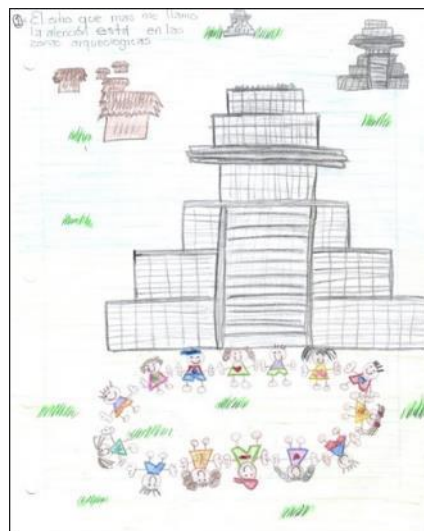
that if we are still alive it is thanks to her. With her everything. Without her... nothing.
Student Yasmín Patricia Baeza Lázaro (Beauregard and Macías, 2012, p. 109).

It was a great experience that enriched me as a person, as it broadened my knowledge of my culture and my origins. I also spent time with my group in a wonderful place. Besides, it is one thing to read and see images through a magazine, a book or a computer, and another to be there, to see it yourself, to feel it, to be able to appreciate it. Because for me, that's the only way to realise the importance of preserving it, because seeing it so impressive awakens people's interest. I hope to be able to repeat this experience.

Student María Isabel Alarcón Cano Lázaro (Beauregard and Macías, 2012, p.109).

I got to know one of the municipalities of the state; this excursion is related to my professional life because it teaches us about the working material and clothing of an environmental engineer. It also shows us what the environmental culture of our ancestors was like; a clear example of this is the cultivation of cocoa and the archaeological monuments built with oyster shell. To have an idea of the cultures that existed in pre-Hispanic times and the natural riches that surrounded them. I really enjoyed living with the environment in the company of so many people who have the same goal as me.

Student Fernanda Cecilia Ortiz Olán (unpublished testimony).



Picture 8 – Recollection of a pleasurable experience at the archaeological site and site museum of Comalcalco, Tabasco, Mexico. In relation with picture 6.

Drawing by student Fernanda Cecilia Ortiz Olán.

Source: Beauregard and Macías, 2012, p. 109.

Tour in protected natural area exploited for gravel and tourist tours; visit to botanical garden

This visit to Teapa is important and it is related to my professional life because I was able to see what is happening in the hill, how it is being exploited, as well as the vision of the professionals in charge of this activity. It helped me to think about what I would do if I were in charge of an activity that is not at all pleasant, like theirs, and what role I would play in that reality. On the other hand, the visit to the agricultural garden was very useful because I learned very interesting facts, I was able to see the vision that the community that makes up the University of Chapingo has of its resources and how they make the most of them without damaging them. Hearing information from an expert on the subject was very pleasant.

Anonymous testimony (Beauregard and Cámara-Córdova, 2021, p. 17-22).

Sight: we saw parakeets, cows, dragonflies, butterflies, cattle, seagulls, cocoa, cedar, banana, cloves, caimito, mosquitoes, iguanas, lychees, rambutan.

Smell: smelled of bedbugs, rubbish, cattle droppings and cedar blossom. It smelled of wet earth. The air was very clean.

Hearing: the clearest sounds were those of the peas, cicadas, parakeets, cows, the current of the river, the screeching of bats and vehicles. Also, the rain falling on the leaves of the trees and the singing of birds.

Touch: we touched the vanilla plant, the caimito, the rambutan, the clove, the jungle vegetation and the rocks that make up the hill.

Taste: I could only taste the caimito; it has a sweet taste, but at the same time, it feels a bit sour, it is delicious. Rambutan and other fruits.

Anonymous testimony (Beauregard and Cámara-Córdova, 2021, p. 21).

Conclusions or contributions to promote the enjoyment of visiting a museum

Irrespective of academic background or of the family's habit of visiting museums – or not visiting them –, one of the factors enhancing enjoyment is related to the information people have before their visit: do they know what the museum has to offer? This offer could for example be an exhibition, a particular topic or a specific object. Other very helpful factors are the time available, and nowadays the technology offered. On the other hand, if you are a teacher and you want your students to have a pleasant experience, it is recommended to contact the educational staff to organise an activity to complement the tour. At the same time, the effort of preparing the students for the encounter with what the museum holds is worthwhile. It awakens their interest in getting to know the contents, both in person and virtually. Also, in countries where there are conflicts related to public insecurity, it should be considered whether it is worth the risk.

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Enjoyment at the Royal Museum of Fine Arts Antwerp An enriching and joyful ICOM CECA Belgium annual meeting (2 March 2023)

Nicole Gesché-Koning

A joyful, inspiring, and enriching day¹ for all participants in the CECA Belgium annual meeting. Six months after its reopening, the “finest museum” (*“schoonste gevoel” / “musée gracieux”* as it calls itself in Dutch and French) is certainly an appropriate and precise definition for the Royal Museum for Fine Arts in Antwerp which “*shines through in everything it organizes, does and represents*”, to quote its website: a positive emotion that truly affects people. A museum which connects across generations and cultures, amazes and challenges visitors, enriching them through an inspiring approach on a human scale for the pleasure of all.

What a joy to discover in Antwerp the newly refurbished Royal Museum of Fine Arts (KMSKA) and enjoy such a well thought renovation where the public and the works of art go hand in hand.

The visit was organized as a CECA Belgium annual study day in collaboration with the KMSKA, ICOM Belgium (ICOM Belgium/Flanders and ICOM Belgique/Wallonie-Bruxelles) and FARO, the Flemish heritage organization. For many participants it was their first visit to the renewed museum which reopened in September 2022 after more than ten years of closure. It was also specially planned as a discovery of the manifold museum education and interpretation facilities around following four topics: diversity, digital offer, family programs and accessibility.

One feels how much the museum staff enjoys working there not only for the sake and preservation of their fabulous collection but moreover for their desire to share the love and sense of beauty with everyone. This sense of beauty or “finest feeling” (*“het schoonste gevoel”* in Dutch) is precisely the motto of the museum to which I would also add a sense of well-being encompassing emotion, appreciation, pleasure, delight, amusement, all notions which arise immediately from the visit.

Thanks to this positive DNA, the museum's visitor numbers are high, as they were when we visited: the entrance hall was full of school groups, guided tours and other visitors. If you had any doubts about the success of this reopening, the figures will convince you: around 400 000 people visited the KMSKA between September 2022 and February 2023.

¹ This article, written for *ICOM Education 31*, was first published under the title *Testimonial. Enjoyment at the Royal Museum of Fine Arts in Antwerp*, in: S. Masuy & S. Vermeiren (2023, p. 6-13),

Audacity

A taste of risk which has proven successful at all levels. Starting with the building itself which restoration considered both the past, the present and the future keeping the shell of the building – respecting thus the original architecture – but inserting into the former courtyards a new modern volume – a solution already found at the Louvre or in Brussels at the Royal Museums for Art and History. Both the ancient and the modern collections are exhibited in most new suitable settings. Thanks to Karin Borghouts' photographs with special lighting, one can follow the whole transformation of the museum step by step in the current temporary exhibition *The Making Of*.

A fully enjoyable “educational” museum

Didn't the founder of the Museum of Louvain-la-Neuve assert that a museum was to be entirely educational? Not having a few activities organized in a remote part of the building located sometimes far from the exhibition rooms? This is exactly what the KMSKA has brilliantly achieved, reaching an amazing variety of audiences from the layman to families and children (*The 10*), to visually impaired and blind people (Radio Bart), as well as each artist which lays in us by inviting the public to draw or be creative (Projects *I can't draw*, *Creative Type* or *Fancy a challenge*), not to mention the general layout of the museum and the use of new technologies, with for instance touch screens and labels accessible to all. While the museum has opted for bilingual texts in Dutch and English for general readability, an application offers commentary in ten languages, including in Flemish sign language.

The 10

What a fabulous and daring adventurous journey of discovery through the museum. Designed for children and their families, this trail reaches all visitors intrigued by Christophe Coppens's ten amazing installations. In collaboration with the Opera House in Brussels La Monnaie/De Munt, the artist has enlarged and sculpted at huge scale details chosen from various paintings which invite the visitor to look at art differently. If some art critics consider these installations horrible, out of place and outrageous, one must confess that even if the task was risky, the result is really convincing.

Just imagine, in the Rubens Hall in between two pompous cardinal red velvet benches, a huge dromedaries sofa replicating detail of Rubens' *Adoration of the Magi* (1624)! Or the amazing hand seeming to fall from the ceiling reproducing a detail of Marinus van Reymerswale's *Saint Jerome* (1541) when it starts moving and rotating. Not only do you easily spot the painting the installation is referring to, you also spontaneously start looking at all the hands in the neighboring paintings and beyond.



Picture 1 – Will anyone dare to sit down on this dromedary sofa?
Inspired by the dromedaries, here marked with the circle,
depicted on Rubens' *Adoration of the Magi* (1624).
Photograph: Nicole Gesché-Koning



Pictures 2-3 – Details: the model painted by the master Peter Paul Rubens
and its velvet counterpart by Christophe Coppens (2022).
Photographs: pict. 2 KMSKA², pict. 3 Nicole Gesché-Koning

Finding out which of Joachim Patinir's small painting has inspired Coppens's enormous rock set in the middle of the room needs a curious eye but how joyful then to enter this huge detail of the *Landscape with the Flight into Egypt* (1516-1517). And did you spot the fly? Is it a detail of Willem van Aelst's *Fruit and a Glass of Wine* (1659), the Master of Frankfurt *The Painter and his Wife* (1496) or another painting? Children and all interested visitors may complete then different assignments in a free booklet designing the ten certainly audacious installations but so full of humor and enriching. One certainly learns a lot!

² Licence Creative Commons CC0 Universal Public Domain Dedication, Royal Museum of Fine Arts Antwerp.

Radio Bart

Have you seen all the details in a painting? By sitting next to blind museum employee Bart in his mobile radio studio people are invited to analyze one work for at least ten minutes: amazing how many things you will discover thanks to Bart's curiosity and being invited to see the work with a surprising new eye and in a way you would not have imagined before meeting Bart or one of the three fellow blind colleagues who have joined him in his journey to make people see differently.

Feedback from "The Finest Hundred", a panel of 100 testing visitors

Without the conversation, I would have been more inclined to look at the artwork from a distance and pass by. So just looking at it without actually seeing it. Erik

While describing the painting, I saw new things I wouldn't have seen otherwise. It was really liberating. Dorien

It was fascinating experience. I found the invitation to describe a work in such a way that a non-sighted person can still imagine the image special, challenging and enriching. It also made me feel safe that no prior art historical knowledge was required of me. Patrick

Ironing in Rik Wouters' time and nowadays – Multimedia is everywhere.

Two computer screens set in front of Rik Wouters' *Woman ironing* (1912) invites the public to view the painting from different points of view (Ill. 2). One computer analyzes how two young boys, a curator and a lady working in an iron office see in the painting and what they think about it. On the other screen you may find the incidence of light, shape, and color on the painting.



