



Constructivism Through Design In Art Museums

An analysis of CAC Málaga

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Abstract

Museums as cultural institutions have served communities immensely in providing non-formal education. While there are different kinds of museums in the world with specific educational objectives, there are also museums that leave these objectives vague and open for the visitors to make sense and achieve their own educational goals. Art museums in particular, have been known to take onto this kind of approach, often without even knowing. In doing so, they are often criticised for appearing elitist. This research has been carried out from a constructivist point of view, building upon existing theories and by employing qualitative research methods to find out whether and how art museums incorporate constructivist learning in their exhibition design. It reveals how museums can make use of different managerial and design techniques, from establishing pedagogical departments to hold educational programs and workshops, to employing implicit techniques where they allow freedom of movement by not setting a route for visitors to follow, exclude plaques from the museum space and use lightings to provide different experiences and to convey different messages. Along with that, the research also provides a glimpse into how visitors interpret the museum environment and how, what might be considered 'insignificant' factors, affect their overall experiences. It also gives a peek into how these factors affect museum visitors and non-museum visitors differently. Some of the insights from this research can be used to make the practice of designing art museums more efficient in explicitly stating that they promote constructivism. As a consequence of which, it is likely that the criticism of art museums being highbrow or elitist can be uprooted.

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1. Introduction

Museums and art galleries are well recognised as non-formal educational institutions. They have come to be seen as sites that explore questions in new and often interestingly applicable ways. They can be acknowledged as an unconventional alternative to the regular formal education received by most people. The role of museums is changing from being mainly a source of authoritative knowledge to providing individuals with opportunities to learn in their own ways. They have secured a renewed importance for themselves as institutions that offer visitors the opportunity to engage in learning of their own choice. This has been referred to as 'free-choice' learning and is becoming increasingly important in 'knowledge economy' (Macdonald, 2006).

The concept of 'knowledge economy' is based on treating knowledge and education as products and thus makes it crucial for museums to be explicit in their educational role. While, many might have differing views on this, it is evident that capitalism has become the reality of the world and consequently, commodification of even knowledge is plausible. Thus, from one perspective it can be argued that it is crucial for museums to be explicit in the kind of learning they promote. Museums through their exhibitions, programmes, blogs, and other media, encourage significant learning among the visiting public (Falk & Dierking, 2013). The learning that takes place in museums is unconventional and to a large extent democratic in nature. Considering the variety of museums available to us, educational experiences at different museums may allow us to make different connections with the past, present or even the future. George E. Hein, Professor Emeritus at Lesley University, is active in visitor studies and museum education as a researcher and teacher. He talks about common museum definitions that only recognize museums as collections of exhibits in fancy buildings either solely for their educational purposes, their aesthetic purposes or their social functions. He refers to three museum professionals who seem to emphasize one philosophy more than the other. However, even in their arguments, they all seem to acknowledge the educational role of museums (Hein, 2006). Hein also discusses various educational theories that can be applied to museum education, a field that's importance is being increasingly realised. He mentions theories of learning, theories of knowledge and the relatively new, constructivist conception that could be applied to museum education (2006). The following study seeks to explore the latter in order to get a better understanding of visitor experiences in art museums and how they serve as a learning environment. Based on different theories and

previously carried out research, this study would particularly focus on the learning environment of art museums and how visitors experience it.

According to Falk and Dierking (2013), “learning is cumulative and is built on experiences individuals have before and after their museum experience” (p. 26). Hein explains that constructivist learning in museums, which is a relatively new perspective, represents meaning-making by museum visitors. It tends to redefine education as a ‘meaningful experience’ rather than ‘defined content outcome’. This conception holds that learning in museums represents mediation of meanings not only by museum objects and the way they are exhibited but also by the visitor’s cultural background, personal experience and the conditions of their visit (2006). From a constructivist perspective, learning in and from museums is not just about what the museum wishes to teach the visitor, that is to say it is not authoritative in nature. It is as much about what meaning the visitor chooses to make of the museum experience (Falk et al., 2006). This concept acknowledges learning as a highly contextual process. “The learner’s prior knowledge, experiences, interests, and motivations all comprise a personal context, which is embedded within a complex socio-cultural and physical context” (Falk et al., 2006, p. 27).

John H. Falk and Lynn D. Dierking came up with a model that conceptualized museum visits as involving interactions among these three overlapping contexts: the personal context, the sociocultural context, and the physical context. The personal context includes the unique backgrounds of prior experiences, interests, knowledge, motivations, beliefs, and values various visitors bring with them, that influence their understanding of museum as a societal institution. The sociocultural context focuses on the cultural background of the visitors and the social interactions they engage in. The physical context involves the influence of architecture, objects on display, and the ambiance of the museum on the visitor. These factors strongly influence how visitors move through the museum, what they observe and what they remember. This model is called the contextual model of learning and has been proven to be informative in understanding the complexities of museum experiences (2013).

Visitors do not respond to exhibitions at museums passively, each one individually engages with different aspects of the museum environment while ignoring certain other aspects, possibly due to the aforementioned contextual reasons. Many museum professionals fail to realize the active participation of visitors in creating and making meaning of their own museum experiences. Visitor studies has come to be recognised as an important area of study in this field. There is considerable amount of existing and ongoing research about how visitors experience museums, and how it can be enhanced. One of the aspects of these

research projects thoroughly consider the experiences and expectations visitors come to museums with to understand how it may affect the way they experience the museum. Other aspects, as mentioned earlier involve their social and physical surroundings. Lately, one of the major focuses of museum studies has been on how and why visitors interact with exhibitions since it is generally assumed that designed spaces of exhibition galleries have the greatest influence on the visitor's museum experience (Falk & Dierking, 2013). Although people visit museums for many reasons, 'seeing' exhibits still represents the main goal of most visitors. The physical setting of a museum, such as the architecture, the ambiance and the overall atmosphere of the space as well as the objects, exert significant influence on them. Falk and Dierking argue that "too many exhibitions are designed with the assumption that the museum, rather than the visitor, controls the experience. Exhibitions are and should be designed to engage the visitor in a learning experience that involves his or her stopping, looking and making sense of the information presented" (2013, 29). Museums should not underestimate that emotion elicited by exhibits, either intentionally or unintentionally, strongly influence the resulting learning and meaning-making.

Dr. Emilie Sitzia, art and literature historian, claims that "museums, art museums in particular, are perceived as learning spaces where the knowledge produced is not reduced to the acquisition of information but also encompasses the development of diverse individual cognitive, emotional and social skills" (2017). She goes on to say that "there is instability of meaning in art museums", which is precisely what makes art museums a particularly interesting topic for research. The theory of constructivist learning also seems to resonate best with art museums for the same reason. Similarly, in my opinion, different other educational theories could be applied to varying categories of museums. For instance, a science museum is most likely to function based on the 'active' theory of learning which construes to gaining knowledge by thinking about and acting upon external factors. While a National History Museum might perform on the basis of a 'passive' theory of learning, one that considers the mind to be a passive recipient of new sensations that are absorbed, classified and learnt.

Art museums, particularly contemporary art museums, imply a certain frame for the visitor and a certain set of expectations: an openness of interpretation, a type of experience (Sitzia, 2017). This thesis studies the following question: *How does a contemporary art museum incorporate constructivist learning in their exhibition design and how do visitors experience it?* I will explore the concepts of 'attracting' and 'holding' power, that is, the inherent quality of an exhibition to draw and hold the attention of the visitor with reference to the physical context of contemporary art museums. While it is true that the museum experience

can only be clearly understood considering all three contexts of the contextual model of learning, since they are bound to overlap. I specifically explore the physical context, like issues of exhibition design techniques, the presentation of objects, and the writing and placement of interpretive materials to understand how conventional or new ways of exhibition and museum design can help in keeping the visitors more engaged and provide a better meaning-making experience to enhance acquisition of knowledge. Evaluating this would require taking into account approaches of visitor studies as well. In doing so, qualitative research methods like observation and interviews with the museum personnel of a contemporary art museum in Málaga, Spain would be conducted. Additionally, in order to answer the second part of this research question, open-ended interviews would be held with visitors at the same museum.

As mentioned before, the educational role of museums is well recognised and one of the aspects that are given most importance in influencing the visitor experience is what they ‘see’. While learning objectives in museums of natural history or science are quite explicit and can be well-accommodated in the exhibits, art museums, especially contemporary art museums, seem to leave the learning objectives ambiguous. The primary reason for considering contemporary art museums for this research is because “its meanings are less established and because many of the works make strong statements about the conditions and modes of operation of the society and human being” (Venäläinen, 2012). While the meanings of contemporary art might remain ambiguous, I study whether and how they are presented or exhibited in a museum, helps the mediation of these meanings. This is because apart from making the exhibition presentable and attractive, the design also has an implicit function of exhibiting some kind of knowledge to its viewers. This study could possibly benefit the practice of exhibition design in contemporary art museums.

Museology or museum studies explores the history and the societal impacts of museums while also studying all activities that are involved within this field like curating, designing, preservation and so on. Scholars like Sharon MacDonald, George E. Hein, Eileen Hooper-Greenhill have written extensively on various areas of museum studies like the cultural theories behind it, museum education, and designing and interpretation of museum objects, respectively. A lot of which would be studied and applied to this research. However, while there is sufficient research available specific to different fields of the study like museum education, exhibition design and visitor studies, which more or less correspond to each other. There does not seem to be existing research on the explicit relationship shared between constructivist educational theory, particularly with the way an art museum is designed and how in such a context the objects are interpreted by

its audience. It would be interesting to apply a combination of theories that relate to each other from all these areas of the study to better understand how design can enhance the learning experience.

This research would be built upon existing theories and research work carried out in the past in the areas of museum studies and exhibition design along with fieldwork, where qualitative methods like observation and interviews would be conducted and analysed. The following chapter, Literature review, corresponds to discussing various theories that have been useful in the field of museum studies, it covers topics of visitor studies, museum education, constructivism and exhibition design. The third chapter discusses the methodology adopted to carry out this research in detail, which includes selection of the case study, how the interviews were conducted and the barriers in doing the fieldwork. The chapter following that focuses entirely on the case study, which corresponds to a detailed analyses of the interviews conducted and the observations that took place. And finally, the fifth chapter answers the research question by summarising all the findings and limitations faced. It is concluded with recommendations for future research as well to improve the practice of exhibition design.

2. Literature Review

This chapter provides an overview of some of the theories and ideas that are relevant to the topic of research. It opens with a discussion on visitor research followed by an understanding of what factors influence visitor experiences and the kind of learning that might take place with the help of the contextual model of learning. After discussing experiences and learning from visitors' perspective, the chapter delves into how learning is incorporated or enhanced by the museum for the visitors i.e. various educational theories that might be adopted by different museums. How learning might take place in art museums is explained following this, with discussing the constructivist theory of learning in detail and how it is practiced in the way that the exhibitions and museums are designed.

Visitor Studies

Museums are established as arts and cultural institutions for the people. Hence, the interest of the audience needs to be taken into account. For this, it is important to understand how people experience the museum. Professor Eileen Hooper-Greenhill (2006) defines 'visitor studies' as "an umbrella term for a range of different forms of research and evaluation involving museums and their actual, virtual, and potential visitors which collectively might be termed the 'audience' for museums" (p.363). These studies concentrate on the views, perceptions and ideas people hold or make in and about museums of all kind. Visitor studies seem to position the complex, theoretically informed studies in relation to the more pragmatic studies carried out for practical and operational purposes within museums (2006). This means that as a response to become more visitor focused, the professional practices within museums will have to adapt to the findings of these kind of studies which would call for them to re-prioritise their resources and re-conceptualise their museum policies.

In the first half of the twentieth century visitor studies were limited, with a limited number of methods to carry out this type of research. The best known, of these studies, were based on observation of behaviour in museums. This method was most popular since it was assumed that observations were more reliable and objective than what people might say in an interview. Exhibition evaluation, being one of the earliest forms of visitor research was based on unobtrusive observation of behaviour of visitors in the exhibition space. This involved tracking the movement of visitors and producing maps that showed which

exhibition spots were most frequently visited. This approach treated museums and galleries as neutral research laboratories and limited the data to observations carried out by supposed neutral researchers. In 1928, Robinson developed the concepts of 'attracting' power, the power of an exhibit to attract viewers, measured by what proportion of visitors stopped to look, and 'holding power', the length of time spent looking (Hooper-Greenhill, 2006, p. 366). In the late 1940s, Alma Wittlin asked visitors open-ended questions about exhibitions and encouraged them to produce sketches of their reminiscences. This created the debate of appropriate research paradigms within visitor research. Observational studies were based on behavioural psychology, where observing the time spent was assumed to be an indicator of 'interest'. While Wittlin's approach treated museums as a natural setting where the individual's subjective views were welcome and where learning may or may not take place (Hooper-Greenhill, 2006, p. 364).