Picture 4 – Rik Wouters, *Woman ironing* (1912) and the touchscreen that connects the painting with today's world.

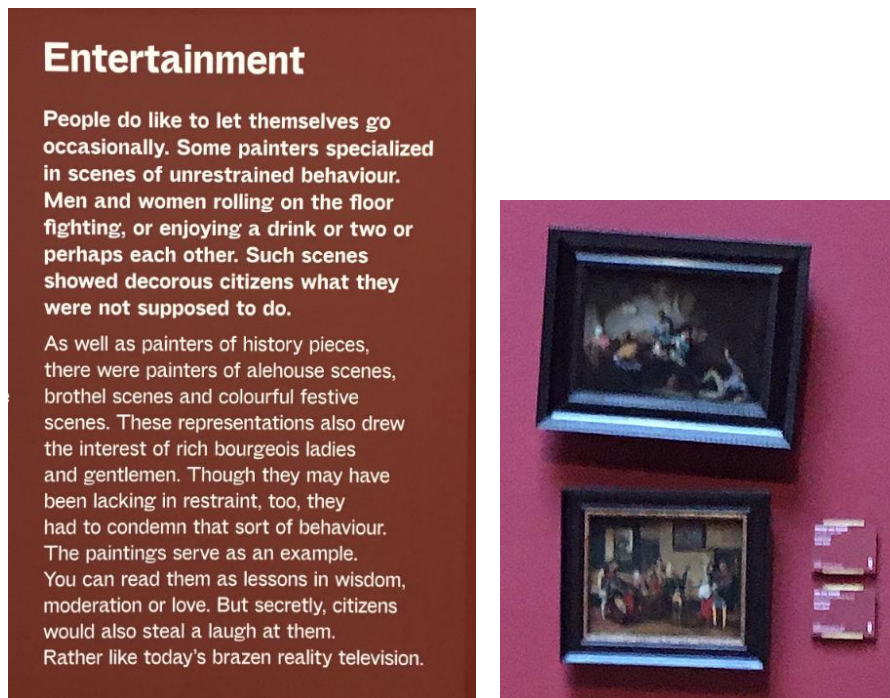
Photograph: Nicole Gesché-Koning

Diving into the masterpieces thanks to these in-depth screens attracts many visitors. One can also enter a real old masters' painting studio by walking in virtual reality or discover a great variety of surprising details in a big immersive space. Not only has one fun, but one also learns constantly in a very pleasant and challenging way.

Last but not least: allowed to laugh and enjoy unusual settings.

Works of the collection are not presented in a chronological order. Grouped by theme, the emphasis has been set on a series of short texts easy to understand by everyone and relating to each person's life.

And why not decide to hang a painting portraying drunk people slightly side wise? What about a visitor wanting to put it right? Worth taking the risk for the pleasure of watching the smile on the visitors' faces.



Pictures 5-6 – Entertainment: introduction text...
... and the frame of a painting slightly crooked.
Photographs: Nicole Gesché-Koning

Creativity to enjoy.

Every visitor is invited to interact artistically with the museum by gathering the drawing material offered in the museum or by attending the Open Studio, open to all to discover the magic of colors and shapes through collages, the importance of movements in art. A museum educator is available at any time to help establish a link between your creation and the works from the museum's collection.

Figures confirm the success of museum education and interpretation.

Approximately 400 000 people visited the museum between September 2022 and February 2023; up until end of January 2023, 18 510 booklets *The 10* were distributed; the Open Studio was opened 3 times a week; Radio Bart was organized 2 days a week meaning 4 sessions of 1h30 each day; up until March 2023, 659 visitors had a Radio Bart-conversation in the studio.

Conclusion

Among the visitors' reactions to the installations *The 10* was this testimony: "*How nice, as a parent of a visually impaired child, to not feel for once that we are coming back from a barren trip. We have visited many museums, zoos and other attractions where she saw little to nothing because "the objects" were too far or in poorly lit areas. You play not only with light and dark but also with color, sound, textures and structures.*" Lisa, through Instagram

In times of anxiety and fear for the world's future, thank you to this "finest museum" aiming at reaching as many audiences as possible, where everyone is welcome, to have offered us a truly enjoyable and inspiring day confirming it is "*more than just a showcase for art*": what a "*warm environment stirring up so many emotions*", a place to fully enjoy, discovering with pleasure and amusement fabulous and famous collections made accessible to all in such a marvelous way.

This text was already published with nearly the same wording with the title *Testimonial. Enjoyment at the Royal Museum of Fine Arts in Antwerp* in the proceedings of the *Networking Event ICOM CECA Belgium*, ICOM Belgium, 2023, online available (in English) at

https://icom-wb.museum/files/files/Publications/ICOMCECA_publication_EN_.pdf

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https://icom-wb.museum/files/files/Publications/ICOMCECA_publication_EN.pdf

Collection de souvenirs

Collection of memories

Colección de recuerdos

A museologist's emotion

Museum	Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation
City, country	Lisbon, Portugal
Exhibition / work	the Chinese porcelain gallery
Author	Heloisa Helena F Gonçalves da Costa
ICOM mandate	member of the CECA Special Interest Group "Research about the reception of museum education programmes"



Picture credits: Heloisa da Costa

Since childhood, I have always loved visiting museums. Then, at the age of 18, I discovered a museology course in Rio de Janeiro, which I took. At the end of the course, I had the opportunity to travel to Portugal. When I entered the Oriental Porcelain Room at the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (Lisbon), I was so overwhelmed that I cried with emotion.

The exhibition was magnificent, with its scenic lighting and soft background music. I felt like I was in a palace, like a princess. My tears caught the attention of a gentleman who asked me if I was feeling unwell. I replied that no, quite the contrary, I was in awe. He gave me a big hug, wiped my face and offered me the book on Chinese porcelain he had just bought.

He said to me: "Your soul is pure and sensitive to beauty! You will make an excellent museologist." We exchanged another hug and two kisses on the cheek, and I continued on my way to the palace of wonders.

When I moved to Salvador de Bahia (Brazil) two years after this wonderful experience, I began working as a researcher in Oriental arts at the Carlos Costa Pinto Museum Foundation, where I remained for 12 years, conducting research and teaching. It was a very rewarding job.



Garden of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon

Magical escape

Museums

Villa Reale, Modern Art Gallery
Natural History Museums

City, country

Milan, Italy

Author

Alberto Garlandini

ICOM Mandate

Former president of ICOM



Picture credit: Sailko, Villa Reale, Milan. Source: Wikimedia commons, licence CC BY 3.0
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Milano,_villa_reale,_prospetto_sul_parco.jpg

This is the story of Albertino, an eight-year-old boy who lived in Milan, Italy, in the early 1960s, in a central district called Porta Venezia, named from the eastern medieval gate to the old city. Not far from Albertino's home were "the Gardens". The Gardens had been commissioned in the second half of the 18th century by the Austrian Archduke Ferdinand of Habsburg, Viceroy of Milan. The Gardens were Milan's first public park and had been designed by the famous architect Giuseppe Piermarini, who also designed La Scala Theatre in 1776. In the 18th century, Milan and Lombardy were under the rule of the Habsburg Empire. Albertino knew nothing about that. For him, the Gardens were just the best place to play with his neighbouring friends in the afternoon, after school.

The Gardens haven't changed much since then. What has changed completely is the city of Milan. In the 1950's, Milan was struggling to recover from the terrible destructions caused by war time bombings. Milan was becoming the first industrial city in post-war Italy. However, at that time there were still no cars parked in the streets, very few passed by, so children could safely play in the streets and on the pavements with no danger.

Albertino's magical escape took place in those days, a dreadful time for his family. His father Gino was seriously ill, suffering from the severe after-effects of two years in a harsh military concentration camp in Germany. Together with his army unit, in September 1943, Sergeant Gino had been taken to Germany from Greece, on trains that the German army said were bound for Italy. Years later, Gino told Albertino that his Greek interpreter friend, with whom he had been working at the military court in Gythion in the Peloponnese, had informed him that the trains were bound for Germany and had invited him to join the Greek partisans. However, military decisions were to be taken collectively: officers, non-commissioned officers like himself and representative soldiers decided to try to return to Italy and accepted to board the German trains. It was a tragic mistake. Gino barely survived and returned to Italy at the end of the war weighing 40 kilos.

After fifteen years marked by several post-war illnesses, Gino was rushed to hospital with a very serious form of lung disease that kept him in a sanatorium for over two years. Without Gino's salary, the family's situation was dire, and mammy Dora sadly discovered that Albertino had fallen ill as well. That lung disease was highly infectious but, miraculously, Dora did not fall ill. After 50 years, Albertino still remembers the tension, the anguish, the sad atmosphere that prevailed at home in those days.

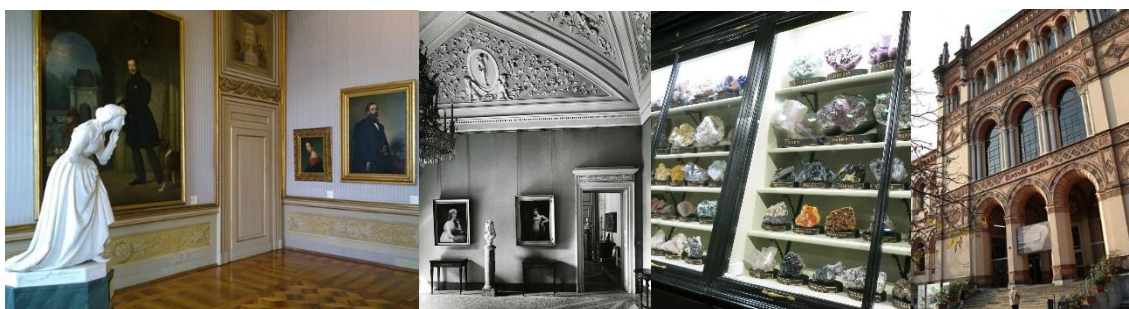
The family doctor banned any physical exertion and sweat. So, while the other children were happily playing football in the Gardens, Albertino walked to the “Villa Reale”, a Neoclassical building of the 18th century facing the Gardens. It was the former residence of Count Ludovico Barbiano di Belgiojoso, designed by the famous architect Leopoldo Pollack. In 1920 the Villa had been converted in an Art Gallery, now the excellent Milan’s Galleria di Arte Moderna GAM.

Admission was free so Albertino entered the Villa easily. He was so fascinated by the art collection that became an assiduous visitor. At that time the museum was not flooded by visitors as it is now. On the contrary, the museum’s rooms were usually empty. In those quiet afternoons Albertino was often the only visitor. He walked through those gilded and decorated neoclassical rooms and stood open-mouthed in front of enormous nineteenth-century Lombard paintings depicting beautiful women and scenes of life and war. Schools did not take children to museums as they do today, and his parents were no intellectuals. For Albertino, those magical hours far from the family’s worries were his first contact with museums.

In the Gardens, a few meters from the Villa Reale, there was, and still is, the Natural History Museum. In the afternoon it was as empty as the Villa Reale. Albertino stood astonished in the large mineralogical rooms, where thousands of minerals were on display. That was where he discovered radioactivity. What a surprise: only certain minerals activated the Geiger counter!

Unfortunately, the magical escape in museums was brief. Albertino's illness worsened, and he was sent in a hospital for children in the Alps. He stayed for a whole year in an isolated medical institution, far from home and family. But he was well nursed and recovered perfectly, as his father Gino did later on. Albertino never forgot the paintings of the wonderful women in the Villa Reale or the radioactivity he had discovered at the Natural History Museum.

I was that child and the passion for museums and heritage born 60 years ago has never left and is still alive.



Picture credits: two galleries in the Villa Reale, left licence CC BY-NC-ND 4.0, <https://www.oguiademilao.com/galeria-de-arte-moderna-de-milao/>; middle-left: Paolo Monti, 1970, source Fond Paolo Monti, BEIC / Wikimedia commons Licence CC BY-SA 4.0, [https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Galerie_d%27art_moderne_de_Milan#/media/Fichier:Paolo_Monti_-_Servizio_fotografico_\(Milano,_1970\)_-_BEIC_6340430.jpg](https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Galerie_d%27art_moderne_de_Milan#/media/Fichier:Paolo_Monti_-_Servizio_fotografico_(Milano,_1970)_-_BEIC_6340430.jpg); Middle-right: Mineralogy gallery, National Museum Prag, photo Stéphanie Wintzerith. Right: Natural History Museum Milan, photo Giovanni Dall'Orto, source Wikimedia Commons, licence CC BY-SA 2.5 https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:DSC01668_Museo_di_storia_naturale,_Milano_-_Foto_di_G._Dall%27Orto_-_20-12-2006.jpg

Architecture and harmony

Museum	Kolumba – Kunstmuseum des Erzbistum Köln
City, country	Cologne, Germany
Exhibition / work	the museum itself
Author	Stéphanie Wintzerith

ICOM mandate Chair of SAREC



Picture credits: Stéphanie Wintzerith

Some years ago, ICOM Germany invited to its annual conference in Cologne. A friend of mine, who is architect, warmly recommended to visit the diocesan art museum of the city. This museum was neither on the programme of the conference – or rather: I did not see it on the programme –, nor in walking distance of the conference venue. Time was scarce, I didn't look for it.

A few months later, passing through Cologne again, I went off the train for a few hours, wandering around in the city and looking for a museum to visit. By pure chance, my path me led to a small street in the city centre. A contemporary façade of light-coloured bricks that contrasted with the surrounding walls caught my eye. Intrigued, I approached and, seeing an opening that was clearly accessible to the public, I went inside. I found myself in front of a bay window overlooking the ruins of a church destroyed by bombs, above which the modern building had been erected with the utmost respect for the historical remains. A handful of visitors were walking along wooden walkways overlooking truncated columns and sections of demolished walls. To one side, a small post-war chapel, still consecrated, kept the original function of this place alive.

I walked around the building, looking for the entrance so I could visit this unexpected space. The sober façade bore the inscription "Kolumba – Kunstmuseum des Erzbistums Köln": it was the diocesan art museum. I remembered my architect friend, his enthusiasm and his praise for Peter Zumthor's architecture. I pushed open the door and, from the moment I stepped inside, the magic began.

The simplicity of the forms, the attention to detail and the nobility of the materials, combining precious wood, grey wall coatings and terrazzo, make it a very refined, sober and beautiful place. It is also very peaceful. Daylight illuminates the works with its changing luminosity as the hours pass and the clouds come and go (or not).

The works are chosen sparingly and wonderfully presented. No overcrowded rooms, no overflow of explanations. Depending on the exhibition – only a handful of works are on permanent display – a medieval Christ on the cross contemplates 20th-century industrial design, a baroque Madonna softens the sober severity of a contemporary canvas with her volutes, and a Gothic triptych rubs shoulders with modern monochrome canvases. No labels distract the eye from the works on display, no text disturbs the incredible beauty of the place. Don't think, however, that visitors are left to their own devices, quite the contrary. The aim is to let the works speak for themselves while emphasising the museum's aesthetic. Visitors can nevertheless consult the information

usually provided by labels and other texts in a small booklet given to them at the entrance – and many do so after contemplating the work in front of them.

The visitors, precisely, all seemed to be under the spell. Focused, contemplative, attentive, serene and without time pressure, they clearly enjoyed their visit. There was a lot of interaction, and – this is worth being noted – as far as I can remember, I believe this was the museum visit where complete strangers most often formed bonds with each other: as they wandered around, they contemplated together, exchanged their impressions and feelings, spoke to other visitors and were very careful not to obstruct somebody else's views of the works. The feeling of sharing a moment of grace and beauty could be seen in their eyes.

Wherever daylight cannot reach the works – or in case of rain –, perfectly controlled lighting beautifully highlights the works of art and the building itself. At the turn of one room, a large bay window opens onto the largest and most impressive religious work of art in the diocese: the Cologne Cathedral, with a breathtaking view of its western façade.

A rest area with a cosy atmosphere and walls covered in precious wood welcomes visitors. Entering it is like stepping into the library of a noble residence. Comfortable armchairs entice you into relaxing for a while, books placed on side tables invite you to read; on the shelves, a collection of beautiful books, catalogues and other works wait patiently to be chosen by the readers of the day. The respect with which these readers handle the books reflects the respect that the museum has for its visitors: with delicacy and great interest.

Visiting this museum was a timeless experience, like a soothing and beneficial interlude, a bubble of beauty and serenity. The perfect harmony between the works and their setting, between the architecture and its visitors, contributed greatly to this feeling. I bought a postcard at the shop, which I left the next day on my architect friend's desk, along with my heartfelt thanks for this wonderful discovery.



Memory

Museum	Macquarie University Art Gallery
City, country	Sidney, Australia
Exhibition / work	<i>Memory</i>
Artist	Ken Unsworth
Author	Andrew Simpson
ICOM mandate	Chair of UMAC



Picture credits: Effy Alexakis (excerpt)

I experienced a profound museum moment of engagement earlier this year at the Macquarie University Art Gallery in suburban Sydney, Australia. I work for them part-time mainly because I enjoy writing and talking and they generously tolerate me coming in and doing it there occasionally. The university has a remarkable art collection, and the gallery puts on some great shows, often experimental, often trying things that civic or regional art institutions would not attempt.

Ken Unsworth is an Australian artist who has worked across many media. He was a trail-blazing performance artist in the 1970s, strung up and stretched out in various configurations in experimental art spaces. He is probably most widely known for his installation works where large stones float in the gallery space effortlessly defying gravity. Now, at the age of 94, and still bristling with creativity, the revered conceptual artist brings his latest works to our university gallery.

In the exhibition *Ken Unsworth: Love is the Sweetest Thing*, the artist presented five new works of significance. The exhibition covered the themes of love, loss, memory, humanity, and corporeality, through a collection of characteristically poetic, unsettling, and theatrical installations that provided kinematic, auditory and visual engagement for visitors.

One of these was particularly “striking”. A multi-figure installation entitled *Memory* consisted of several ghostly white replicas of Unsworth’s own body standing in a circle around a bell. The bell rings! Slowly the ghostly white figures shake and wobble in response, slowly building in intensity and then eventually subsiding and returning to their static state or incarnation as the memory is evoked.

Visitors trigger the bell by pressing a pedal, the bellringer pulls on the rope and the sound reverberates through the space. The figures wait momentarily before shaking, capturing the delayed, unsettling return of a sense of portent triggered by the clang of the bell. Works like *Memory* make the audience a participant – evoking introspection and emotional resonance through interactive experience of the chain reaction as the memory spreads like ripples in a pond.

Memory is a physical reminder that we are all shaped by our past, even though the mindfulness of the present may disguise or deeply bury and hide our memories, they still reside deep inside us. It also reminds us that to prepare for the future we must understand the present and how it is shaped by our past. Memories are echoes in individuals, small communities or whole nations. The sound of the bell a timeless reminder.

What do you remember when the bell rings?

There are many bells in our lives; the church bell in the village square calling the faithful to prayer, the school bell starting and finishing the day’s learning, the door-bell – who could

that be I wonder –, the ping as a message hits your phone – somebody somewhere has done something!

A bell ringing can be a transition, a link between two worlds, a door opening, a passage from one place to another, a new revelation, a fresh insight, a light bulb moment. Listen, pay attention, this is significant – remember! The ringing bell can mark out passages of our lives, like the greenkeeper marks out lines in preparation of the field of play, or how a conductor marks out a symphony with the arc of their hands.

In many ways *Memory* was an evocative and expressive metaphor of what museum work itself is meant to do. As museum professionals we invoke memory to ground the present and prepare for the future. Museum people are the real time lords, magicians of matter and energy.

In the words of the artist himself: *“The eternal bell reverberates through time and space. And in the icy isolation of our memory, it remembers. Are we not matter that trembles before a falling star?”*



Memory, artwork by Ken Unsworth, 2024. Copyright: photograph Effy Alexakis, photowrite from the *Love is the Sweetest Thing* exhibition catalogue, Macquarie University Art Gallery in partnership with Bandicoot Press.

Poetry of silence

Museum	La Pedrera
City, country	Barcelona, Spain
Exhibition / work	Poesia del silenci
Artist	Jaume Plensa
Author	Annette Viel
ICOM mandate	member of the CECA Special Interest Group "Research about the reception of museum education programmes"



Picture credits: Annette Viel

I invite you to imagine silence. Jaume Plensa

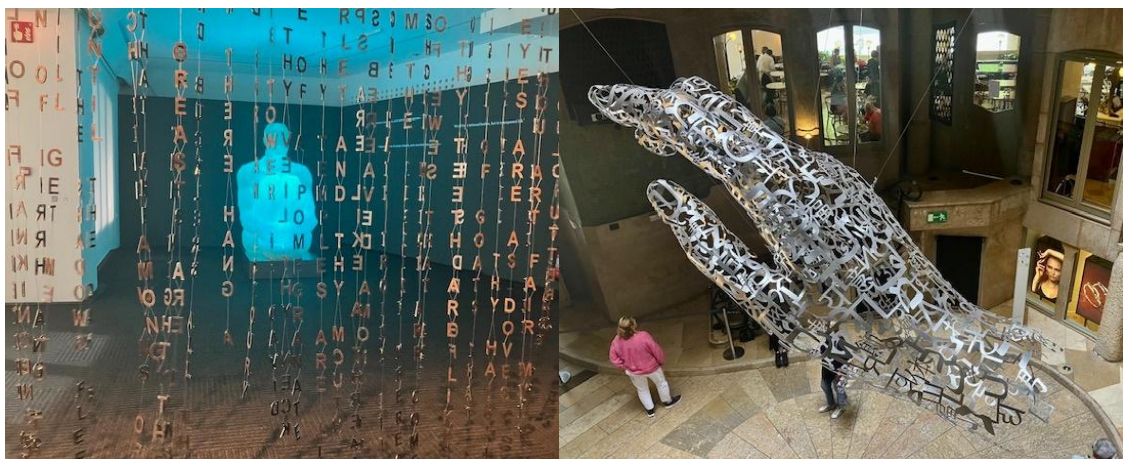
Poetry of Silence: a unique artistic experience showcasing the work of Jaume Plensa. From the outset, his installations invite visitors to *imagine silence* throughout a journey rich in discoveries, where words dance in the museum space and come to life through gazes and interactions. Make way for an intimate encounter that echoes with oneself, with others, and with living nature/culture. La Pedrera, designed by the Catalan architect Antoni Gaudí and built at the beginning of the last century, was not intended to become a highly frequented museum as it is today. It was originally the new residence of the Milà family.