Two of the major reasons for the advent of these studies was to understand the educational role of museums better and the need for museums to 'measure' outputs in order to be accountable to their funders and sponsors. To measure the attainment by visitors, many studies with different research paradigms were carried out, however no or little attention was paid to their social or cultural contexts. Eventually, the role of exhibitions as communicative media was realised. It was learnt that the visitor's understanding of the subject of the exhibition or providing conceptual and spatial maps to the visitors would help them understand the purpose and layout of the exhibition (Hooper-Greenhill, 2006).

This, however meant that the designers were responsible for determining the information that was conveyed and the visitors are expected to absorb and retain the message (Hooper-Greenhill, 2006). In the late twentieth century, the scholars of visitor studies began to realise that visitors were not always inclined to strive toward the educational goals as evaluators might have wished (Hooper-Greenhill, 2006). In 1994, Miles and Tout admitted that no matter how well the exhibition is designed, if the visitors were not always motivated to learn, then learning - as motivated and planned for by the exhibition developer - might not take place and any kind of assessment of cognitive development would only indicate failure (Hooper-Greenhill, 2006). This meant that exploring the experience of visitors and the meanings of their visits were more important to create a successful exhibition than what an exhibition designer might have predicted in an attempt to just get a message across.

Conceptual Model of Learning

More than twenty years ago, John H. Falk and Lynn D. Dierking designed a model to help represent the common and unique aspects of the museum experience; “a framework designed to acknowledge, reveal, and organise its complexity” (2013, p. 26). This framework is called the contextual model of learning and has proven to be a convenient aid in comprehending museum experience. The model conceptualizes museum visits as involving an interaction among three overlapping contexts. According to Falk and Dierking, theoretically, each context can be explained and understood individually, however in practicality they will always interact and connect with each other (2013). They say that the “contextual model of learning portrays learning as a result of a contextually driven process which involves constant interactions between an individual’s personal, socio-cultural and physical contexts” (2013, p. 27). None of these three contexts are ever stable, they are constantly changing over time. The three contexts of the model are elaborated below based on Falk and Dierking’s understanding.

Personal Context

The personal context of the model refers to the variety of unique experiences and knowledge visitors already have. These include varying degrees of experience with the institution of museums generally, as well as experience with, and knowledge of, the content and design of the specific museum being visited. This context also includes differences in individual interests, attitudes and motivations for visiting a museum since these factors tend to shape their experiences. Personal context variables help us to recognize and understand many of the differences we observe in who does and does not visit the museum, as well as how visitors behave and learn when they do (Falk & Dierking, 2013).

Sociocultural Context

The sociocultural context of the model refers to the sociocultural background in which the visit to a museum takes place. This context considers two aspects. One focuses on the cultural milieu that people are born into and develop within, while the other focuses on the social interactive factors embedded in and facilitated by the institution itself. Depending on one’s cultural background, people can have different perceptions of museums in society that could determine whether or not they prefer going to museums. This aspect of the sociocultural context could provide us with insights on the underlying reasons for their decisions. Museum visitors are strongly influenced by social interaction factors within the museum. These

could include the company of the visitors, interactions with volunteers and the museum staff or factors like whether or not the museum is crowded. These are factors that have a strong influence on visitors and help us make better sense out of variation in behaviors that we observe (Falk & Dierking, 2013).

Physical Context

The physical context refers to the interior, exterior, design and overall architecture of museums. Architectural and design features can make it easier or harder for individuals to utilize the museum. Important to the physical context is assuring accessible and all-inclusive design for visitors with widely ranging ages, abilities, levels of interest and learning styles. The physical variables strongly influence how visitors move through the museum, what they observe, and what they remember. This can enable us in understanding how people make use of and respond to physical space and what can be done to keep them more engaged at the museum. The look and feel of an exhibition, the design and construction of interactive components; the content, what is presented and how, are important factors that can enhance the museum experience. Museums also rely upon various forms of interactive experiences- “flip labels, buttons to push, handles to pull, holes to peep through, and a burgeoning array of digital tools” (Falk and Dierking, 2006, p. 109), including audio guides, videos to look at during the exhibition, and handheld devices that enhance the experience like virtual reality.

The contextual model of learning allows us to explore museum experiences and what kind of learning takes place in there, keeping in mind the various aspects of a visitor’s life and the environment he or she is in. While this provides us with an understanding from a visitor perspective, it is also important to understand what kind of pedagogy is adopted by the museum for the visitors, or perhaps in simpler words, what kind of learning is being promoted by the museum. The following section explores the concept of museum education and various teaching methods adopted by museums.

Museum Education

As we now have a clear understanding of what visitor studies are, the following section will focus largely on Hein’s theories that involve combining visitor research and philosophy of education to understand how museum experiences can be enriched educationally.

The learning that museums promote is wider and deeper than merely learning facts and concepts; museums promote results such as learning and bonding, improved self-awareness and self-confidence, and

learning related to aesthetics and society (Falk & Dierking, 2013). Learning in the museum and understanding visitors' learning experiences have become essential for museums to survive. The rise and importance of museum education, which has largely become the backbone for the existence of museums, requires us to understand how and what kind of learning is actually taking place in a museum environment. As mentioned before in the introduction, there are many educational theories that are applied within a museum setting, depending on the category of a museum. One of the learning models that seem to be prevalent in most museums is the behaviorist model of learning. Falk, Dierking & Adams (2006) explain that "underlying this framework are a number of assumptions, most significantly that learners come to the learning situation knowing nothing, or virtually nothing, and after a suitable educational intervention, exit "knowing" something. That something is the "thing" that the designer chose for them to learn. Behaviorist teaching strategies tend to be didactic and instructor-centered; the teacher provides the what, when and how fast of the learning experience" (p. 325). However, as discussed earlier, there is always the possibility of a visitor visiting a museum with no intention to learn anything at all, and in such a situation no matter how well the designer plans to teach something to its visitor, he is bound to fail. Although insightful and still existent, the behaviourist model of learning has been criticised and considered flawed by many scholars in the field.

Over the years, with the advancement in neuroscience research, learning revealed to be a more constructive process. According to Hein (1998), educational theories can be classified according to two domains: theories of learning and theories of knowledge they profess. Theories of learning can be grouped along the continuum from 'passive' to 'active', that is, from theories, on one extreme, that consider the mind to be a passive recipient of new sensations that are absorbed, classified, and learned, to the opposite extreme that postulates that learning consists of active engagement of the mind with the external world, wherein the learner gains knowledge by thinking about and acting on the external world in response to stimuli. Here, the one end of the continuum considers learning to be a process where people absorb information that has been transmitted to them, a slow, step-by-step process. The other end of the continuum includes learning theories that are based on the belief that people themselves construct knowledge (1998 p. 21, 22).

Theories of knowledge, also known as epistemologies, on the other hand, are concerned with whether learning entails acquiring truths about nature or constructing knowledge, either personally or culturally, that is 'true' for those who accept it (Hein, 2006, p. 345). Epistemological theories can be explained on a continuum between two extremes as well. On the one end there are theories that claim that the 'real' world exists out there, independent of any ideas that humans have about it. Such views are called

‘realist’ and come under the category of ‘realism’. On the opposite extreme of the continuum is the ‘idealist’ position that views knowledge to only exist in minds of people and does not necessarily correspond to anything ‘out there’ in nature (Hein, 1998 p. 17). A classic example of holding such an idealist position is George Berkeley. Berkeley was an 18th-century philosopher who believed that existence of the external world depends on the human mind. He argued that there would be no sound of a tree falling in the forest if there was no one there to hear it. Applying these positions in the context of museums, a realist position would focus only on the material of the museum content that is being displayed. It would not be organised with a concern for the viewer’s interest or the meaning the viewer might make from the material. In contrast, an idealist curator would consider showing multiple perspectives, or arranging an exhibition that allows visitors to draw their own conclusions. This is because “an idealist curator would be of the belief that meaning of an entire exhibition derives not from some external reality, but arises from the interpretation it is given, either by the curator or the viewer” (Hein, 1998 p. 21).

Hein (1998) eventually created combinations of the two extremes of each continua to develop four families of educational theories. These include didactic, expository education, stimulus-response education, discovery education and constructivism.

Didactic, expository education emerged as a combination of the realist end of theory of knowledge and the passive end of theory of learning. This means that it functions on teaching ‘knowledge’ that already exists, in a specific order. In other words, anything constructed deliberately to provide a ‘lesson’ can be an example of a medium for didactic, expository education. For instance, a teacher, text panels, a tape, instruction manual or an exhibition catalogue. A museum organised on the lines of didactic-expository lines will have exhibitions that are sequential, didactic components like labels and panels, a hierarchical arrangement of subject from simple to complex and clear learning objectives. The focus here is exclusively on the subject. The way to teach something is to analyse it, and then to present it (Hein, 1998, p. 25).

Stimulus-response education is a combination of passive theory of learning and the idealist position of theory of knowledge. Educational theories that focus primarily on training usually fall into this category, where the content of what is being taught is not a concern, only the method. A museum organised on the lines of stimulus-response education lines will also be sequential and have didactic components that describe what is to be learnt from the exhibition. The organisational structure of stimulus-response and didactic, exploratory are similar except that the former is particularly concerned with the method. In the museum field, this kind of pedagogy includes description of exhibits content that focus on linear, sequential structuring of exhibit components and defining specific learning objectives (Hein, 1998, p. 29).

Discovery learning, on the other hand is a combination of active theory of learning and the realist theory of knowledge. Discovery education approaches have accepted the idea that learning is an active process, that learners undergo changes as they learn, that they interact with the material to be learned more fundamentally than only absorbing it. This type of approach may also involve 'hands-on' learning as active learning is often translated into physical activity associated with learning (1998). A museum organised on the lines of discovery learning, will have exhibitions that are exploratory, didactic components that ask questions to provoke thought and some means to assess their interpretation against the 'correct' interpretation of the exhibition. Discovery learning requires an active learning situation where learners get the opportunity to manipulate, explore and experiment (Hein, 1998, p. 30).

The fourth educational theory that emerged as a result of combining the idealist theory of knowledge and the active theory of learning is called constructivism. This education theory suggests that "learning requires active participation of the learner in both the way the mind is employed and in the product of the activity, the knowledge that is acquired" (Hein, 1998 p. 34). This means that first, the learner has to actively, physically be involved during the process of learning and second, that the conclusions reached by the learner must be validated not by conforming to some external standard of truth but by whether they 'make sense' to the constructed reality of the learner (Hein, 1998 p. 34). The constructivist model of learning suggests that learning is a continuous, highly contextual and personal process. It focuses on understanding how to allow individual learners to find meanings and significance in the teaching content such that learning occurs, and on creating the most effective environment for learning (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000). While discussing museum education, Hein (2006) claims that "increasingly this constructivist conception that learning in the museum represents meaning-making by museum visitors - that these meanings are mediated not only by museum objects and the way in which they are presented but also powerfully by the visitors' culture, previous personal experience, and conditions of their visit - is recognised as an essential consideration for museum education" (p. 347). Visitors use exhibits and interpretive resources to, by and large, meet their expectations in general and to address their own questions. A constructivist exhibition would give visitors the opportunity to construct their own interpretations while also validating these conclusions, regardless of whether they suit the curatorial intentions. The educational intention of museum exhibitions to facilitate meaning-making requires withdrawal or modification of curatorial authority.

Since the point of interest in this research is towards constructivism, the following section discusses in detail how this type of learning is facilitated simply by the way the exhibitions are designed and presented to the

visitors. Understanding this will also help in better observing the environment at the museum during fieldwork and whether or not it has an effect on the visitor experiences.

Exhibition Design & Constructivism

According to Eileen Hooper-Greenhill (2000), “museum pedagogy is structured firstly through the narratives constructed by museum displays and secondly through the methods used to communicate these narratives” (p. 3). One of the most significant museum studies approaches of recent years is the textual approach. This involves understanding the objects of study as a text for its narrative frameworks and strategies. In museums, the textual approach would involve studying the spatial narratives set up by the relation between one gallery or object to another, or it might consider the narrative approaches involved and voices implicit in labeling, lighting and sound. There are quite a few advantages of understanding museums in terms of texts and narratives, however one of the important advantages is that “the idea of textuality allows us to raise questions of unintentional meanings, omissions, or contradictions present within displays” (Maison, 2006, p. 27).

As mentioned above, the textual approach might, in some case involve the analysis of spatial narratives that are created by the museum. Spatial design can make a considerable difference to the museum experience. “Space syntax is a theory of space and a set of analytical, quantitative, and descriptive tools for analyzing the layout of space in buildings and cities” (Hillier and Tzortzi, 2006, p. 282). A substantial amount of literature exists on how curators may realize their intentions, and how changing intentions might represent deeper changes in the contextual society. This theory can be used as a tool to investigate the social and cultural functioning of spatial layouts and how they might influence visitors.

According to Bill Hillier and Kali Tzortzi (2006) the theory of space syntax is based on two philosophical ideas. The first is that space is not just the background to human activity, but an intrinsic aspect of it (p. 283). Space plays an essential role in determining movements and interactions between individuals. “The second idea is that how space works for people is not simply about the properties of this or that space, but about the relations between all the spaces that make up a layout” (Hillier and Tzortzi, 2006, p. 283). While spatial design is one aspect that may have an influence on visitors with reference to the physical context, the study of Sainsbury Wing (Tzortzi 2004) shows an alternate case that emphasises the synthesis of design of space with the layout of the display. This is the second aspect of syntactic studies, where rather than using space to complement the exhibits, the architect uses objects to articulate and elaborate space.

“This seems to have an effect by making the visitor culture more exploratory, and the museum visit, a spatial event” (Hillier and Tzortzi, 2006, p. 296). Syntactic studies are increasingly looking at the relationship between the two dimensions of spatial layout: the layout of objects inside spaces and the layout of the relationships between spaces, and showing that they are both strongly associated and powerful in their ability to shape and enhance the experience of the visitor. In the study and design of museum and gallery layouts, space syntax has emerged as a powerful resource not only for asking questions, testing design alternatives, and making strategic decisions, but also for educating our intuitions about the effect of space on visitors’ cognitive and social experience (Hillier and Tzortzi, 2006).

Meaning in museums is created in relation to the collections held within the museum. Eileen Hooper-Greenhill (2000) claims that “one critical element in the construction of meaning within museums is the presence or absence of particular objects. A second vital consideration is that of the frameworks of intelligibility into which collected objects are placed. Objects in museums are assembled to make visual statements which combine to produce visual narratives” (p.3). These objects are subject to a variety of interpretations, some of which may be contradictory. These meanings are constructed from the position that they are viewed. The material properties of objects seek responses, which may be intuitive and immediate. “These responses are culturally shaped, according to previous knowledge and experience, but the initial reaction that an object receives is more likely to be based on a tacit and sensory level than an articulated verbal level” (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000, p. 112). Hooper-Greenhill (2000) attempts to explain the interpretation of these objects by individuals, using hermeneutics. In order to understand hermeneutics, especially in this context it is important to understand tacit knowledge and verbal knowledge. Tacit knowledge is knowledge that has not been brought to articulation. It is the first impulse, a ‘gut-reaction’ that is produced upon encounter. This type of knowledge is entirely based on emotions and influence behaviours a lot. Verbal knowledge, on the other hand, is the evaluation and articulation of what is known, it is textual knowledge and is facilitated by comparison with the ideas of others and enables discussion. Hooper-Greenhill coined the term ‘inter-artefactuality’ (or the artifactual framework) deriving from intertextuality, to define the interrelationships between objects. This includes both verbal and tacit ways of knowing. Now, hermeneutics theory explains that understanding is reached through the process of meaning-making. “Understanding is a process by which people match what they see and hear with pre-stored groupings of actions that they have already experienced. Interpretations aims to uncover the meaning of a work through a dialogic relationship between the detail and the whole” (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000, p.116). The idea of ‘hermeneutic circle’ indicates that understanding takes place through the continuous dialogic movement

between the whole and the parts of a work, where contexts are constantly changed as further relationships are explored. This dialogue between the viewer and the object is influenced by prior experience and knowledge (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000).

The second element in construction of meaning from objects, which is the interpretive framework in which the subject encounters the object, is a crucial one because it is the concept and context in which the object is set that gives it its absolute meaning. This is because the meanings of objects are open to interpretation. These meanings cannot be directly expressed but only be indicated partially, through context. “This partial fixing remains very open: it is always possible to take an individual object and place it in a framework or see it in a new way. The lack of definitive and final articulation of significance keeps objects endlessly mysterious” (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000, p. 115).

Moving forward from individual objects to exhibitions, where meaning lies in the relationship between the objects and other elements, since groups of objects are combined with words and images in an exhibition. Hooper-Greenhill (2000) reiterates that within museums the phenomenon of exhibitions is the major form of pedagogy, it is through displays that museums communicate and produce knowledge. Methods of exhibition design are well-established and it is the curator or the development team’s duty to make sure that the displays produced, communicate meaningful visual and textual statements. However, it cannot be taken for granted that the intended meanings will be achieved by the visitor. “Curators display objects in groups with associated images and texts, and thereby produce interpretations for visitors; meanwhile visitors deploy their own interpretive strategies and repertoires to make sense of the objects, the displays and the experience of the museum as a whole” (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000, p. 124). Hooper-Greenhill complies with the understanding that the opportunity for visitors to experience meaning-making are mostly available at art museums as she claims “in museum exhibitions, curators, especially in art museums frequently prefer leaving the potential meaning open and ambiguous” (2000, p. 4). Hence, the idea of constructivist educational theory being applied to art museums in particular, seems valid. Constructivist learning theory maintains that people make their own active interpretations of experiences and that individuals search for meanings and construct them based on pattern recognition. Museums have addressed this issue of incorporating constructivist learning in a variety of ways, including by providing several different interpretations of an object or exhibit or by encouraging visitors to add their comments. Other strategies, according to Hein (2006) include posing provocative questions to visitors, rather than answers; or seeking to upset linear or chronological representation (p. 347).

To get a better understanding of why these strategies have been adopted, George E. Hein, in his book *Learning in Museums* (1998) lists down some of the components that combine to make up a constructivist position on education. These components must be considered in order to construct a museum that holds a constructivist position.

The first component is connections to the familiar, according to Hein one of the major attributes under any constructivist position is the ability to allow the learners to associate the educational setting with what they already know. 'Prior knowledge' is a major factor in mediating any learning that would take place. In order to incorporate new concepts and ideas, we need to be able to associate what we are intended to learn with what we already know. Keeping in mind that constructivism as an approach allows meaning-making, it can be assumed that "what we are intended to learn" is our own interpretations. Since this approach does not necessarily have an intention, it promotes the freedom to learn anything. A museum that holds a constructivist position would make a conscious effort to allow visitors to make connections between the known and the new. There are various attributes of a museum that can help us in making such connections. The first type of connection that visitors make is with the building that they enter, its location, appearance, and the overall atmosphere. The relationship between the environment and its influence on the meaning visitors make of the experience can often result negatively. The field of environmental psychology proves that visitors, in order to learn, need freedom of movement with comfort and opportunities to feel competent and in control (1998, p. 159). "A constructivist museum, hence should have at least some spaces that are recognisable to the visitors as settings for relaxed, engaged activity in which the visitor would feel safe" (Hein, 1998, p.160). Another aspect to keep in mind is the orientation of visitors. For any learning to take place at a museum, the visitors must feel comfortable with the impression their surroundings make. With respect to museums, taking this into consideration would mean investing "in explicit orientation aids like signs, maps, colour codes, distinctive graphics as well as docents who can explain, interpret and answer questions" (1998, p. 161). Finally, there is the concern of conceptual access, intellectual comfort, which means the ability to associate the content of the exhibition with prior knowledge of the visitor.

The second component of a museum that holds a constructivist position is including different learning modalities. Hein (1998) mentions the theory of multiple intelligences which explicitly contradicts the psychological conception that intelligence is defined by a single element. This theory suggests that humans have a range of unique cognitive forms for expressing thought and creativity and each of them must be valued. He further claims that when planning exhibitions the museum staff must consider multiple ways to involve their audience by exploiting all senses as well as other learning capabilities (1998, p.165). A

constructivist museum will provide opportunities for learning using maximum possible modalities. One interesting learning modality that Hein talks about is the use of drama and theater. The use of theatre techniques engage the learner actively and theater, a formal setting that engages the visitor emotionally and intellectually, can help to expand the visitors' access to the content of the museum (1998). Another component is time. For any kind of learning to take place, especially in a museum setting, it is essential for the visitor to spend some time engaging with the exhibits. So one of the aspects to keep in mind for such a museum is to apply strategies that would keep the visitors in the museum or the gallery for a longer time. Hein claims that the best way to do this is to provide the visitors with comfort. One of the effective ways to do that is to add seating in the museum, particularly with interactive exhibits (1998).

The formal teaching technique known as 'instructional scaffolding' or 'Vygotsky's scaffolding' could also help in enriching the visitors experience at the museum. According to this concept, as compared to learning independently, people learn better when they collaborate with others who might be more skilled or have greater knowledge on the subject. Keeping in mind that constructivism does not impose meanings but allows freedom to create ones own, a slight modification to this formal teaching method can help in giving some sort of direction to the visitors. By this I mean, instead of using 'teachers', using design techniques that gives visitors multiple directions of thought and that also allows them the freedom to choose which direction they want to think in can be beneficial to the practice. One of the major limitations of a constructionist museum, that the acknowledgement of this technique might resolve is providing the visitors with a context. We have already established the way that objects are placed in and the context they are placed in help visitors in making sense of these objects, however if the context is not explicitly made clear, the overall museum experience can be a letdown. Similarly, also important is the role of social interactions. Social interaction allows learners to move beyond their own experience and to expand their own knowledge and also their capacity to learn. One of the new concepts developed in formal education is that of 'cooperative learning' which holds that sharing information and working together will help students learn more and better, while for adults the concept of 'learning community' seems to work well in educating them. Every individual has a unique museum experience and probably a different prior knowledge and preference for learning style than the other person. Sharing museum experiences with other members of the group can enrich the experience of each member of the group. A constructivist museum makes provisions for social interactions and allows the possibility of socially mediated learning (1998, p. 174).

Finally, Hein has suggested one path based on enticing the learner by the lure of the familiar, the comfortable, and the known. However, he suggests another path- the lure of challenge, which also works

well and is quite recognised in the constructivist approach. He says the trick here would be to find the right degree of intellectual challenge that leaves the learner slightly uncomfortable and sufficiently oriented so that he/she stays motivated to pursue the challenge and learn (1998, p. 176).

In 2010, Nina Simon, a former museum director, wrote *The Participatory Museum*, where she states that visitors “expect the ability to respond and be taken seriously. They expect the ability to discuss, share and remix” (Preface, para. 2). Building upon Hein’s contribution to the idea that visitors create their own meanings, Nina Simon introduced the concept of the participatory museum. She too, stresses upon the importance of active engagement of the visitors and provided with design techniques that can help make a museum more audience-centred. She defines this type of museum as one that allows visitors to create, share and socially interact around the content. The one way in which a participatory museum would differ from any other museum is the way it is designed. Traditional design techniques provide information for visitors to consume while a participatory design technique promotes multi-directional content. This means that there would not be any consistency in the kind of experience the museum is providing, however there will be opportunities to develop diverse experiences. She broadly states that one of the first components for any kind of active participation to take place is to make the institution more personal so that the visitors feel comfortable, confident and motivated to participate, following from which tools or platforms for social interaction should be designed for visitors to engage with one another. And finally, making use of artefacts and objects at the museum as ‘topics’ or ‘social objects’ for discussion and interaction between visitors should be facilitated.

Now that we have an overview on how it is possible to merge exhibition design and constructivism, it will be easier to evaluate the museum environment during fieldwork and analyse interviews since we will be able to make comparisons. Since this research is particularly focused towards constructivism in art museums and how it is experienced by the visitors, the following section discusses how interpretation may take place in art museums and the different ways of designing exhibitions in such museums.

Learning in Art Museums

As mentioned earlier, the constructivist notion of acquiring or constructing knowledge seems to be most evidently applicable at art museums, especially contemporary art museums. The reason why art museums are particularly interesting for this research has been discussed in the previous chapter. Some of the

research that has already been carried out with regards to this particular topic is discussed in detail below to build a foundation for this research. It largely corresponds to the contributions made by Dr. Emilie Sitzia to the field of art museums and constructivist educational theory.