The museum, that place inspired by the muses, has always attracted me, even from a very young age. I remember seeing a retrospective of Georges Rouault at the Musée des Beaux-Arts du Québec. I was fascinated to discover an international artist in my small town of Quebec City. Then, over time, my steps led me to art history and museology. I focused on the nature/culture field, defining myself as an "all-round field museologist". This experience, in direct contact with places and people, resonated with the changing world of museums. I think of Beaubourg, inaugurated in 1977, where in 1981 I organised an experience-sharing event entitled *Quand l'école va au musée* (When school goes to the museum). There I discovered a new approach to museology in which the public was involved in the conceptual process from the outset. The young architects Renzo Piano and Richard Rogers defended the idea that the venue should resonate with its surroundings. Then in San Sebastian in 1993, during the presentation of the future Guggenheim designed by Frank Gehry in Bilbao, I became even more aware of the significant power of museum architecture.

These contemporary projects, where architecture and content caught visitors' attention from the outside, invited them to see things differently. It's no surprise that one day I took the liberty of giving the title *Muséo-Skate* to a lecture I gave in Barcelona, showing how much young people enjoyed practising this sport on the forecourts of major museums such as MACBA (Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona) in Barcelona and the Trocadéro in Paris.

These practices raised many questions, initiating new connections between museums, visions, collections, research, productions, audiences and societies. Just as recent artistic approaches were vigorously challenging established ideas, I was looking for innovative avenues, particularly those related to symbolism, interpretations, myths and stories, both real and imaginary. I cannot forget the words of Joseph Campbell, the great mythology expert, who, while watching the film *Star Wars* at the invitation of anthropologist-turned-filmmaker George Lucas, declared that cinema was now the contemporary fairy-tale realm. Links were then forged between different museological practices, and my pleasure found resonance at La Pedrera. Its architect skilfully juggled the anchors of nature and culture, myth and history, urbanism and community. In 1996, I enjoyed accessing its roof, where the chimneys stood proud and solid like knights from another century. And the magic happened: I thought of Lucas, of his Jedis learning to juggle with the force, inviting us to reconnect with our myths in a new modernity. La Pedrera is a mythical place offering an exceptional space for expression where it is possible to travel between reality and myth.

My pleasure in going to see *The Poetry of Silence* led me to revisit Jaume Plensa's mythical characters, those men perched high on a promontory who, in the evening, light up and remind us that despite all these ascents, one day or another, the light will go out and the perch may collapse. Plensa's exhibition sculpted words through human figures and juggled with all our possibilities. *We are all tattooed, but in transparent ink*. This statement alone invited us to leave our prejudices behind and open ourselves up to other stories waiting to be revealed along the way. Everyone is tattooed, but it is invisible. *The real material of sculpture is ideas*. So imagine my pleasure in walking through these works sculpted from words. From the entrance, a giant hand made of letters calls out to you, and then with each step taken within the installations, a sensitive and meaningful question about the meaning of things seeps in. I am still deeply moved by it. And I tell myself how lucky I was to see these works in a magical place that echoes Montserrat, the monastery built on the site of highly symbolic rocks, located near Barcelona. Gaudí engaged in a sensitive dialogue with nature. And yes, as Plensa so aptly puts it: *The poet is the soul of a society*.



Two works by Jaume Plensa in the exhibition *Poesia del silenci*, 2023.

Art in house

Museum	Museum of Contemporary Art
City, country	Minuto de Dios neighbourhood, Bogotá, Colombia
Exhibition / work	Project <i>Arte en Casa</i>
Author	Gustavo A. Ortiz Serrano
ICOM mandate	Former chair of ICOM Colombia



Picture credits: Gustavo Ortiz

Art in house, living art

Very few people are lucky enough to be neighbors of a museum, and this is the case for the inhabitants of the Minuto de Dios neighborhood in Bogotá. What's curious is not only its location but also the social environment that gave rise to this remarkable enclave in the city's northwest.

Its name comes from a television program that began airing in 1956 and lasted one minute (*Minuto de Dios*: a minute for God). Could it have been the predecessor of today's popular *reels*? Its promoter, Father Rafael García-Herreros, sparked a solidarity movement to solve one of the most pressing problems of Colombian society: the lack of dignified housing.

In 1958, the first homes and the school were inaugurated. However, the founder had a much broader vision: a museum, a university, workshops, plazas, sculptures, a theater... an entire self-sufficient citadel designed for the comprehensive development of its residents. The homes, classrooms, and workshops gradually increased. The Museum of Contemporary Art (MAC) became a reality in 1966 and, four years later, got its own headquarters to house a collection approaching six hundred contemporary artworks.

The Museum, the church, the school, the community house, and the administrative offices were located around the central plaza. In concentric circles, the homes were built, ranging from one- and two-story houses to multi-family buildings. In 1987, the university settled down in the neighbourhood. This dynamic of growth and development has not stopped and has expanded beyond its original borders with projects in different parts of Bogotá, in medium-sized and intermediate cities throughout Colombia, South America, and some African countries.

My home is your home

To celebrate the neighborhood's first fifty years in 2008, we gathered at the MAC with founding families, friends, and artists. An audacious idea emerged there: to take original artworks from the collection into the neighbors' homes for a visit. An initiative that would be almost unthinkable for another type of museum, but highly viable for a community museum.

Enthusiastically, we made the first list of families who wanted to host an artwork. We visited their homes, learned their stories, and selected pieces related to their work or that connected with the context of their lives. The dynamic was simple: pack the artwork,

arrive at the selected house, place it in the living room or the chosen spot, and chat over coffee about their life stories in the neighborhood and the visiting artwork. We also explored what object in their home held special significance for the family. We documented all of this in a logbook with photographs and videos.

Each of these gatherings became a torrent of memories colored by anecdotes, music, photo albums, personal experiences, family struggles, and achievements. On some occasions, we hosted the artist who created the work. By the end of each session, the connection was palpable: we felt closer, more like neighbors, more like siblings. Consequently, their visits to the museum increased, our relationship shifted from acquaintances to friends, and the museum became part of their home.

We ran three seasons of the *Art at Home* program, which we sometimes called *Performance at Home* because the artist became the work, preparing and executing a piece *in situ* during the visit. Quite a privilege!

With such a strong relationship with the neighbors, new ideas were woven. Many artists invited by the museum directly intervened on the facades of the houses with the owners' consent. Several requested a mural, which turned Minuto de Dios into a benchmark for urban art, earning it the name "Museum-neighbourhood".

I feel profoundly grateful to be part of this community that has been open to the transformative power of art and has given culture a social meaning. A community that has understood the museum as a space for mutual knowledge and has established new connections between life, artistic practice, and society. A community that, with freedom and joy, managed to get ahead of history's inevitable curve.



Wonderful encounters with neighbours: *Art in House*, be it in the living room or on the outside walls, 2008.

Prix de la recherche

Research award

Premio de investigación

Study of the relationship between two cultural institutions and their social environment in the Barrio del Carmen in Murcia

Carlos Javier Egio Rubio and Victoria Osete Villalba

1 Justification

Surveys on cultural habits and practices carried out in Spain in recent years show that a significant part of the population is far from the cultural sphere. As stated in the 2013 survey (Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, 2015), in that year 37% of Spanish citizens said they had a low involvement in cultural activities. In fact, the data extracted shows that the country ranks eighteenth in the European Union in terms of cultural participation. The Autonomous Community of the Region of Murcia, on the other hand, has a medium-low average interest in museums, exhibitions, art galleries and archives (4.7 out of 10).

The present research, which includes a comparative analysis of the cultural action carried out by a municipal centre and a museum, has taken place in the Carmen neighbourhood of the city of Murcia. Located south of the Segura River, it is characterized by being one of the most populated neighbourhoods in Murcia, with approximately 23,000 inhabitants (Fundación Cepaim, 2016). Based on the qualitative and quantitative analysis of the data collected, the aim is to know what relationships the Museum of Science and Water and the El Carmen Municipal Centre (Centro Municipal El Carmen) establish with the social actors in their environment, as well as the perceptions that citizens have about these institutions.

The scarcity of studies that show a detailed analysis of the aforementioned aspects makes it pertinent to carry out this research. The objective of this work is to determine how the links are established, as well as what facilities and disadvantages different groups find to relate to two cultural institutions whose ultimate purpose is the promotion and transmission of culture and cultural identity.

Regarding the need and relevance of the research, several aspects should be highlighted. Firstly, there are numerous studies that observe and detail both the work of museums and the expectations and experiences of their visitors. On the contrary, there is a great lack of information regarding cultural centres. In addition, hardly any research project could be found that joins both institutions. Nevertheless, some of these issues were addressed in a study carried out in the Region of Murcia with people linked to cultural centres and associations located in the surroundings of the Museum of Fine Arts of Murcia (MUBAM), with the aim of improving the methodologies of approach and communication between museums and their context. The study showed that there was no relationship between the MUBAM and the sociocultural institutions of the environment and that collaboration between the two could have numerous benefits (Hervás, Sánchez, &

Castejón, 2017). Although the present research can be understood as a continuation of the study previously mentioned, it is not part of the same project.

On the other hand, it is convenient to highlight the originality of this work by presenting a new perspective on the phenomenon explored. Thus, despite the fact that there are countless studies whose purpose is to know the impressions of the audiences visiting museums and to analyse the level of satisfaction of the visits and activities carried out, there are no studies that compare cultural centres and museums based on the perceptions of the visitor.

2 Theoretical framework and state of the art

2.1 Context

Since the last decades of the twentieth century, the immigrant population in the city of Murcia has increased considerably, contributing to the transformation of the social and economic reality of the Region (Pedreño & Torres, 2008 cited by Rasinet, 2014, p. 5, Immigrant Social Support Network). In Murcia, the capital city of the region, it went from constituting 0.65% of the total population in 1996 to representing 13.05% in 2008. Six years later, according to the National Institute of Statistics, 11.56% of the resident population in the city was of foreign origin. This is a group that, as Torres indicates, has had a more significant presence in those “*more popular and modest neighbourhoods*” such as San Antolín, San Nicolás, San Andrés or San Pedro (Torres, 2009, cited by Rasinet, 2014, p. 10).

The Carmen neighbourhood is built on the remains of an old medieval suburb later becoming an important industrial area of which only a few factories and buildings converted into homes are preserved. During the last decades, it has experienced the arrival of a large number of inhabitants of various nationalities, transforming it into a multicultural area in which a wide variety of customs, languages, and religions can be found, which have contributed to its cultural enrichment (Fundación Cepaim, 2016).