Dr. Emilie Sitzia (2016) has, with the help of constructivist educational theory, researched into the kind of learning that takes place in art museums and how it is enhanced using different modes of exhibition design. She applies the narrative theory to make sense out of the ways learning takes place in art museums as a consequence of exhibitions that are created with a constructive approach.

Dr. Sitzia, in her article *Narrative theories and Learning in Contemporary Art Museums: A theoretical exploration* for *Stedelijk Studies* journals (2016), discusses the narrative qualities of a museum, particularly art museums and their impact on learning processes. The three overarching elements of the narrative theory are that “we think in and through narrative, remember in narrative and that narratives are central to the construction of our reality and identity” (2016, p. 6), help in understanding the impact of exhibitions on visitors at an art museum. According to her, the first understanding is that exhibitions are perceived as narratives to the visitor, irrespective of whether it was intended or not by the curatorial team. This means that exhibitions where the visitors can move freely, without a sequential order, will still have a narrative because the visitor will construct some kind of a narrative between the different parts of the exhibition. This constructed narrative will then have an impact on the meaning-making process. “This link between narrative, meaning-making and understanding implies that plot patterns and motifs impact the perception of the exhibition, the process of meaning-making, understanding and remembering, which are all key steps in the learning process” (Sitzia, 2016, p. 6).

The second important aspect of learning in contemporary art exhibitions is the perceived tension between immersive and discursive exhibition designs. While these modes of exhibiting are not opposed to each other, the impacts and the kinds of learning processes and knowledge these models create are very different. In discursive models, the knowledge produced is often in the realm of cognitive information. Discursive exhibition spaces are designed as spaces “that foster negotiation and debate, polarize and politicise space and invite discussion fraught with contradictory views” (2016, p. 2) In a discursive exhibition, the museum narratives are experienced at the same time with the visitor’s own narrative, as a story that can be objectively viewed, as a discourse that can be evaluated. The visitor experiences discursive experience as an external narrative on which he can have a critical view (p. 7).

On the other hand, immersive exhibition designs aim to create knowledge in the area of experience and affective information, and they “look to mobilize visitors sensations and imagination by integrating them

into universes that encourage that reception of the exhibition's messages" (2016, p. 2). An immersive exhibition becomes an immersive experience in a museum visit that can be added to the visitor's autobiographical narrative. This type of an experience gets integrated in the visitor's own history. The impact of such an exhibit would be on an emotional rather than a cognitive level. The discursive display creates a space for reflection but diminishes the emotional-engagement of the visitor (2016). Dr. Sitzia concludes the article with the claim that an ideal art museum with a constructivist approach would be one that creates a hybrid of these two modes of designing exhibitions. In order to achieve optimum visitor learning experience, the museum must create an environment that oscillates between the immersive and discursive.

Building upon these existing literatures and theories, I want to investigate whether and how a contemporary art museum incorporates constructivist learning in its exhibition design and understand how conventional or new ways of exhibition and museum design can help in keeping the visitors more engaged and provide a better meaning-making experience to enhance acquisition of knowledge. The following chapter explains the methodologies adopted to carry out this research and to analyse the data received.

3. Methodology

This chapter focuses on the methodologies adopted in order to answer the research question. It entails the description of the case study selected, the research methods, and research analysis methods adopted. The chapter first discusses the selection of the case study and what research methods were initially chosen and later provides a detailed overview of how the events unfolded during fieldwork.

Case Study & Research Methods

To answer my research question, I will be analysing the Contemporary Art Center (Centro de Arte Contemporáneo) in Málaga, Spain, to find out how a contemporary art museum incorporates constructivist learning through its exhibition design. One of the main reasons for selecting CAC Málaga as a case study was largely circumstantial as most other museums that were approached were unwilling to cooperate or contribute to this research. Fortunately, at the time I happened to be visiting Málaga, the Artistic Director of the CAC museum agreed to schedule an interview, and keeping the time constraints in mind, I decided to select it as my case study.

The CAC Málaga is an initiative taken up by the city council of Málaga. Its aim is the promotion and dissemination of 20th-21st century visual art. CAC is characterised by the dissemination of contemporary art and reflection on the issues involved in this field. The museum serves as a cultural addition to the city of Málaga, an important tourist hub of prime significance. One of the aspects that make CAC Málaga an interesting topic of research is how it operates. Mostly, private and public art museums are constructed with different intentions. Private museums seem to deliberately break conventions in the art world and have the autonomy and funds to do so. However, public art museums rely on various actors, including the government. CAC Málaga combines models of private management with the aims and ideals of public administration. The Centre supposedly encourages local participation and places great emphasis on teaching and education. Considering it is a contemporary art museum, I will analyse what kind of pedagogy they have adopted and whether or not it resembles the constructivist conception of learning.

In order to carry out my research I will be employing qualitative research methods. Naturalistic inquiry or interpretivism is a part of qualitative research, which starts and ends with circumstances as naturally occurring and happening in people's lives. It adopts the view that social order follows from how

humans understand their situation and act upon them (Beuving & Vries, 2015). One of the main reasons for adopting qualitative research methods is because my preferences and what I seek from this research resemble the preferences of any other qualitative researcher. For instance, qualitative researchers prefer qualitative data that involves analysing words and images rather than numbers. “They have a preference for naturally occurring data and inductive, hypothesis-generating research rather than hypothesis-testing” (Silverman, 2014, 22).

Amongst the methods selected for this research are interviews and ethnographic observations. I would be conducting a semi-structured interview with the artistic director of the museum to find out how exhibition designers of contemporary art museums create their exhibitions, whether or not they have specific intentions or objectives for the visitors behind their decisions regarding the design and how they execute them. Another point of interest for me is to find out whether these objectives of the museum are actually met. Therefore, I would also conduct unstructured, open-ended interviews with visitors to explore the responses of the people to gather more information and a deeper perspective. This would be a part of ‘visitor studies’, which according to Eileen Hooper-Greenhill is an “umbrella term for a range of different research and evaluation involving museums and their actual potential, and virtual visitors which collectively might be termed the ‘audience’ for museums” (2006, p.363). The type of data I seek from these interviews are based on the concept of emotionalism, which is “concerned with eliciting authentic accounts of subjective experiences and not objective ‘facts’” (Silverman, 2014, p.173). I intend to interview ten visitors, out of which I want to analyse the data from at least one frequent art museum visitor, one less frequent visitor and one non-visitor. This is solely for the purpose of understanding different perspectives. On the CAC Málaga website, it states that one of the objectives of the project is to serve as a reference point for both the national and the European circuit, keeping that in mind one of the basis for sampling my subjects for the interview would also be whether they are locals or tourists, to get a broad understanding.

I would also be conducting ethnographic observations at the museum to study the environment and how it is being perceived and understood by the visitors. I find observation to fit best as a method to carry out this research since there is minimal disturbance to social life and it can help in understanding how events unfold naturally under ordinary conditions (Beuving & Vries, 2015). However, based on the existing literature, the limitations of behaviourist perspective have already been established and observation as a method falls under this approach. Therefore, a combination of data collected from open-ended interviews as well as observation may serve my best interest since one cannot entirely rely on observations alone.

Fieldwork & Research Analysis

As mentioned in the previous section, I wanted to conduct semi-structured interviews with at least 10 visitors. However at the museum, there were only 6 visitors that I could build a rapport with to actually conduct the interviews. This was because most people seemed to be visiting the museum in pairs and were uninterested in having a conversation with a stranger. However, I did manage to strike up conversations with other visitors at the museum, mostly under the guise of being a visitor myself. Out of the 6 visitors, only 4 of them actually contributed to the research.

After building a rapport with the visitors, they were provided with a brief background about myself and a broad overview of my research. The purpose and direction of the interview in relation to the Master's thesis was provided, however leaving out the exact research question. They were simply told about what visitor research is and that I, as a researcher am looking into various aspects of a visitor's museum experience. It was also clarified that the interviews would be recorded in order to maintain the correctness in the final document. They were informed that if wished, the name of the interviewee would be left out or changed in the thesis. As the visitors agreed to the interviews, I decided to conduct it at a cafe within the museum. They were told that they are expected to respond to the questions as freely and close to reality as possible. A similar brief was provided to the Artistic director of CAC Málaga, however instead of mentioning visitor research, she was told it was to understand the museum's objectives and the way it is designed. There was no mention of constructivism or learning as such to either of the parties.

Even though I was able to build a foundation with all six of the visitors, there were two visitors who appeared to be taken aback by the mention of an interview. They did agree to be part of the interviews, probably out of politeness, however their disinterest was quite evident during the interviews as they provided one-word responses and seemed distracted. Since these two interviews did not materialise as I had hoped and did not add anything to the research, they have been excluded from analysis. All interviews began with questions concerning the background of the interviewees and whether or not they like visiting museums, what kind of museums they usually visit and what it is about museums they like, in general. Eventually, the interviews sought to explore whether or not any kind of learning took place at the museum for these visitors. Based on the responses received, it was found that out of the four visitors, two were frequent art museum visitors while the other two were non-visitors. It should be noted that since the aim of this research is towards art museums, what is meant by 'non-visitors' is with respect to the same, even though they do sometimes visit other types of museums.

Another difficulty faced in carrying out this research was the inability to conduct ethnographic observations. Ethnographic observations are rather long and involve observing the real-life environment in a natural setting. After conducting the interviews, I had decided to visit the museum again the next day to give this research sufficient amount of time. However, upon arriving at the museum I found out that the day before, was the last day of the temporary exhibitions. It was necessary to conduct observations at the same site as what has been referred by the visitors for comparison of data collected and observed, to get a detailed understanding of the environment of the museum. However, there were some unstructured observations carried out the day interviews with the visitors were conducted. Although not as planned, but the observations that took place did put things into perspective with respect to this research.

The semi structured interviews conducted have been analysed using thematic or content analysis of qualitative research. This is one of the most common methods of analysing qualitative data received from semi-structured interviews. A thematic analysis seeks to recognise themes or patterns evident in interviews. This particular methodology helps in sorting out all the data collected from qualitative research methods, for further analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006). The process of thematically analysing primary data collected from interviews involves the following six steps, however in practice a few steps were carried out simultaneously. First is familiarisation with the data. It is absolutely essential to familiarise oneself with the data collected. In this case, since the interviews were recorded, they were first transcribed using the *Otter.ai: Otter voice meeting notes*. The application helps in recording audio and converting speech to text. It also synchronises the audio with text during playback, which helped in fixing any unclear or unfinished sentences. While the application made the process of consolidating data relatively easier, it is still required that such data is reviewed and fixed manually. Later the data was gone through over and again to get a broad idea of what kind of information has been obtained. The second step involves assigning basic initial codes to the data in order to describe the content. For instance, in this case the initial codes that were developed involved using open coding. This was done by matching various data received from the interviewees with specific codes like background, interest, origin, negatives, positives and so on. The next step is to look for patterns or themes. At this stage I used axial coding in order to put these open codes into broader categories or sub-categories that would eventually form the final themes. This was done with the use of some fixed set of codes that were withdrawn from the literature studied and the previously carried out research. These themes basically entail various codes that were found in the second step. The categorisation of those codes into broader themes is the third step. The open codes largely corresponded to the visitors' interests, their company, background,

overall experience at the museum, what they liked, what they disliked, the educational or the not educational aspects that they discussed during the interviews, the motivation and the duration of their visit. Since the focus of this research is largely, towards design and the physical aspects of the museum, a specific code just for that was also created, which entailed comments specific to the ambience. These initial codes helped in coming up with broader categories like ‘visitors’ or ‘non-visitors’, their preferences, criticisms, social factors and physical factors, which were then narrowed down to three final themes corresponding to the contextual model of learning discussed in the literature review. The themes recognised in the data collected from these interviews included personal, sociocultural and physical contexts, built up from the contextual model of learning discussed in the second chapter. As the themes are developed, the data should be reviewed again to make sure no information that could still fit into the categories is left out. By the end of this process, 10 open codes, 5 axial codes and 3 final themes were received (Appendix C). Finally, based on the themes recognised the analysis should be written down to produce the final report (Braun & Clark, 2006). In doing so, I have ensured that I provide sufficient transparency by adding enough evidence that support the development of the final themes and their accuracy by using exact quotes and examples from the interviews in the fourth chapter.

In my approach to further analyse these interviews, I have adopted a constructive point of view, which means that I would be building upon some sort of theory that I can associate my outcomes with. The theories and studies I would be building this research upon, have already been mentioned in the second chapter, however amongst the theories mentioned, the contextual model of learning, constructivist learning theory and the narrative theory would be of primary focus. The following chapter evaluates the case study selected by analysing the interviews with the visitors and the artistic director of CAC Málaga in detail, and discusses the results of this research.

4. Case Study: CAC Málaga

This chapter focuses on the empirical research carried out in order to answer the question of how contemporary art museums incorporate constructivist learning through their exhibition design. The chapter begins with a descriptive introduction of the case study which includes its background and my unstructured observations at the site. Following this, the chapter is divided into two parts. The first part entails the analysis of data collected from the museum personnel at the CAC and the second part entails the analysis of data collected from visitor interviews as part of visitor research. It is concluded with a comparison of results from the analyses to see whether there is congruence in what the visitors experienced and what the creators of the museum intended.

Centro de Arte Contemporáneo de Málaga (Contemporary Art Center of Málaga)

The Contemporary Art Center of Málaga is located in the Wholesalers's market of Málaga in Spain, a historic building on the left bank of the Guadalmedina river. After a period of disuse, the building was declared as an 'item of cultural value' and eventually got converted into the CAC. The building is located in the heart of the old city and offers a range of transport options with the local railway station only 100 meters away and the main bus station at a walking distance of 15 minutes. One of the main objectives of this museum is to bring local and international artists to the forefront while also encouraging local participation. Visiting hours of the museum are from 9 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. from Tuesdays to Sundays and it is generally closed on Mondays. Entry to the museum is free of cost and the visitors are also provided with free use of wifi. It is also wheelchair and disabled friendly. This section largely focuses on observations about and at the museum based on how I perceived it.

Upon entrance the first thing witnessed was the gift shop followed by a cafe. At the reception, the visitors were being provided with a sticker that had the CAC Málaga logo on it, to enter the exhibition space. The first sight upon entering the exhibition space was of, an approximately three to four meter high, white wall right in the middle of the space, allowing the visitors to either start the tour from the left or the right. There was no set order or route in which the visitors were expected to begin their journey. There were five

exhibition spaces, two of which entail permanent collections while the rest held temporary exhibitions. The collections held at the museum varied from local to international artists and displayed artworks through different media like photography, abstract paintings, short films and installations. The layout of the museum seemed to be in a rectangular form with four corridors on the sides and an enclosed space in the centre. Exhibition spaces had broad corridors and white walls with yellow or white lighting over the exhibits, giving the museum a classic art gallery look. There were no clear signals in the form of signs or boards that informed the visitors about entrance into the next exhibition space. However, there were subtle indicators like change in the colour of lights that were used to highlight the art pieces. The sudden change of lighting from fluorescent to yellow, eventually gave a sense of experiencing a different collection. Most of the works displayed were by Spanish artists along with some international artists. All art pieces were accompanied with plaques that referred to the artist and the materials used. However, none of the plaques demonstrated any sort of background of the artist or the art piece.

Though there were many visitors present at the museum, it was not overcrowded, which allowed everyone to have enough personal space to experience all the exhibits. The museum was mostly quiet, there was hardly any interaction with the museum staff. Any conversations that could be overheard were in whispers and amongst couples instead of group discussions. Most visitors particularly seemed to stop and spend some time looking at art installations and art pieces that were massive. One occurrence that took place at least thrice while I was still at the museum, was of visitors being scolded by the floor managers for touching one of the art pieces. This particular art piece seemed to be an interactive work of art as it had objects protruding from it. The art piece in itself and the lack of information and warnings probably led some of the visitors to believe that the exhibit was to be interacted with, which caused reproach by the staff and is likely to have affected their museum experience.

Eventually other aspects that affected the experiences of visitors came to light, as I got a chance to interview a few of them to better understand how they perceived the museum. These are discussed in the second section of the chapter. The following section analyzes a semi-structured interview conducted with the Artistic Director of CAC Málaga.

Part 1: Museum Research

This section focuses on analysing a semi-structured interview that took place with the Artistic Director of CAC Málaga, Helena Juncosa. It aims at finding out whether the museum consciously holds a constructivist position and what their intentions are behind the way the museum is presented and designed. It would also provide a basis to explore if there is any congruence between these intentions and what the visitors actually experienced, in the later section.

The interview with Helena Juncosa was scheduled over email where she was briefed about my background and the requirement of this interview in relation to my Master's thesis. In briefing her, the exact topic of research was excluded. She was simply informed that the interview is to understand the objectives of the museum and how it is designed. The sole purpose for taking this decision was to avoid any manipulation of responses to match the topic of research. The aim was to collect data that is honest and as close to reality as possible.

The interview with Juncosa began with a general discussion about her position and duties at CAC Málaga. She has been working at the museum since it opened in 2003. Initially she worked with the exhibition department and now, is in the middle of discussions with her seniors about her position as the artistic director. She explained that the museum is an initiative by the Málaga City Council and is publicly funded, however it is managed privately. So, currently her position at the museum is of an acting artistic director, yet she is not at the highest position in the organisation because it is managed by a private company. In discussing her role and duties at the museum, she claimed that since it is a small museum with a limited number of workforce, she largely looks over most activities at the museum, which includes organising exhibitions, working with artists, managing the technical aspects including transportation and loaning of artworks, creating catalogues as well as organising programs.

According to Juncosa, one of the main objectives of CAC Málaga is to support and bring upcoming artists, both local and international to the forefront and make them and their works well-known. Following this she was asked if they also support some kind of learning, to which she responded:

“Well we think that one of the most important roles played by any museum is education. So ever since we opened the museum in 2003, we have had an education department, where the idea is to, I think it is obvious that you have to start with the students and try to make it easier for them to experience the pieces at the museum... The department not only attains to kids, but also different

groups of people. We organize programs and workshops with regard to the schools, so it's a combined effort. We also have free guided tours, twice a week for everyone, children as well as adults, on Tuesdays and Thursdays at six o'clock, and another at seven, twice a week. We get approached by schools, during holidays, especially Christmas to organize particular kinds of workshops for them. We are showing works of another artist and it is being viewed and understood by people who visit the museum, often we invite many young artists to the opening of an exhibition, especially if it is by an established artist so that they have a platform to connect and understand and learn better [AD].”

CAC Málaga has a pedagogical department that organises workshops and activities for all age groups ranging from children attending preschools to adults at university level and beyond. Their broad pedagogical approach towards children is based on primary education and aims at helping them get inspired by their environment to create something new. The museum provides them with the environment, surrounding the children with various art pieces and sculptures as sources of inspiration. The activity for the temporary exhibition of *Dracula x Dracula*, for instance, includes a participatory tour of the exhibition where the children are exposed to different styles and mediums that various artists used to come up with their own artworks inspired by Juan Miguel Quiñones’ sculpture. Later, the students are encouraged to come up with their own versions of the ‘Dracula’, like the artists involved in the project. The second type of pedagogical approach is based on secondary level of education and is based on discourse around the content presented at the museum. It aims at developing visual capacity and teaching how to look, while also encouraging critical thinking and developing discourse around the artworks. Apart from conducting participatory workshops and activities, the museum also provides guided tours twice a week and acknowledges the need for networking by treating itself as a platform during exhibition openings, for young and emerging artists to learn and meet established artists.

Further into the interview, it was found out that though the museum acknowledges its educational role and practices it through organising workshops and activities, it does not necessarily incorporate it in the way it is designed. This became clear when Juncosa was asked if the educational aspect is consciously kept in mind while designing these exhibitions and she said that:

“Well you know for sure, in advance which kind of a show will be more popular and which one would not. So, I think this is not the main idea that you have to follow. We bring here artists, we present them because we can see that they have something to tell. I mean more because they are referenced artists... So we consider them because we believe these subjects to be important. But sometimes, you know, I don't know, there are different artists that are more popular and established

and we just know that they will be quite busy shows. Most of them are often more conceptual. So it does become more difficult to program such shows but you know, we have to show many different kinds of things [AD].”

Although Juncosa did not exactly answer the question, it is clear that the preference for the museum is towards shows and artists that are popular and that will bring in more audience. The educational aspect is considered at most in bringing in and presenting different subjects but there is no conscious effort towards particularly presenting something educational. Juncosa mentioned that most works by the artists they represent are conceptual, the rest of the interview sought to understand whether the artworks are consciously exhibited in a particular way to convey their message or meaning, what is considered while making decisions about presenting such artworks and more about the way the exhibitions are designed.

Juncosa claimed that they do not do anything differently in exhibiting artworks that are seemingly more conceptual. Her argument is that since it is a small museum, they do not have the budget for production and hence they make do with whatever they have.

“More or less in the same line. So yes, as I told you we don't have money for production... We don't have texts on the walls because it was a decision of my boss. So, we have this kind of information... [hands out a summary/introduction of the previous exhibition] this is a text we give for free to anyone who visits the exhibition as a bit of only information that could work as a tool to help the visitors in understanding the pieces or the concept better. Sometimes, we work with lights though. They are usually white and simple but in case the artwork or the concept behind it or even the artist demands the presentation to be more dramatic, we switch to different lights, might even use fluctuations in some cases. But we don't necessarily make anything special [AD].”

The museum does not add texts next to artworks, but supposedly provides a summary of the exhibition beforehand. Juncosa claimed that not using texts in the exhibition space was a decision taken by her boss at the institution and she does not know what the reason behind that is. She also acknowledged the fact that this particular decision makes designing conceptual art pieces difficult for her. Apart from that, the museum also makes use of different kinds of lighting in some cases for dramatic effect and to get the message across. Further into discussing exhibition design, the techniques and what is kept in mind while designing the space, it was found that one of the most important aspects for Juncosa is the first impression, she says: “The aim is to get a reaction, something like a shock or a surprise. Something that makes them say: ‘Wow!’. So that it actually hooks them to the exhibition a bit, right at the beginning [AD].” She further explained that a

museum like CAC that does not have different enclosed spaces with different themes, so everything remains a bit connected. The museum works with its space in a way that particular exhibits attract visitors toward it.

“It's all about the view. It's not like any other museum that has closed spaces so you can make different themes. Everything should be a bit connected, or maybe a group of works I think that are related, so when you are making decisions regarding the design these are some of the things that you have to think about [AD].”

Juncosa explained that some spots at the exhibition space are more ‘important’ or ‘good’ and the decision on what kind of artwork would go there depends on which artwork most easily conveys the message of the exhibition.

“It depends on the context of the show. You have to see what kind of work we have for the show. There are always pieces that are peacefully more powerful than others, more powerful or in case when you make a show related to a specific subject, then a good representation is essential. So the work that represents the theme best becomes an important one.”

Moving on from there, it was found that the artists the CAC work with also have a considerable say in how the museum should exhibit their art pieces. According to Juncosa, since the museum works so closely with artists and maintains such good relations with them, it is important for them to keep the artists happy and satisfied. She also mentioned that the biggest issue for the CAC is their budget. She compared the museum to the Picasso Museum in Málaga in saying that they cannot make productions for different exhibitions like the Picasso museum does and if they had the budget for it, they would do things much differently. In discussing what could be done differently if the museum had sufficient funds, Juncosa claimed:

“Well, it obviously depends on what kind of show I'm curating. But we could produce enclosed areas that separate one theme from another, to get the message across of a theme better. Maybe use different lightings in different areas. I personally would also put in a bit more texts, maybe construct structures that would make the view of a specific painting or an installation better, actually to put more emphasis on the important exhibits [AD].”

To conclude, in terms of learning and education CAC Málaga seems to adapt as a participatory museum which partially practices constructivism only through its pedagogical department. Their workshops and activities allow for visitors to actively engage with the museum environment individually as well as

provides with the opportunities to create, share and interact. Some of the things that became clear about the museum based on the interview with Juncosa are that there is more than one factor that is determining the way the museum is presented. The company that manages the museum and the artists that the CAC Málaga works with seem to have more of an influence on how it is designed than the artistic director herself. Another factor that is influencing the overall representation of the museum is the Málaga City Council, as the funds provided to the museum are not sufficient enough for it to reach its full potential. What is also evident is that Juncosa is aware of the lack of context that is provided at the museum and although she cannot disregard her boss' decision to not add texts next to the artworks, had she had more funds she would have sought to different techniques that more or less encourage learning, like emphasizing specific 'important' art pieces of an exhibition to get across the theme of the exhibition better, working with different lights for effect and separating the themes. Another point that came into perspective upon analysis was that the on-ground management at the museum might not be the most efficient one. This is because while Juncosa handed out the summary of the exhibition to me during the interview, based on my observations, no sort of summary or introduction to the exhibition was provided at the site. Besides, the introduction only described one out of the five exhibitions at the museum. All in all it is clear that the CAC does not particularly assume the educational role of the museum in the way it is designed, however unbeknownst it is practicing a constructivist learning technique to a certain extent. However, this claim is only based on the theories that were studied and analysed in the second chapter. The following section looks into how this museum was perceived by the visitors and shall confirm whether or not constructivist learning actually took place.