In the Carmen neighbourhood, the migrant population represented between 15% and 20% of the total population in 2006, while in 2014 it increased to 20-25% (Rasinet, 2014), with foreigners of up to 80 different nationalities registered and giving rise to a multicultural neighbourhood. Within this group, the Latin American population stands out with around 40% of the total. In second place is the population from Eastern Europe, mainly from Ukraine and Romania, with 22.7%. The North African population is the third predominant group in the neighbourhood, accounting for 15% of the total. In terms of countries, the nationalities with the greatest population weight in the Carmen neighbourhood are Ecuador, Morocco and, finally, Bolivia (Rasinet, 2014).

Pérez Azagot defines the neighbourhood as an area in which “*a variety of different ethnic collectivities coexist, and they do so outside the monopoly of an assimilative logic from the cultural point of view*” (Pérez Azagote, 2012, cited by Sánchez-García, 2016, p. 13).

2.2 Cultural policies

The cultural sphere has not traditionally been one of the main political concerns, being discriminated against by other issues of greater political and social interest such as health, education or employment (Hernández, 2003). However, globalization is causing

a reaction effect that increases the importance of culture as a link to the territory, creating a great debate: multiculturalism. Since 1977, when the construction of the so-called welfare state began in Spain, the cultural sector has shown great economic dynamism, although in a very uneven way. The Autonomous Community of Murcia however, is in an almost marginal position, since the public sector in general has a downward trend while the private sector shows some growth (Hernández, 2003). It is at this point that cultural policies should be reflected, understanding culture as the *“set of interventions, actions and strategies that different governmental, non-governmental, private, community, etc. institutions implement with the purpose of satisfying the cultural, symbolic and expressive needs and aspirations of society at its different levels and modalities”* (Ariel, 2012, p. 57).

It is clear that the current cultural space is heterogeneous, changing and complex and, precisely for this reason, the design of cultural policies must take into account and know the cultural variety and the undoubted complexity of both the territory and its inhabitants, as well as the different institutions and associations that interact and participate in the process. According to Ariel (2012), these cultural policies are articulated on four axes: cultural heritage, creators, cultural industries and cultural cooperation. In this regard, the Council of Europe at the Oslo Conference in 1976 proposed the following objectives of cultural policies: to promote creative action and preserve the legacy, to ensure access to culture for all citizens (democratization of culture) and, finally, to guarantee the possibility of creating culture (cultural democracy). In this way, those political and cultural management strategies based on an open model must take into account existing social alternatives, as well as create new strategies for cultural communication and human development (Ariel, 2012).

Spain's cultural policy model is characterised, among other things, by a process of decentralisation. Almost all cultural competences have been transferred to the 17 Autonomous Communities. Their behaviours are not uniform and show notable variations and divergences (Uriel & Raussell, 2009).

Delving into the particular situation of the Region of Murcia, it has opted for the creation of credit and prestige projects, focusing attention on these initiatives rather than promoting initiatives that directly concern the culture available to citizens (access to cultural centres, support for creators in the Region, quality of the programmes created, etc.) (Hernández, 2003).

2.3 New Museology: the social function of the museum

ICOM (2017) defines the museum as *“a permanent, not-for-profit institution, at the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, preserves, researches, exhibits and transmits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of study, education and enjoyment”* (Mairesse, 2017, p. 30). In other words, broadly speaking, a museum is an institution at the service of society that has a direct relationship not only with cultural heritage, but also with many other areas.

Among the main objectives and functions of the museum is its openness to society, thus acquiring a clear sociocultural and didactic approach. This fact has led to what is known as “New Museology”, a term that is used with different meanings according to various authors. In this process of change, two essential facts can be highlighted: the Santiago de Chile Roundtable of 1972, which highlighted the social function of the

museum and approved its adaptation to a contemporary reality (Azócar, 2007). Furthermore, as Alonso (1999) points out, the Quebec Declaration (1984) recognised the importance of citizenship in the museum and established the need to broaden the objectives of museology beyond its traditional role. From this new perspective, *“the main function of the museum is to be an instrument of social and cultural development at the service of a democratic society”* (Alonso, 1999, p. 231), thus promoting active, direct and meaningful participation in the population. For his part, Navajas (2015) states that the main contributions of the New Museology are the perception of the museum as an open space and the importance of its social function, as well as the heritage of the cultural and social memory of a territory.

At the European level, various policies have been created whose main purpose is to promote social inclusion through the development of programmes for minority groups. In the case of Anglo-Saxon museums, the policies put in place are aimed at ensuring that museums take into account the needs of a wide audience and promote social cohesion. For their part, Ibero-American museums focus on respect for diversity as a factor of both common enrichment and personal growth. Similarly, some Spanish museums are involved in a dialogue with society, thus promoting the inclusion of all groups in order to respond to the social, cultural and economic changes that occur in the environment. The vast majority of these museums are part of the plan called *Museos+Sociales* that was launched in 2015 by the Spanish Secretary of State for Culture.

On the other hand, and based on the model developed by the Reinwardt Academie in Amsterdam, three main functions can be distinguished in museums: preservation (related to acquiring and conserving collections of cultural objects), cultural research and the communication function, which includes two of the most visible functions of the museum: education and exhibition (Desvallés & Mairesse, 2010). Currently, as Hernández (1992) points out, the museum has a double responsibility: to preserve the identity of the object as a heritage element and to contribute to the development and evolution of society, having to find the perfect balance between both issues.

In terms of research focused on museum entities, there is a wide variety of studies of museum audiences, as well as analyses of the visiting experiences. In the context in which we are interested, Tiburcio (2015) carried out a visitor study in several museums in the Region of Murcia. One of the most interesting aspects of this work is that it allowed us to know what the profile of the non-visitor to the museum is. Thus, young people aged 16 to 25, mainly men, were not very much connected to the cultural activity carried out in museums, finding only 4.4% who said they attended them. On the other end, people over 65 rarely visited museums, as well as people with secondary, primary, or no education. This was the same situation for foreigners residing in Spain from countries of emigration and foreign tourists (Tiburcio, 2015).

2.4 Science museums

Science museums, whose main objective is to contribute to scientific literacy in non-formal environments, provide an ideal opportunity to learn independently, individually and by choice, as well as to deepen knowledge of the scientific field in an enjoyable, dynamic and attractive way. As opposed to a purely individual learning process, museums, and especially scientific museums, promote social interaction and collaborative learning and offer opportunities for various forms and strategies of learning. However, one of the

main controversies of science museums is the dichotomy between, on the one hand, exploring through play based on the visitor's curiosity and, on the other, learning about natural phenomena through much more guided activities and explanations (Segarra, Vilches, & Gil, 2008). Likewise, Shields (1992) highlights that there is an essential variable that must be taken into account: the predisposition of the visitor. In this sense, adults access the museum with the purpose of learning, while schoolchildren seek fun and entertainment in it, thus acquiring an essential role in their learning both the museum educators and the teaching-learning process itself (Guisasola & Morentín, 2007, p. 402).

Science museums currently focus their activity on the presentation of concepts/laws, universal principles and scientific phenomena that transcend time and context, instead of focusing their exhibition on objects, as was the case previously. They promote the interaction of the visitor with the different modules through the senses, thus favouring both active participation and motivation. However, this personal context is closely linked to the physical and social context that will also have a clear impact on the museum experience (Laspra, 2013).

One of the most important characteristics of today's science museums is the increased use of new technologies (Jiménez & Palàcio, 2010), which makes it possible to develop new projects based on learning by discovery (Guisasola & Morentín, 2007).

2.5 The Museum of Science and Water

Inaugurated at the end of 1996, the main objective of the Museum of Science and Water was to provide the city of Murcia with a space for scientific dissemination by resorting to techniques that implied the active participation of the visitor. The profile of the public that comes to the museum, as indicated by its director (Parra, 2003) is mostly children and young people, so the visit adopts a didactic approach. A visitors' study conducted in 2007-2008 (Hervás, Parra, Nicolás, & Ruiz, 2009) aimed to describe the characteristics of the non-school audiences visiting the museum. Thus, among the visitors were mainly women (52.4%), users with a high-medium level of education and the public from the Autonomous Community of the Region of Murcia, most of them residents of the capital. Furthermore, the study showed that the audiences were mainly young visitors, with almost half of them aged between 12 and 31 years. Concerning the reasons for visiting, 74.3% went to the museum to learn, 33.7% to enjoy themselves and 12.6% to spend their leisure time. Likewise, approximately 60% of the total made the visit as a family. 58.3% of the respondents had previously visited the museum at least once (Hervás, Parra, Nicolás, & Ruiz, 2009).

Regarding the museum facilities, it is a rectangular building with a total surface of 2,421.90 m² that was built to revitalize a depressed area by taking advantage of an old water tank owned by the City of Murcia. A certain emblematic character can be extracted from the implementation of the project, as Murcia is a city in which water scarcity is one of the main concerns of citizens (Hervás, Parra, Nicolás and Ruiz, 2009). As its director indicates (Parra, 2003), the museum's infrastructure is divided into five large spaces in which each room fulfils a specific function:

- **Water Room:** various activities and exhibitions are carried out in this room to generate new cultural attitudes and awareness in relation to the use, distribution and exploitation of water.

- **Children's sky: School planetarium**, especially designed for children in which the observation of the sky is carried out in a pedagogical and fun way. The capacity of this room is of 26 people and it has a projector of more than 2,000 stars.
- **Discover and Imagine Room**: intended for children aged 3-7 years, it has an interactive nature that encourages exploration, participation and discovery.
- **Temporary exhibition hall**: in which current scientific issues are disseminated. The museum has both exhibitions of its own production and exhibitions imported from other Spanish towns and European cities.
- **Assembly Hall**: the conferences, workshops and courses given by the museum take place in this hall, focused on promoting the participation of young and adult audiences through the treatment of scientific topics of interest.

It is, therefore, an entity with multipurpose facilities that make it possible to carry out activities of various kinds.

2.6 Cultural centres and participation

Municipal cultural centres

The cultural centres of the municipality of Murcia are non-profit public entities of citizen participation, whose objective is the design, planning and realization of cultural programmes and activities that complement the cultural offer proposed by the local administration. Dynamizing and promoting the cultural activities carried out in these institutions is the responsibility of the Municipal Board (Murcia City Council, 2005, Official Gazette of the Region of Murcia, nº 139).

Municipal cultural centres “*constitute a wide network of socio-cultural public services extensively decentralised throughout the municipality*” (González, 1997, p. 5). Its objectives are both to promote the enjoyment of culture and to encourage social exchange through playful, educational, festive and creative actions. To this end, cultural centres plan and design a wide range of activities, which can be grouped into five blocks of action: training, participation and associative promotion, creation (cultural workshops), dissemination and, finally, cultural production (symposia, exhibitions and seminars) (Jular, Montero, Planes and Sánchez, 1995). This range of activities is programmed taking into account the needs and demands of the inhabitants, although the cultural centre's own proposals also arise if they are considered adequate, useful or interesting for users.