Part 2: Visitor Research

As mentioned in the third chapter, in order to understand how art museums incorporate constructivist learning in their exhibition design, I decided to understand visitor perspectives as well by conducting unstructured interviews with four visitors. These interviews are analysed in detail here. The following section is structured in a way that each of the interviews is evaluated and explained individually with the help of the themes recognised. The themes recognised while analysing these interview, are discussed individually. A brief profile of each interviewee is provided at the beginning so that the discussion on various themes have some context and become easier to understand. Following this, a new section is introduced which specifically focuses on the kind of learning that took place at the museum based on visitor responses. The reason for separating these two aspects in two parts is that all four of the visitors mentioned two particular exhibits at the museum as examples, in explaining their learning experience or discussing educational aspects of the museum. This section is structured this way only for the sake of clarity.

Visitor 1

The first interviewee was an Italian student, named Chiara who was on vacation in Málaga, Spain. She has an educational background in Art History and is a frequent museum visitor, who enjoys visiting contemporary and modern art museums. When asked about her visit to CAC Málaga, she responded saying: “I would say it was okay. Not great, not so bad either [R1].” In order to understand why her experience at the museum was such, the interview continued to explore the themes of personal, sociocultural and physical contexts.

Personal Context

One of the first themes that were recognised in the interviews was that of the personal context. The personal context variables would include the interests, experiences and knowledge a visitor comes with. These variables have the direct influence on the opinion that a visitor might make about the museum since they are explicit factors concerned with what one likes or dislikes.

“Well, the pieces were interesting. I like the Spanish focus, I mean that pretty much all the artists were Spanish. To me, it is interesting to go to a country and see and learn about the country’s art and culture... Also, I would have liked to have more context about the art pieces as well the artists and I think that the museum did not provide enough of that. I wasn’t amused by the ambience of the place. I mean it wasn’t even so bad, I’ve visited [laughs] worse museums. It wasn’t amazing but yeah I did see things that I found to be interesting [R1].”

When asked about why she found the experience to be okay, Chiara explained it was because she got a chance to know something new, a bit more about the Spanish culture and its art scene, however, the lack of context or background to the artworks as well as the ambience of the place was a letdown for her. The personal context is concerned with the interests, experiences and knowledge a visitor comes with. To better understand her reasons, she was asked to explain what would make an ideal art museum, according to her.

“Well, I like museums that are neither too big nor too small. I like museums that are also a bit educational in the sense that they explain the art a bit more or a bit more about the artist, basically sort of explain what's going on, you know. The aesthetics of the museum, the interiors are important to me as well. I need to like the ambience and the consistency between different art pieces to actually like the museum [R1].”

Considering Chiara has a background in Art History and is a frequent art museum visitor, her reasons and preferences clearly seem to be based on previous experiences and what she has studied. Hence, her reasons do back up her opinion on the museum.

Sociocultural Context

We have already established a part of Chiara’s sociocultural background which involves her growing up in Italy and having a background in the field of arts. Italy has been a crucial centre of art and history, hence it is reasonable for Chiara to be passionate about art museums and have a positive perspective towards them. In fact, one of the reasons as to why she would like a bit of a background about the artist is that it helps her in making connections with what she already knows.

“So, like in contemporary art, there are different types and concepts behind it. I sort of like to compare art pieces and make sense of which period of art history the artist possibly got inspired from. [Laughs] It's like a little game for myself [R1].”

The last statement also implies how a visitor too can make their museum experience worthwhile. Other sociocultural factors that are yet to be explored however, involve the socially interactive ones. Visitor experience is strongly affected by the socially interactive factors present on site. In Chiara's case, these factors were her friends who she visited the museum with. She claimed that the visit was about 40 minutes to 1 hour long, however she would have preferred to spend more time at the museum. Since she was visiting the museum with other people, she did not want to take a lot of time to herself and cause inconvenience to her company.

“I think I should have spent more time there. Yeah, I'm sure I could have spent more time. Also I was with other people, I was with some friends of mine. So I think that when you're with friends you also kind of keep up with their pace and try to not spend too much time at one piece. And so yeah, I think like, if I were alone I probably would have spent more time there. But yeah, it was good anyway. I mean, I think I really saw everything [R1].”

However as she elaborated on what it is like to be visiting a museum with company, she described the negatives as well as the positives of it. According to her, it is good in a way because there is interaction, which allows room for comments, discussions and understanding perspectives different from our own. To her, the difference in opinions itself is interesting and makes the experience worthwhile. She then went on to mention that the 'ideal' company for her to visit an art museum would be someone who is independent and likeminded, someone who likes going to art museums and takes their own time to experience everything as well.

“But, at the same time, I love going to museums alone. I like to take my time, I'm very slow. And with people it's always like pressure, you know. Like you are taking too much time and everyone's waiting for you. But honestly, the best thing ever is to go with somebody who is independent. So you both go inside together, and then just get lost. Take your own path, at your own pace and just meet at the end once you are all done, at a particular spot. And then discuss things afterwards [R1].”

Physical Context

One of the things that Chiara was not too fond of was the ambience of the museum. The physical context variables of a museum like the interiors, architecture and the overall look and feel of a place enhance

museum experience. However, according to her the lighting was too “cold” and the placement of certain installations was not “valorized [R1]”. She mentioned a particular installation with balloon-like structures hanging from the ceiling which was placed in one of the corners of the museum. She seemed to think the value of this particular art piece was compromised by placing it in a corner, when it could have been hung somewhere in the center so that it is visible from all sides. While that was one of the things she did not quite admire, the fact that it was not a big museum with a lot of pieces and could be covered entirely in an hour or so was a plus for her.

“Yeah, I liked the fact that it wasn't so big. Like in such a museum, in one hour or hour and a half, you can actually really enjoy it and see everything and you don't leave the museum thinking ‘did I miss something?’, or you know, like, the Louvre is too big in my opinion. It's overwhelming and it's also stressful because you want to see all you can and you always end up feeling like you saw nothing [R1].”

We know that museum experiences are complex and the three themes recognised and discussed above have been essential in Falk and Dierking's contextual model of learning, which aims at organising the complexities of museum experiences in order to understand them better. What is also evident from the analysis above is how all contexts, though discussed individually, seem to interact with each other constantly. For instance, Chiara's previous experiences with art museums affected her opinion about the ambience of the place as she says, “It wasn't even so bad, I've visited worse museums [R1]”, which is indicative of how the ambience of this particular museum puts it in the middle of a spectrum of good and “worse” museums she has visited.

Visitor 2

The second interviewee was Laura from Berlin, Germany. She has a Bachelor's degree in Design and is currently interning with a design firm. She too, like Chiara, is a frequent art museum visitor who has particular interest only in contemporary and modern art museums. When asked about her experience at the museum, she said: “I liked it. Yes. It was definitely not the best experience, but I did like it [R2].”

Personal Context

One of the reasons for Laura to visit CAC Málaga was the fact that it had the words ‘contemporary art’ in it [R2], which signifies what her particular interests are. In explaining why her museum experience was not the best, she said

“I think one of the things that I didn't like about the museum was that it was a bit typical because, you know you imagine art museums to be very elitist and slightly superficial if you would like to put it like that. And the museum did give off that kind of vibe. I've been to art museums that are not the typical image of what an art museum is like, you know, white walls and gold framed pictures and paintings. It was to me slightly traditional apart from maybe the exhibition of artworks... But yeah, just the interiors in general, I think weren't attractive to me. It seemed kind of dull. Also, yes, at the museum we didn't get any sort of information to refer to, no brochures or anything were handed to us, there was no information on what the exhibition is about. Stuff like that kind of makes you feel clueless and also is a bit condescending, I think? Because then it feels like ‘if you are smart enough, you would understand’. [R2].”

According to Laura it was mostly because the museum was too ‘traditional’ for her and gave off a vibe of elitism. She claims that typically art museums are considered to be elitist and high-browed, which is something she does not quite like and has had previous experiences of art museums where she did not feel that way. She added that she was not particularly fond of the interiors, as there was nothing new there. She said: “I have been to a lot of art museums and art galleries that do not fall in the same category or follow the same aesthetics. And they seem so much nicer, the experiences there were so much better [R2].” This statement in itself is indicative of the knowledge and experiences she has had of art museums and how they serve as a point of reference for her to judge her new experiences. Apart from the interiors, the lack of information provided, added to the image of it being high-browed. The ‘elitist’ image of the museum was patronizing to her. However, she still liked her experience because of the way some of the artworks were exhibited. When she was asked how the experience could have been better for her, she said:

“What I would have preferred is just a little bit of context, some kind of context. Maybe something like at the entrance of the museum, maybe there's a plaque that just explains, not even explain, maybe just a brief description of what the exhibition is, or just the concept behind it. You know, it doesn't have to be to the point [R2].”

Sociocultural Context

Laura has an educational background in Design and is likely to be spending most of her time at work with her colleagues who might also be designers. The company that you spend most of your time with tends to have an effect on how you behave, understand and perceive things. Laura visited the museum with a friend of hers as it was a Sunday and they wanted to explore the city. Incidentally, CAC museum was open so they decided to visit it. They had also visited the Picasso museum earlier. Although Laura visited the museum with a friend, she claims that it could also be considered a solo visit as the two of them moved about the museum at their own pace, experiencing most of the museum individually.

Laura too, like Chiara, prefers to visit museums on her own. She explained,

“Because I mostly only visit art museums. And I like to take my time. And it's also always a kind of pressure with people around. Yeah, because you never know if they're actually digging the vibe of the place as much as you are. Or maybe you're not digging the vibe of the place but someone else is... But yeah, like, sure I was walking around on my own and my friend was away. But there were points when I was looking at an art piece and I was thinking something and then I thought that I need a second opinion. Yeah, like I want to talk about it or I want to see whether someone else is thinking the same thing or not. I can't quite say I liked walking around alone in this museum [R2].”

Her reasons for visiting the museum alone are similar to that of Chiara's, however she seemed glad that she had visited this particular museum with a friend. She explained later that the reason for this was mostly because of the way the artworks were exhibited and the lack of references available.

“And there weren't a lot of references. Not a lot of background. So it was a little difficult to just, you know, go around. It's also kind of nice sometimes. But yeah, I personally, at a couple of points felt like 'Where is she? I want to get her here. Make her see this art piece and ask her what she thinks, just to get a sort of reassurance of whether what I'm thinking of an art piece is what she is thinking as well or not? [R2]”

Laura's visit was approximately 45 minutes long, which according to her was an appropriate amount of time since museums can be very “time consuming, take a lot of energy out of you, sometimes... If I can cover an entire museum in anything less than an hour and a half, I think it's perfect [R2].”

Physical Context

As mentioned earlier Laura's background and her company obviously have an influence on how she perceives things. It would not be unreasonable to assume that she analyses the environment that she is in, especially the environment of an art museum more critically than others, keeping in mind that her field of interest is Design. Her major criticism of the entire experience has largely been on the physical variables of the museum like the 'typical', 'traditional' look of an art museum and the lack of information provided. She considered the interiors of the museum to be dull. When asked what made it 'dull' according to her, she said "I think just ambience. It was too conventional for me. Nothing new or different. Yeah, very snobbish, too many white lights, white walls and everything [R2]." The feeling of condescension that came with the 'elitist' vibe of the museum was mostly because of the way the museum looked and the lack of information like art pieces without any context or background.

This being said, Laura also mentioned that one of the interesting things was the way the artworks were exhibited, while she would have liked a little bit of context or background, she emphasised on 'little' as, to her, it provokes thought and makes the experience interesting.

"Just a little background, something that gives you a direction to think in a way, it can go multiple ways, but, you know, just a description of the exhibition. And then I don't think it is very necessary for each artwork to have a description or anything. I think that is a good thing, it kind of makes you think in general [R2]."

As is evident from abovementioned conversations, Laura too is a frequent art museum visitor and a lot of her preferences and dislikes resemble that of Chiara's. For instance, their preference to visit museums alone as well as the reasons behind those preferences. Also, none of them were amused by the ambience of the museum. Here as well, the overlapping of the themes is clear. Mostly, the variables mentioned under the personal context and physical context seem to be closely connected to each other.

Visitor 3

The third interviewee was Emma, a local from Málaga who works at a nursing home. She is originally English but has been brought up in Spain. Emma likes visiting museums, however she is not particularly fond of art museums. When she was asked how her visit to the CAC was, she said, "I would say

it was, it was okay it was quick enough, I don't really know how long it took but I would say around half an hour [R3].”

Personal Context

Emma seemed to be of the same opinion as Chiara about her experience at the CAC being ‘okay’. However, her reasons for it were slightly different. She said that she likes visiting museums but the vibe of the place resembled more to that of an art gallery, which she was not particularly fond of. She explained that she would rather go to a history museum or a museum that gives her “more information [R3].” Since her response seemed quite generalised, she was asked if she thinks that art museums do not provide any knowledge or information. To which she responded,

“Well, it depends. Because on the same day we also went to the Picasso Museum. And with that there was like a temporary exhibition that we saw of Picasso and I can't remember the other guy's name, and you know you have those plaques on the wall that explained what you're looking at. Or there's an audio guide that's giving you information about it, which, that's not happening in the CAC, the CAC looks like it's just an art gallery in my opinion, or, I don't really know, but that's what I would say, and I didn't really learn anything [R3].

Here too, it is visible that a previous experience of an art museum that Emma liked became a point of reference with which she made comparisons to judge the ‘good’ and ‘bad’ of the next museum she visited. Another such reference, where a connection or a comparison was made with a previous experience occurred when Emma was further enquired about why she would rather visit a history museum than an art museum.

“Um, I guess I'm just more interested, at the end of the day in something that's more educational, I think, you know, recently I was in Sweden and I went to a museum in Malmo and there's not that many museums there and it's just like their main city museum. And there was a lot of information about like natural history and stuff and a lot of plaques, lot of texts and there was also an aquarium and loads of stuff about animals so I think that's more interesting for me to go and see and actually learn about, than just walk around an art museum where I'm maybe not getting as much information [R3].”

Sociocultural Context

So, it is quite clear that the experiences Emma has had as well as her general interests are not particularly directed towards art museums. However she still visited two art museums that day. When she was asked why she decided to visit CAC Málaga she said that it was because her friends wanted to go. This was a group of four girls, out of which, Emma claims two were really interested in art and that “they have studied more about it so for them, it was really interesting [R3]. So, they had a day-out and she decided to accompany them to the museum. She also stressed upon the fact that she would not have visited the museum if it was not for her friends.

Emma also mentioned that although the museum experience was ‘okay’ for her, it was also short. She claimed it was about 35 minutes and that was a good thing for her because, she said “I don't want to be in that kind of museum for too long or any museum to be honest, because I think here, it's very quiet, you're just walking around and it can make you a bit sleepy, in my opinion... [R3].” Another aspect of the visit that Emma thought was a good thing was her company. She further elaborated on the dynamic of the group saying,

“Yeah, I mean, it definitely made it better. I can't imagine what it would be like if I went alone. [Laughs] If I went alone I would just walk around very fast. I was somewhat grateful that it was free you know because I wouldn't really want to spend money on it. Um, but yeah, it's different because the girls I went with, you know one of them, wasn't as interested, either. And so, yeah, it's nice to kind of, not joke or, you know, to make fun of it but just not to take it so seriously because I do think that people in art museums in particular, among other museums, do take what they're looking at way more seriously. Probably because they're very passionate about it, they very much like it. But, they just take it a bit more seriously so it was nice to go with someone that kind of made me share my opinion without the fear of being judged for it and I can say yeah what do you think of that [R3].”

For someone like Emma, it is clear that she would like to have company while visiting a museum, especially an art museum, and preferably with someone who is also not so engrossed in it. What is also evident here is the perception of elitism that Laura mentioned in the previous interview. Emma seemed to be of the opinion that people who do visit art museums with interest might get offended by her nonchalance, since they take it ‘too seriously’. Another plus for her was the free entrance of the museum, which is understandable from a ‘non-visitor’ perspective.

Physical Context

In the previous section, I mentioned similar incidents where visitors were told off for touching a particular artwork. Emma was one of the three visitors that were told off and as I had suggested, such an incident did make a difference in her experience.

“Yeah I mean the experience was fine, I did get told off by one of the security guards because there was an art piece there that really looked interactive in my opinion. It had lots of, as compared to the rest of them (art pieces) it had a lot of cylindrical kind of things and they looked like they moved so I did move one because it really looked interactive.. In fact, one of the girls I was with also said the same. So I touched it and I got told off by the security guard for it. Yeah, but other than that, the experience was fine but I thought, it is so obviously interactive and if it's really not, why not just put a sign there, you know, like a warning or something. No one wants to be put on the spot like that [R3].”

What is presented and how, are important components that heavily influence a visitors' experience at the museum. An incident like this can understandably bring the experience for someone who already does not have any interest in this kind of a museum, further down. When Emma was asked what would have made her experience better at the museum, even though she does not particularly like art museums, she said:

“Yeah, I would suggest adding either an audio guide and if they're not into audio guide for a particular reason then at least, I don't know a brochure or catalog, some thing, whether it's on paper, or whether it's already on the wall or something. But just something that I can understand what I'm looking at because just a small plaque next to it with the title. And thankfully I speak Spanish, and so I could understand the plaques when it says oil on canvas and such, I can understand that but that's, I mean Spanish yeah so I think that for a contemporary art museum, it should maybe be different, in English as is universal language. But yeah, just some, some more information, some more context about the whole thing because to me it's just pictures on a wall in the big room and, and that was all it was [R3].”

The interiors and the ambience of the museum were brought up in discussing some of the things that Emma did like about the museum. According to her the ambience was very simple and clean, she also liked the way the museum was lit up and the one sight that particularly caught her attention was the one that was in contrast with and stood out at the museum. She elaborated saying,

“I like the way it's set up and you know like a lot of the paintings that were there, some of the colors used I think they were very well laid out to me. And then there's this cool kind of neon lighting exhibit, which I think was quite cool. It's kind of in contrast to the rest of the part of the permanent collection. I think that kind of stood out to me, so it's pleasant enough to walk around, but yeah it's not the best thing I've seen maybe [R3].”

Although Emma's general interest in museums was different from that of Chiara and Laura's, some of her opinions and perspectives were similar to each, respectively. At the same time, one aspect that both art museum visitors were not too fond of was the ambience of the museum, however for Emma that was the only amusing aspect. While there are similarities and differences in opinions, one feeling common in all three respondents was their contempt towards the lack of context and information provided by the museum.

Visitor 4

The last visitor I interviewed was a Portuguese woman named Rita. She is a product designer, who was on a solo trip to Málaga. Rita likes visiting museums, however she too like Emma is not particularly fond of art museums. In describing her experience at the CAC, she said:

“It was an interesting combination of works. I liked that the rooms had similar themes of the artworks. It was quite short, I feel. I didn't really get too in depth with the artworks. It was a very short interpretation each time I looked at the art pieces [R4].”

Personal Context

Before trying to understand the reason behind why she could not engage with the artworks in depth, Rita was asked what kind of museums she likes to visit, to understand her interests. To this she responded: “Different ones. I like knowing about different things, not so big on art museums but I do visit them every once in a while [R4].” She said, in general when she visits a museum, what she expects out of it is to find out something new or different from what she already knows. Elaborating on her experience at the museums she said that that did happen to a certain extent. She said: “Some of the artworks did make me think of some things, but I guess it's not really for certain because it's only my interpretation of it [R4].”

She then explained the reason for why it was difficult for her engage with the art pieces in depth,

“Mostly because the artworks were too abstract for me I think. I didn’t understand what was going on, like something felt like they were connected or maybe forming a pattern but then suddenly I would come across something that felt out of context. Besides, the context I’m talking about is something I’m probably making up myself because the museum didn’t really provide any background at all [R4].”

Here as well, the critique is towards the confusion that lack of information and context created. Considering the visitor is someone who does not visit art museums a lot, looking at abstract paintings without any reference can understandably create confusion and leave the visitor perplexed.

Sociocultural Context

Rita, though she is not a frequent art museum visitor, she is still open to visiting them. In order to understand one aspect of the sociocultural background, which is the reason that led to this visit, she was asked why she decided to go to CAC that day. To which, she responded,

“I was just walking around the city yesterday and had covered pretty much all the things I wanted to see in Málaga. On my walk, I had crossed this museum and I thought I have one more day here, might as well visit this museum to kill some time [R4].”

It was clearly a decision made out of boredom and as a tourist, to have something to do on the last day in the city. This factor could have subconsciously also affected Rita’s experience, since she just decided to wander into a museum without an interest or purpose. She earlier mentioned that she felt the visit was short. Her visit was approximately 50 minutes long, the longest amongst all the other visitors I interviewed, yet she felt it was quick. Since Rita was on a solo trip and was visiting the museum on her own, she was asked if that is also a conscious preference for her, to which she responded saying:

“I like going on my own. Because then I can take my time with whichever artwork I’m interested in most. But also it’s nice to go with other people where we can discuss what we’ve seen and how we each interpreted things differently [R4].”

Like Chiara and Laura, Rita too preferred going to museums on her own for the same reasons while also acknowledging the perks of visiting museums with someone.

Physical Context

Rita, like Emma, experienced the same incident where she believed the same exhibit to be an interactive one, and when she touched it she got told off for it as well. Rita mentioned the incident as part of what she did not like at the museum. She explained,

“I feel like there was so much variance between the different pieces and some pieces were too abstract to not have any explanation and it doesn't really look like they're there on purpose but they're there so it's probably on purpose. There was also an instance when I got screamed at [laughs]. Well, there was an art piece that looked very interactive and it had different symbols, like it's supposed to be a puzzle that you solve. And they were within cylindrical rolling pins and they obviously can rotate . So, once I touched it the guards screamed at me. Yeah, that was very strange. I mean first, it seems a bit overkill to have an interactive artwork that you can't interact with and second, even if it isn't meant to be interacted with, maybe a warning or something, a text, absolutely anything could be put up there next to it because it seemed to be very obviously interactive. I mean there already isn't any information about any of the artworks, which I also don't like but yeah something like this should be put up there [R4].”

Similar to Emma's experience, being put on the spot in an overall quiet museum can bring out the feeling of humiliation and can certainly affect the entire experience of the visitor, which is what happened with Rita as well. Moving on from the things that she did not like, I tried to enquire if there were things that she did like as well.

“I liked that there were works from different artists... Also, there was no one route so I could just take whichever route I wanted and end up back at the same point. Another thing was the ambience, like the lighting. The museum in itself was too white and I think it kind of helped focus, it put the focus on artworks [R4].”

Here as well the opinion on the ambience of the museum is similar to that of Emma's in the sense that although the museum gave 'art gallery vibes' to Emma and was 'too white' for Rita, they both looked at it in a positive light as for them it looked 'clean' and helped 'focus'. When she was asked what could have been done to make her experience better she too said that the museum needed to provide more context and that more could be done to make the environment more engaging.

From the above analyses of the interviews, it is clear that Chiara and Laura were art museum visitors while Emma and Rita could be considered as ‘non-visitors’. We know that museum experiences are complex and the three themes recognised and discussed above have been essential in Falk and Dierking’s contextual model of learning, which aims at organising the complexities of museum experiences in order to understand them better. During the analyses, a pattern in preferences and reasons was observed amongst the art museum visitors and the non-visitors, respectively. The art museum visitors seemed to be more understanding and accepting, although not entirely happy with the lack of context provided by the museum. They also seemed to disapprove of the ambience and the interiors of the museum, mostly because of their experiences at other art museums. What also became evident from the analyses above is how all contexts, though discussed individually, seemed to interact with each other constantly. For instance, Chiara’s previous experiences with art museums affected her opinion about the ambience of the place as she says: “It wasn’t even so bad, I’ve visited worse museums [R1]”, which is indicative of how the ambience of this particular museum puts it in the middle of a spectrum of good and “worse” museums she has visited. For the non-visitors, however, the lack of context was one of the major critiques. Emma and Rita liked the way the museum was designed and presented but the lack of context left them mostly clueless. They both also had similar experiences of being told off for touching a particular exhibit at the museum. However, one thing in common in all interviews analysed above is the feeling of condemnation towards lack of information and context provided by the museum. Keeping this factor in mind, the following section explores how it affected the learning experience for the visitors.