The facilities of the cultural centres of the Region are located in public buildings owned by the City of Murcia. Different types of activities coincide in time, so these spaces can be described as mainly multipurpose areas and adaptable to the needs of the activities they host.

The target audience depends to a large extent on the social fabric of the district or neighbourhood in which they are located. However, in an interview with Carmen Sánchez, coordinator of the cultural centres in the Region, “*the recipients who participate most in the cultural centres as a population, in general, are women*”. Men, on the other hand, do not show such a level of attendance while young people go to cultural centres in a very punctual manner. Likewise, the cultural centres establish links with the cultural associations of each area (theatre, music, literature) and with the Associations of Mothers and Fathers of the schools (AMPAS) for the organization of extracurricular activities.

The El Carmen Municipal Centre

The municipal centre of the Carmen neighbourhood is located in a building in which several municipal services offered by the City of Murcia are concentrated, such as the education service, the mayor's office and the culture service, with the coordinator of the latter being responsible and a reference for the operation of the facilities, although her work is limited solely and exclusively to the planning of the cultural programme.

There are several rooms in the centre, such as the library, rooms for workshops or the exhibition hall. The library was inaugurated at the end of 1996, has a surface of 325 m² and is part of the Municipal Network of Libraries of Murcia. On the other hand, it has several rooms that function as the headquarters of the following associations and groups in the neighbourhood: Literary Association "Renglonas", Catholic Centre – Popular Culture and Development of Adults El Carmen, Association of Neighbours of Carmen of Murcia, Association of Merchants of the Carmen neighbourhood, Centre of Women El Carmen-CEMCAR and, finally, the Regional Federation of Widows of Murcia. Other dependencies of the centre's facilities are the assembly hall, whose capacity is 70 seats, the dance room and two multipurpose rooms.

The human resources available to the centre are scarce, since it only has one coordinator, two employees and experts temporarily hired as trainers/speakers etc. depending on the scheduled activity or workshop.

3 Objectives

The objectives of the study are broader than the ones presented below. As it is not possible to present the complete research and all its results in this article, we will only focus on those related to the results discussed in this article.

Objective 1: To identify the sociocultural characteristics that define the Carmen neighbourhood.

Specific objectives:

- 1.1 Describe the profile of inhabitants who participate in the socio-cultural activities of the neighbourhood.
- 1.2 Study the social needs and problems that predominate in the neighbourhood according to the inhabitants themselves, as well as the needs and strengths of the neighbourhood, and discover whether these conflicts and social needs are dealt with by the entities and associations in the area.
- 1.3 To know the opinion of inhabitants on the main functions of museums and on the social role of museum institutions.

Objective 2: To learn about the activities of the El Carmen Municipal Centre and the Museum of Science and Water with a social projection and the groups to whom they are directed, as well as participation in them.

Specific objective:

- 2.1 To learn about inhabitants' participation in the activities of both the municipal centre and the museum, and the type of relationship that exists between the inhabitants of the area studied, the El Carmen Municipal Centre and the Science and Water Museum.

4 Methodology

4.1 Method

A non-experimental descriptive method of a mixed nature was implemented for the research. A survey was used as a quantitative instrument, and semi-structured interviews and a discussion group served as qualitative instruments. The purpose of the latter was to know and structure the attitudes, thoughts and ideological orientations of the participants in order to go beyond mere observation and reveal some of the social relations of the field of study.

4.2 Sample

The research sample consisted of:

1. **Interviews:** the coordinator of the cultural centres of the Region of Murcia and the two people responsible for the El Carmen Municipal Centre and the Museum of Science and Water; using the interview as an instrument through which to obtain relevant information for the research.
2. **Questionnaire:** 103 regular visitors to the Municipal Centre of El Carmen for whose selection an accidental random non-probabilistic sampling technique has been carried out. This is made up of 67 women and 36 men over 16 years of age, most of them Spaniards (97%). The average age was 48.6 years.
3. **Discussion group:** finally, eight residents of the Carmen neighbourhood belonging to groups and/or associations in the neighbourhood itself collaborated in the discussion group.

4.3 Techniques and instruments

4.3.1 Remark: event log

In order to analyse the reports of activities of the museum and the municipal centre, all projects, workshops, exhibitions and activities offered in the course of one year were listed and classified. This information was available on the websites of both institutions.

4.3.2 The interview

Three interviews were conducted: with the director of the Museum of Science and Water, the coordinator of cultural centres of the Region and the coordinator of the El Carmen Municipal Centre.

Firstly, after a thorough bibliographic search on the origin and characteristics of cultural centres, it was considered appropriate to carry out a semi-structured interview of six questions (Morga, 2012) with the coordinator of the cultural centres of the Region of Murcia. The information provided gave insights about the process of creation of cultural centres, as well as their objectives and functions. The interview was necessary mainly because it was otherwise impossible to find the relevant information needed to establish the theoretical bases of the research.

Subsequently, a structured interview was conducted respectively with each head of both institutions in which the project was developed. This second type of interview was carried out individually to find out the characteristics of the sociocultural action developed

by both institutions, such as the target audience, the resources they have or the measures adopted to adapt to the social reality of the neighbourhood in which they are located.

4.3.3 The questionnaire

Thirdly, a questionnaire was designed and passed to the users of the Municipal Centre El Carmen in order to find out their sociodemographic and sociocultural characteristics, as well as certain aspects related to the museum and the municipal centre. This included 23 questions, of which 22 were closed and one open. The structure of the questionnaire consisted of six dimensions:

1. **socio-demographic characteristics** of the users who come to the municipal centre, including gender, age, training, occupation and nationality;
2. **socio-cultural habits**: data relating to the respondents' socio-cultural habits;
3. **the social problems** perceived in the neighbourhood by its inhabitants, as well as whether these conflicts or difficulties are taken into account in the planning of the centre they attend;
4. **museums and participation**: knowledge of museums near the neighbourhood and participation in activities carried out in them;
5. **social needs**: information provided by the municipal centre on the activities carried out in museums in the city, as well as whether museum institutions take into account social needs or whether they are spaces in which those social needs are tackled. Furthermore, a question is included to find out the importance that each user attaches to three of the museum's functions;
6. **joint activities**: Finally, question number 20 sought to know if users would like cultural centres and museums to carry out activities together.

Table 1 shows the connection between the specific objectives of the research and the variables of the questionnaire.

Specific objectives	Variables
Describe the profile of inhabitants who participate in the socio-cultural activities of the neighbourhood.	Sociodemographic characteristics of the visitors - gender - age - education - occupation - nationality - leisure activities
To know the inhabitants' participation in the activities of both the municipal centre and the museum and the type of relationship between the inhabitants of the area studied, the El Carmen Municipal Centre and the Museum of Science and Water.	Visitor experience in visits to the El Carmen Municipal Centre - frequency of visits - type of activity carried out - information received regarding activities in museums Visitor experience on visits to the Museum of Science and Water - museum visit - participation in museum activities - type of activity - participation in other museums Knowledge of museums near the El Carmen Municipal Centre - museums in the Carmen neighbourhood - the Museum of Science and Water
To identify the sociocultural habits of the inhabitants who live together in the context analysed.	Sociocultural habits - leisure time
To study the social needs and problems that predominate in the neighbourhood according to the inhabitants themselves, as well as the needs and strengths of the neighbourhood, and to discover whether these conflicts and social needs are dealt with by the entities and associations in the area.	Social context of the neighbourhood - social problems Relationship of cultural institutions and their context - treatment of social problems
To know the opinion of inhabitants on the main functions of museums, and specifically, their specific assessment with respect to the social role of museum institutions.	The role of museums - functions of the Museum - social function

Table 1 – Questionnaire: objectives and variables
Source: own elaboration

The purpose of the questionnaire was to find out the sociodemographic and sociocultural characteristics of the regular visitors, as well as their vision of certain aspects related to the museum and the municipal centre. The sample selection was carried out through an accidental random non-probabilistic sampling technique, being composed of a total of 103 people (67 women and 36 men) over 16 years of age, mostly Spanish (97%) and with an average age of 48.6 years.

The data was collected on a paper questionnaire distributed at the doors of the cultural centre during three days, delivering the survey individually to each participant and providing an explanation prior to filling in the questionnaire. When necessary, supervision was provided during the process, so that all questionnaires were considered valid.

4.3.4 The discussion group

A discussion group was used with a study sample of eight people with a common characteristic: they were all residents of the Carmen neighbourhood who actively participated in the sociocultural life of the neighbourhood and, for the most part, members of different groups and associations in the neighbourhood. This allowed gaining a representative vision of the general opinion of its inhabitants. Women predominated (7 of the 8 participants) with an average age of approximately 43 years. As for the origin, six participants were of Spanish nationality and two were of foreign origin.

The information obtained can be grouped into the following seven metacategories:

- Metacategory I. Leisure time.
- Metacategory II. Cultural activities.
- Metacategory III. Relationship with the Museum of Science and Water.
- Metacategory IV. Relationship with the El Carmen Municipal Centre.
- Metacategory V. Social problems of the Carmen neighbourhood.
- Metacategory VI. Demands and strengths of the neighbourhood.
- Metacategory VII. Treatment of social problems.

The study variables and the specific objectives to which they are linked in the discussion group are shown in Table 2:

Specific objectives	Variables
To identify the sociocultural habits of the inhabitants who live together in the context analysed.	Sociocultural habits - leisure time - types of activities, cultural activities - participation in activities in museums and cultural centres
To analyse the knowledge and participation of inhabitants in the social and cultural activity of the neighbourhood generated by the different entities, groups and associations in the area.	Social and cultural activity of the neighbourhood - knowledge of the Museum of Science and Water and the El Carmen Municipal Centre - participation in the Museum of Science and Water and in the El Carmen Municipal Centre
To study the social needs and problems that predominate in the neighbourhood according to the inhabitants themselves, as well as the needs and strengths of the neighbourhood, and to discover whether these conflicts and social needs are dealt with by the entities and associations in the area.	Social context - neighbourhood needs - treatment of social problems in the Museum of Science and Water and in the El Carmen Municipal Centre
To know the inhabitants' participation in the activities of both the municipal centre and the museum and the type of relationship between the inhabitants of the area studied, the El Carmen Municipal Centre and the Museum of Science and Water.	Relations - relationship of the El Carmen Municipal Centre and the Museum of Science and Water with the collectives and the social context of the neighbourhood

Table 2 – The discussion group: objectives and variables
Source: own elaboration

5 Research results

As mentioned above, it is materially impossible to address all the results of the research in a summary like this, so it has been decided to describe in detail only those directly related to the research objectives that have been considered most relevant in the development of the conclusions and suggestions for improvement.

5.1 Profile of inhabitants who participate in the socio-cultural activities of the neighbourhood

The data acquired thanks to the information collected with the different instruments and techniques made it possible to define the sociodemographic characteristics of the visitor to the El Carmen Municipal Centre.

The sample was composed of 103 people over 16 years of age with an average age of 48.6 years, of which 67 are women and 36 are men. At this point, it is necessary to take into account that the target audience of the municipal centre is anyone over 16 years of age. All activities are focused on this target group, thus excluding a large part of the population that includes children and young people (0-16 years old). For this reason, no person younger than 16 answered the questionnaire despite the fact that some teenagers go to the municipal centre to make use of the library facilities.

Age	Number of respondents	In %
17-25 years	15	14%
26-35 years	9	9%
36-45 years	13	13%
46-55 years	19	18%
56-65 years	27	26%
older than 65 years	20	19%
Total	103	100%

Table 3 – Age of the user of the El Carmen Municipal Centre
Source: own elaboration

With regard to their country of origin, with the exception of three people (two from Ecuador and one from Cuba), all were of Spanish nationality (97%). The education level can be described as medium/medium-high, since 66% have at least reached their a-levels (Baccalaureate/Intermediate Vocational Training). 22% of the respondents were housewives / housemen and 38% were active, either as employees (26%) or as self-employed (12%). Finally, retirees and students accounted for the same percentage (19%).

Current occupation	Number of respondents	In %
employees	27	26%
housewife/houseman	23	22%
student	20	19%
retiree	19	19%
self-employed	12	12%
unemployed	2	2%
Total	103	100%

Table 4 – Current occupation of the users of the El Carmen Municipal Centre
Source: own elaboration

It is necessary to point out that part of the results may be biased due to the huge number of students who go to the library located in the municipal centre, which represent a significant proportion of the overall number of respondents. This fact is one of the factors to be taken into account in the analysis, as it substantially modifies the figures obtained, lowering, for example, the average age of the user of the centre or raising the average level of education, shown in Table 5.

Education level	Number of respondents	In %
no education	3	3%
primary school	11	11%
secondary school / ESO	20	19%
A-Levels / medium professional education	24	24%
Diploma / higher professional education	21	20%
Bachelor	22	21%
Master / Doctorate	2	2%
Total	103	100%

Table 5 – Education level of the users of the El Carmen Municipal Centre
Source: own elaboration

5.2 Cultural activity in the Carmen neighbourhood

The results obtained in the discussion group delved into both the knowledge and organisation of the sociocultural activities carried out in the neighbourhood, as well as the degree of participation and involvement in them.

In relation to the first question, the 8 participants claimed to be informed, to a greater or lesser extent, of the cultural activity of Carmen, since all of them belonged to associations or groups in the area that actively participated in its socio-cultural life. This is one of the main characteristics to the participants of the discussion group: the sense of belonging

that united them to the neighbourhood and, therefore, their commitment and participation in the sociocultural activity generated in it.

It was also striking that none of the participants made special mention of either the museum's programming or that of the municipal centre. On the other hand, four participants defined the neighbourhood as a space in which initiatives and projects of this nature were promoted by small working groups, while the activities promoted by the museum or the centre were considered to be of a sporadic and punctual nature and were, in most cases, far from the demands and cultural needs of the inhabitants of the neighbourhood.

Despite this, a member of the group points out that the neighbourhood does not stand out for its intense cultural activity, the latter being focused on festivals and small activities planned by the neighbourhood's culture group, such as the Intercultural Festival of the Carmen neighbourhood.

5.3 Social problems perceived by the inhabitants of the Carmen neighbourhood

Given that the main objective of the research was to know the relationships of the groups living in the neighbourhood with the El Carmen Municipal Centre and the Museum of Science and Water, as well as the role played by each of the above in the socio-cultural life of the neighbourhood, it was essential to know the most outstanding social problems in the area.

Thus, in the case of the discussion group, the participants specified that the area delimited by Calle Industria, Calle Floridablanca and Paseo Marqués de Corvera was the area in which most of the social problems of the neighbourhood are concentrated. Overall, and taking into account the information collected through the questionnaire and the discussion group, the social conflicts that generated the greatest concern among the residents of the neighbourhood were the burying of the train tracks, immigration, poverty and prostitution. The data obtained are collected in Table 6 and the perceptions about each of them are detailed and described in depth in the following sub-sections.

Social issues	Number of mentions	In % of all respondents (n=103)
immigration	36	35%
burying	36	35%
poverty	22	21%
don't know	15	15%
unemployment	12	12%
prostitution	11	11%
declining economy	9	9%
delinquency	9	9%
insecurity	8	8%
abandon	4	4%
inequalities	3	3%
ageing of population	3	3%
litter	2	2%
racism	2	2%
expensive activities	1	1%
lack of social engagement	1	1%
Total	175	-

Table 6 – Social issues in the Carmen neighbourhood included in the questionnaire
Source: own elaboration

It should be noted that the first of the issues referred to the numerous conflicts and social disagreements that occurred in the city due to the arrival of the Spanish high-speed train (AVE) throughout the year in which the research was carried out.

5.4 Treatment of social issues in the Museum of Science and Water and in the El Carmen Municipal Centre

To gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between both institutions and their surroundings, the study explored the participants' perceptions of how social issues were addressed through the programmes and activities carried out at the El Carmen Municipal Centre and the Science and Water Museum.

As can be seen in Table 7, 52% of the respondents believed that social conflicts were taken into account in the municipal centre to programme, design and plan its cultural action. This figure significantly contrasts with the 11% who believed that museums also consider these aspects in the implementation of their projects.

In the "sometimes" section, the difference between the two institutions is less pronounced, while in the last option of answering "no", there is greater inequality, since 53% of the participants considered that museums do not deal with social problems in any way and that, therefore, they do not adapt to the social context that surrounds them, whereas 23% of the respondents opted for this negative answer in the case of the municipal centre.

... in the ...	Number of respondents				In % (n=103)		
	yes	sometimes	no	total	yes	sometimes	no
Municipal Centre	54	26	23	103	52%	25%	23%
Museum	12	37	54	103	11%	36%	53%

Table 7 – Tackling social issues in the
El Carmen Municipal Centre and the Museum of Science and Water
Source: own elaboration

Analysing the data obtained, it is striking that a large proportion of respondents considered that one of these two institutions did not take into account the social issues of their surrounding areas. In fact, if the answers provided for each of the institutions are aggregated¹ together, the “no” option accumulates 38% of responses compared to the overall, while “sometimes” and “yes” account for 30% and 32% of the total respectively. This fact shows that a large percentage of those surveyed considered that municipal centres and museums are institutions that are located on the margins of the conditions and particularities of the environment in which they are located.

As far as the discussion group is concerned, there are different opinions on this issue. Regarding the possible performance of the Museum of Science and Water as a space in which to deal with the social problems mentioned above, one participant considered that the museum did offer the possibility of resolving the social conflicts in the area and that it could do so not only through exhibition activities but also through the programming of events that take advantage of the space and facilities available. Another pointed out that there was a lack of communication between the different institutions. The rest of the participants did not state any explicit opinion on this aspect.

This question gives rise to a second category that addresses which other museums in the area would deal with such issues, as well as how they would do it. Three participants mentioned the Párraga Centre as a space in which to delve into and solve these issues. However, one participant argued that, when exhibitions or activities related in some way to the neighbourhood are proposed, those responsible refer them to the municipal centre, arguing that this is the appropriate place in which they should be carried out. In addition, four participants agreed on one of the ideas expressed: in the case of rehabilitating the different facilities in the neighbourhood, a long-term programme should be proposed to provide continuity and coherence to the use of the space, that is, to plan what is going to be offered, for what and for what reason.

On the other hand, and based on the general opinion that the municipal centre does not adapt to the needs of the neighbourhood, one participant did not consider that it is an institution that allows for tackling social problems, while two others stated that it could and that, in fact, this should be one of its objectives. Similarly, two participants stated that they encountered obstacles in applying for being allowed to use the centre’s facilities and that the available rooms were permanently occupied by certain associations, which made access to them difficult. In addition, three participants perceived a reluctant attitude on the part of their managers when it came to participating in projects planned by other

¹ Note of the editor: it might be methodologically safer to calculate cross-tabulations rather than aggregating the results of two separate variables.

groups, as well as in those that are carried out outside the facilities and the schedule established by the institution.

The members of the group mentioned several examples that corroborate their opinions regarding the municipal centre. Thus, for example, three participants highlighted the poor adaptation of the municipal centre to the social context of the neighbourhood. Of these, two mentioned a need that arose a few years earlier in the neighbourhood from the creation of a Halloween party for children. The party had been proposed and managed by several mothers in the neighbourhood and was finally attended by 120 children. Considering the great success of the event, the organizers decided to request the help and collaboration of the municipal centre for the development of activities and games related to that celebration, as well as the use of its facilities for the projection of films for children. This proposal was rejected by the municipal centre on the grounds that the insurance contracted did not include activities for children under 16 years of age (“[...] *How are you going to cover the socio-cultural needs of a neighbourhood that has six primary schools, four public and two private, as well as two high schools if the municipal centre itself does not cover insurance for children under 16 years of age? It is very representative and there is a need [...]*”).

Furthermore, one participant emphasised that the cultural centre’s activities were pre-designed, contracted workshops, while another considered that the centre should show a certain willingness to collaborate with community groups and study their needs. Consequently, attendees argued that this type of attitude and behaviour showed that the municipal centre’s proposals were far from being in line with the social context of the Carmen neighbourhood.

5.5 To know the opinion of inhabitants on the main functions of museums and on the social role of museum institutions

Delving deeper into museum institutions, it is vital to discover participants’ opinions on some of the museum’s functions. The aim was to ascertain whether, in the participants’ perceptions, the museum has evolved or still retains a certain traditional character, as well as the importance of each of the selected functions in the museum’s activities.

Regarding the social function of museums, for 72% of the respondents, these are spaces in which to work to improve the needs and social problems of the environment. In other words, they valued the museum as a place that can contribute to and promote social and cultural development. However, the remaining 18% considered museums to be purely contemplative spaces related to art.

Likewise, the respondents rated the following functions of the museum according to the degree of importance of each of them, 1 being very important, 2 important and 3 not very important. The results obtained are detailed in Table 8.

	Number of respondents			Average	In % (n=103)		
	1 I consider it very/	2 important	3 /not		1 very/	2 important	3 /not
leisure time	37	47	19	1,83	36%	46%	18%
education and training	82	20	1	1,21	80%	19%	1%
Social and cultural development	48	35	20	1,37	47%	34%	19%

Table 8 – Importance of the museum's functions according to the users of the El Carmen Municipal Centre

Source: own elaboration

In general terms, the three functions of the museum mentioned above, as well as its social function, were important or very important for the respondents, highlighting the educational and training function, and all of them acquiring a fundamental role in the action carried out by these institutions.

6 Discussion

Based on the results obtained, it can be stated that at the time the research was carried out, there was a lack of dialogue between cultural institutions and groups in the study environment. This fact is also evident in the research carried out by Hervás, Sánchez and Castejón (2017), which focused on the Museum of Fine Arts of Murcia (MUBAM) and the possibilities for local development that it offered. It emphasised the need to know the environment in which the cultural institution is located in order to know the field of action of certain groups and thus be able to optimise the quality of the cultural experience. Along these lines, Soler (2016) highlights this idea by stating that *"museums have very diverse audiences, with different sociodemographic characteristics and disparate intentions and expectations. It is vitally important to start from this conception when thinking about communication strategies aimed at them"* (p. 64). Therefore, it is evident that it is advisable to create communicative processes not only between the various institutions, associations and entities, but also between the groups and inhabitants of the surroundings in order to design and provide a wide and adapted cultural offer.

In this study, the participants perceive the cultural centre as an institution focused on working with the part of the public having particular characteristics (namely: elderly women), implementing projects and workshops that are not linked to the social and cultural development of the context in which they are carried out, but rather to learning, improving and perfecting certain techniques and skills such as painting or dance.

According to the results, the Museum of Science and Water has certain limitations in terms of the type of activity, since the vast majority of them are aimed at children or young people, which substantially limits its field of action. Likewise, the institution's involvement in the cultural life of the neighbourhood is scarce, as it does not collaborate with other institutions in the area for the creation of joint projects and does not take into account the needs of the groups in the planning of its own programming. In addition, both this and a previous public study (Hervás, Parra, & Ruiz, 2009) reveal the deficient

management and dissemination of information related to the activities programmed by this institution.

The conclusions of the study *El museo como espacio de desarrollo local. Una experiencia de participación ciudadana* (Hervás, Sánchez, & Castejón, 2017) (literally: The museum as a space for local development. An experience of citizen participation) determine that both cultural centres and museums have common interests and that, therefore, they must collaborate in order to promote territorial development, so the functions of these institutions should be reconsidered from a social perspective. In other words, both would need to be open to the community and adapt to a changing and complex society (Sabaté & Gort Riera, 2012).

Finally, it is worth highlighting the interest and relevance of the study, as it presents the methodological basis to be taken into account when comparing the work carried out by different cultural institutions and how they relate to their environment. The research, which is not without its limitations – such as the difficulty of getting certain groups (mainly young people) to participate and the impossibility of accessing the programming records of certain institutions –, aims to establish an initial approach to the research question posed, as well as to lay the foundations for expanding the field of study through the use of the same or similar procedures.

7 Conclusions

The results presented so far allow us to know the cultural action carried out by both the Museum of Science and Water and the El Carmen Municipal Centre during the period of one year. The analysis of the data collected shows that neither of the two institutions is adequately adapted to the particularities of the context in which it is located. In any case, it should be noted, as has already been explained above, that both have very limited resources in terms of budget as well as personnel, which in a way can explain this situation. This does not prevent the recommendations described in these conclusions from being used by technical and policy makers to take into account the needs and seek ways to improve.

The data obtained allow us to know and understand the social and cultural needs of some parts of the population of the Carmen neighbourhood and their consideration – or not – by the museum and the municipal centre, whose offers and programmes seem to be limited to groups with very specific characteristics.

The adaptation of programming is not only necessary but desirable, since culture and access to it creates identity, generates social inclusion, brings together and catalyses diversity, fosters the creation of social networks and promotes citizen participation (Insa, 2009). All this has a positive impact on the social and cultural development of the environment and, as a consequence, also on local development. In short, it is a matter of both institutions adapting to the demands of the inhabitants of the neighbourhood and adjusting, to a greater or lesser extent, their projects, to meet the socio-cultural needs of an increasingly diverse public.

7.1 Knowing the social reality

In order to propose not only a quality cultural offer, but also an adequate and varied one, it would be convenient for both institutions in the first place to analyse the social context of the neighbourhood in which they are located. In this case, it would be a matter of establishing a two-way communication to identify the concerns, problems and social demands of the inhabitants of the area. To this end, they could use various means of consultation of the population for the proposal of events and activities, as well as for the approval of the projects generated from them.

This is what is known as the implementation of citizen participation models. In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the use of different instruments of this type in Europe, promoted in the legislative and executive spheres, to revitalize citizen involvement, as well as to strengthen the institutions themselves (Colino et al., 2003; Sintomer et al., 2008 cited by Ganuza, 2010). This boom is due, on the one hand, to the need to address a new social and political scenario in which municipalities are attempting to overcome problems of various kinds; while, on the other hand, they have as a common basis the expansion of the participatory subject, which is usually monopolised by corporate social groups, thus allowing the intervention of informal social groups and inhabitants, agents traditionally excluded from the channels of participation (Ganuza, 2010).

In this sense, conducting short interviews and surveys to find out the preferences and needs of the inhabitants of the neighbourhood could be very useful for the development of adapted programmes. Interviews could be individual or group, which fosters dialogue, as it is a flexible and dynamic instrument for the collection of qualitative data (Díaz, Torruco, Martínez and Varela, 2013).

In turn, the questionnaires are aiming at obtaining quantitative information in a systematic and structured manner, with the major advantage that they can be completed by all types of people without the need to bring them together (García, 2003). The collection and analysis of the data would provide a global vision of the demands of the target audience of both institutions, favouring knowledge of the social reality of the neighbourhood, this being an essential aspect for the development of cultural projects there. Therefore, either of these two instruments can be considered as the starting point for developing and creating activities that adjust to the social and cultural peculiarities of the context.

Another option would be to work with stakeholder mappings. Stakeholders (social actors) can be individuals, groups or organizations that have an interest in a project or programme. They are normally considered as those who can significantly influence (positively or negatively) an intervention or whose presence or work determines the way in which a situation manifests itself (Tapella, 2007). The mapping of social actors, also known as sociograms, which *“involves the use of schemes to represent the social reality in which we are immersed, to understand it in its most complex extension possible and to establish strategies for change for the reality thus understood”* (Tapella, 2007, p. 2). One of the main advantages of this technique is that the construction of these maps is not based on individuals or groups, but on the relationships and networks that they establish. In this way, both the municipal centre and the museum could find out what their links are with the various groups in the neighbourhood and propose improvement measures, thus turning their institutions into spaces in which all social actors are considered.

It is important to bear in mind that the role of certain social actors can be modified, either by the presence of new ones, by changes in the context or by changes in the actor himself. This fact makes it necessary to assume that the mapping or information from the interviews

and questionnaires will be valid for a given moment and that, therefore, these procedures should be updated frequently.

7.2 Implement adapted cultural programmes

Once the needs of the residents of the neighbourhood have been identified and the network of relationships woven between the different social actors has been analysed, cultural projects must be designed, offered and implemented in accordance with the environment in which the entities are located. Although it would be necessary to design concrete proposals for both institutions, some suggestions for the implementation of cultural programmes that take into account the sociocultural reality of the context are:

1. Collect the demands and social needs perceived by the inhabitants of the neighbourhood, as well as know the characteristics of the population as a whole that resides in the area.
2. To propose activities, workshops, exhibitions and projects that respond to the particular needs of the neighbourhood's groups and that favour the participation, development, integration and inclusion of all of them. To this end, the offer must be wide and diverse.
3. To promote the creation of links between different entities, institutions and associations in the neighbourhood and collaboration between them, as well as the continuous exchange of ideas and proposals with the groups that live in it. All this will make it possible to turn these institutions into a space at the service of the community and residents.

Likewise, there are also several areas for improvement, which would have a positive impact on the updating of the cultural offer, making it convenient, varied, adapted and up-to-date.

First, improving the dissemination of information and programmes would help, since the results of this study show the deficient management and transmission of information relating to the programmed activities. The dissemination system adopted by both institutions is based on the distribution of flyers, outside or within their own premises. Although both institutions have a website, it would be convenient to use social networks to reach a greater public information. This aspect would in turn foster outreach towards young and adult audiences.

At the same time, both the museum and the municipal centre must ensure better access for all audiences. They must do everything possible to incorporate options for all types of people into their programmes, such as people with disabilities, persons with disabilities, whether auditory, visual, motor or other, or socially discriminated groups, etc. However, this is an aspect that must be worked on progressively and that requires economic and human resources. For its part, the municipal centre must facilitate access to the spaces that it has in its facilities, trying to eliminate, as far as possible, the administrative and bureaucratic barriers that make it difficult to use.

Finally, in light of the results, it is advisable to continue working on projects that address the relationship between social actors and the cultural action promoted by cultural institutions, since the use of appropriate and up-to-date practices in cultural centres and museums can contribute substantially to socio-cultural development. In this regard, it would be advisable, taking into account the characteristics of the cultural institutions in each location, to extend the research to other municipalities and autonomous communities in order to determine whether what is described in this article is specific to the study area or whether, on the contrary, it is a problem that needs to be addressed throughout the

rest of the country. In any case, this would serve to highlight different experiences and, in all likelihood, to find innovative solutions for creating spaces for coexistence and enrichment that promote community participation in local development processes, with the aim of addressing various social issues (Sabaté and Gort, 2012).

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In memoriam

In memoriam

In memoriam

Cornelia Brüninghaus-Knubel

Nicole Gesché-Koning



Cornelia Brüninghaus-Knubel 1943-2024

Photograph: Emanuela Danielewicz

Cornelia was a very active member of CECA, which she chaired for six years between 1983 and 1989. She attended her first CECA conference in Budapest in 1973.

A few weeks before her sudden death, she was still giving a very appreciated lecture at the Bundeskunsthalle in Bonn, Germany, *Time for change and experimentation in North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) – A pioneer museum art educator's report* (29 November 2024). Cornelia was indeed a real pioneer museum educator during a period when enthusiasm for transmitting modern art to all led to the recognition of the importance of museum education, not only in her country Germany but worldwide. Her article in *Museum International*, entitled *Museum educator: the audience's advocate*¹, remains a must read for all museum educators.

During her last conference, she explained how the use of inclusivity, accessibility and openness to diverse audiences through museum education experiences led to her personal conviction that our work in museums is a fabulous adventure. A work which owes a lot to strong will and determination despite the interference of administration and politics². "Believe in what you are doing and keep going" would have been Cornelia's motto all over the years of her fascinating career from the Folkwang Museum in Essen to her Children's Museum in Duisburg.

¹ Available online at <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1755-5825.1993.tb00564.x>

² Her last lecture (in German) is available online: <https://vimeo.com/1045942591?share=copy>

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ICOM Education is the annual journal issued by CECA, the international Committee for Education and Cultural Action of the International Council of Museums (ICOM) network. The journal publishes papers written by museum professionals as well as academic researchers around the world in order to foster the reflection on the themes which are the committee's *raison d'être*: museum education, cultural action and audience research.

ICOM Education est la revue annuelle du CECA, le Comité pour l'éducation et l'action culturelle du réseau du Conseil international des musées (ICOM). Elle rassemble des contributions du monde entier issues de la pratique muséale ainsi que de la recherche universitaire dans le but d'enrichir la réflexion sur les thèmes qui sont l'essence même du comité : l'éducation muséale, la médiation, l'action culturelle et la recherche sur les publics.

ICOM Educación es la revista anual del CECA, el Comité de Educación y Acción Cultural de la red del Consejo Internacional de Museos (ICOM). Ella junta artículos de todo el mundo escritos por profesionales de los museos y por investigadores universitarios para contribuir a la reflexión sobre los temas que constituyen la *raison d'être* del comité : la educación museal, la mediación, la acción cultural y la investigación sobre los públicos.