Learning at CAC

Since the main aim of this research is to understand whether or not any learning is taking place in such art museums and if so, what kind, this section further analyses the educational aspects and learning experienced by the visitors. The themes recognised in the interviews that were conducted are clearly a part of the contextual model of learning. This model helps researchers in understanding the complexities of visitor experiences and the underlying frameworks that encourage or disregard any learning that takes place at the museum.

Interestingly, during the interview when the visitors were asked if they learnt anything at the museum or if there was anything educational about the visit, three out of four of them coincidentally mentioned the same two examples. One, of a temporary exhibition that was set up at the museum called

Dracula x Dracula and a particular art piece which was part of the permanent collection of the museum. In order to clearly state how learning and the interpretation of artworks took place, I will give a brief description of each of the examples mentioned and then analyse how the way they were exhibited encouraged or discouraged learning for the visitors.

Exhibit 1 : *Dracula x Dracula*

One of the first examples mentioned in the interviews conducted was that of a temporary exhibition set up at the museum. *Dracula x Dracula* was presented by CAC Málaga from 31st October 2019 to 2nd February 2020. According to the museum website, “*Dracula x Dracula* is a free interpretation of *Dracula*, a life-size sculpture made entirely of marble by Juan Miguel Quiñones. It was a curatorial project, where each artist presented a reinterpretation of the sculpture in their own style, technique and language. By means of appropriation and reinterpretation strategies the artists took as their reference either the legendary literary character or the iconic ice cream or the honour Quiñones dedicated to him in his sculpture.” Juan Miguel Quiñones is a famous self-taught Spanish artist whose work is often presented in several international exhibitions. *Dracula* is one of his most famous artworks. The exhibition consisted of 61 works, including paintings, sculptures, drawings and photographs by 56 different artists (Figure 1: CAC Málaga, n.d.).



Figure 1: *Drácula x Drácula*, CAC Málaga

Exhibit 2 : *Permanent Collection*

The second example that three out of the four visitors discussed was a particular art piece that belonged to the museum's permanent collection. This particular exhibit entailed four black and white framed photographs mounted in a square format. Three out of the four pictures show a bare body of a man in water while one of frames only captures the waterbody (Figure 2: Naina Tripathi, 2.02.2020).



Figure 2: Permanent Exhibition, CAC Málaga

Visitor 1:

Chiara had mentioned that she liked her museum experience to be educational. According to her, for a museum visit to be educational it is requisite that some context is provided at the site, be it explicitly written or implicit in the environment. She elaborated that the theme of an exhibition and consistency amongst the artworks and the relation they share with each other can make the context clear without the use of texts. Chiara agreed that her visit to CAC Málaga was educational and helped her understand what is currently trending in the art scene of Spain. It also made her make connections with things she has seen earlier. She then explained that one of the things that she thought was interesting was how some of the art pieces kept her questioning.

“Like there was this room full of art pieces from different artists but with a connected theme. It was this kind of small black ice cream that has been bit from a corner and inside there was like red and it was pretty much there in the majority of art pieces. Their titles were diabolic or something connected to diablo, the devil in English. And all these different art pieces that were like collages, paintings and photographs. So a lot of different mediums. And there was always this ice cream there and it made me think like probably these are a collective and now I'm really curious and want to check it out better to know what is that thing? How? What does it actually mean? I understood from seeing more art pieces. Taking them singularly wasn't clear but seeing them together I think it was. I understood that, again it was a criticism against capitalism and the evil behind capitalism. But yeah I'm really curious to see why these different artists that use different styles and different mediums, how did they come up with this idea, and who started this and why did people join in. And if you really look at it, it is really educational, but in a different way, not the traditional way. Because the museum itself, as I said, didn't give you any real context or written text, at least no description or anything. So it pushes, especially someone like me to say ‘Okay, I'm gonna do some research myself later’. And, of course, I will learn something more about it. So definitely educational at the end of the day.”

The way Chiara described the exhibition makes three things clear. First, she did not realise she had walked into a different exhibition space until she noticed the repetition of the same symbol in all of the artworks, second, the way the artworks were presented developed curiosity and third, she can construct her own understanding of it. According to her, this realisation and curiosity in itself were educational enough for her as she would pursue it to answer the questions she has and learn something new. Chiara also mentioned the second example, however in a different context. She said:

“Like I went up to them (her friends) to tell them about this piece that I really liked which had four frames and my friends were like ‘are you joking? We were just discussing that we don't like it.’ And it's interesting because the piece was a little dark and anxious and the order of the frames didn't seem right but I really liked it while they didn't like it at all. [Laughs] And that difference in opinion in itself is very interesting [R1].”

This was also an example of how something developed curiosity for her based on how it was placed. While she was discussing how her perspective was different from that of her friend's, she also acknowledged the fact that the order of the frames did not seem right, however she still liked it.

Visitor 2:

In Laura's experience the museum visit was educational as well, however she explained that the term 'educational' is too academic, which is not how she would describe this experience. She said:

"I would say, the way I interpret it is that it was just, it made me think, right, there were things at the museum that made me think about something else that weren't very explicit, but my mind wandered there. It was definitely thought-provoking and that to me is enough to call it educational."

She too mentioned the *Dracula x Dracula* exhibition in explaining what she liked about the museum referencing the educational aspect of the entire experience. She said that anything that she found to be interesting at the museum was pleasant for her. In discussing this particular exhibit she claimed that her understanding was very metaphorical and mentioned that she had put too much thought in interpreting what she saw, because when she finally discussed it with her friend, who has been brought up in Spain, she found out about the iconic Dracula ice cream. This made her feel as if she had put too much thought into it while it was probably "just an expression of the Spanish culture [R2]." We already established in the previous section that Laura found the museum to be a bit elitist and condescending. This particular incident seems to have been an add-on in maintaining that opinion. Laura described her experience as "not particularly educational, but definitely insightful [R2]", as the things she saw were thought-provoking. Just like Chiara, Laura mentioned the second exhibit in the same reference. She said:

"Well, I would say... I don't know about liking but... actually, I can say that I like things that I found slightly interesting. Like, there was an art piece with four photographs of a man walking into the sea, I think it was really black and white and was nice. What got me thinking was, its placement. There were four frames. One of them kind of showed him on the outside of the sea. The second one showed him inside. One showed him drowned. And there was the fourth one which was halfway. And those four frames, obviously they're together, but they were placed in a way that it kind of made you think, whether the person is walking out from a dip? Or is he committing suicide or something like that, you know, because just the colors, composition, everything the way it was placed. I got confused there. I thought is it dark or is it pleasant? You know, is it peaceful? Or? Yeah, that I think I would say I like that [R2]."

Here as well, the thought-provoking aspects of the art piece, which Laura particularly found interesting, was enforced by how the artwork was placed at the museum.

Visitor 3:

In the previous section, we already established that for Emma the museum visit was not educational at all. Right at the beginning of the interview as she discussed why she did not like the museum so much, she explained that she did not feel like she learnt anything. Amongst the things she did like was the ambience. Based on the interview, it was clear that Emma prefers clear instructions and clarity in whatever it is that she is observing for her to understand it. She mentioned the second exhibit in particular, while discussing some of the things that she did not like. She explained:

“There was one that I really didn't like though, I don't know if that applies as well. There were a series of four photos in which a naked body is getting into water. And it's a sequence of photos but it doesn't seem like in a natural sequence. And I don't yeah I don't like that and then there were two screens of like these people, very slowly walking off, and I think like short videos. I think that's quite disturbing. I didn't really like that either. I would have preferred it to be in order. It was like for me something needs to be in a Z sequence so from left to right, bottom left to bottom right. Yeah, and this was more top left then bottom left then top right, then bottom right, and it just doesn't seem natural to look at in that way [R3].”

Here, there is a complete difference in opinion compared to the other two responses above referencing the same second exhibit. While Chiara and Laura seemed to be fascinated by the intrigue created through the placement of that particular art piece, Emma was of the opinion that it created confusion and seemed unnatural to her, which made her withdraw from engaging with the art piece completely.

Visitor 4:

When Rita was asked if she thought her experience at the CAC Museum was educational in any way she responded saying:

“Educational? Not so much? Because I didn't really feel like I learned anything new more than I interpreted some things in a certain way. But it's not really confirmed. So it's just thoughts that I have and obviously they came from me, because of the artworks but I'm not entirely sure of their initial meaning [R4].”

In discussing the things that she appreciated about the museum she mentioned the *Dracula x Dracula* exhibition in particular, explaining that she liked that it involved different artists and was not an exhibition

by a single artist. Here as well, like with other visitors, realising the repetition of a symbol helped in making Rita understand that it was a separate exhibition space that she had walked into and it also helped in making sense out of what she was looking at. However, like in Emma's case, for Rita as well it is important to know whether what she is understanding or trying to make sense of is or is at least close to its 'initial meaning'.

"I liked that there were works from different artists. It wasn't an exhibition by just one artist. And I could sort of connect the dots a little at one instance. It was in a different corner of the museum, think it was a separate exhibition altogether. There were artworks with one similar ice cream in each of them. And while, one piece alone didn't mean much, but then when it was repeated, it was repeated in different contexts. I could try to interpret what the ice cream means or symbolises [R4]."

Unlike Emma, Rita tried to engage with the art pieces even if they left her perplexed. However, she did not interpret it as a learning experience whatsoever since it is important for someone like her to have some sort of reassurance that her interpretation is correct or close to what is intended.

From the above analyses of the interviews conducted, there are a few things that are explicitly clear. First, that for the non-visitors, this museum experience was not educational while for the other two visitors who like going to art museums, the visit was still fruitful in that respect. The recognition of the themes or patterns in all visitors, like the personal variables, the sociocultural variables and the physical variables helped in understanding the differences in their choices, behaviours and the decisions they took. It also helped in understanding why and how learning did or did not take place for the visitors. For instance, the art museum visitors evidently seem to be active in engaging with the art pieces individually and create their own meanings, while for the non-visitors it seems necessary to clearly know what they are looking at and what they are supposed to understand from it. Art museum visitors acknowledge this kind of mental participation to be learning, while the non-visitors do not. Some of the theories and ideas discussed in the literature review are also clearly evident throughout the analyses. For instance, all four of the visitors emphasised the fact that there was lack of context. While the art museum visitors were still accepting of it, as they seem to acknowledge that things can be understood without to-the-point background or context, the non-visitors did not. In the second chapter we discussed how construction of meaning takes place from objects, and the one basic requirement for it to take place is how that particular object is placed in the overall context. The surroundings, adjacent artworks and the relationship they share is what helps visitors in making sense out of what they are looking at. Additionally, we also discussed a slight modification or incorporating the technique

of ‘instructional scaffolding’ in design could help in enriching the visitor experience. It seems that both these components were more or less lacking from the museum. Nevertheless, in conclusion, the analyses of interviews indicate that constructivist learning did take place at the museum.

From the observations and the interviews conducted, to a large extent it can be confidently assumed that CAC Málaga, albeit unknowingly does make use of the constructivist learning theory, which insists on active visitor participation in making one’s own meaning and creating knowledge on one’s own. A few instances that support this assumption are: First, the museum allowed freedom of movement as there was no set route or way in which the visitor was expected to move. Second, the lack of information provided, although a negative for all visitors, is also one of the ways of production that a museum that holds a constructionist position would take to. And third, the constructivist learning theory supports that human beings strive for meaning and construct them based on pattern recognition. This was evident in all cases analysed above since, in answering questions pertaining to learning and education, everyone mentioned the recognition of a pattern with reference to the *Dracula x Dracula* exhibition. This pattern recognition directed them towards understanding that they are experiencing a different exhibition altogether as well as to an extent, helped them in making their own meanings of what the exhibition is about. This was because that particular exhibition developed intrigue in the minds of the visitors. Also, with regard to art museum visitors in particular, the narrative theory by Dr. Sitzia discussed in the second chapter is also quite evident. According to this theory, human beings think and remember in narratives, understand in narratives and are central to the construction of their reality and identity. Particularly with the art museum visitors, during the analyses of the interviews it was clear how in discussing most things at the museum they spoke in narratives as well as remembered instances from different experiences in the same way. In making sense of the second exhibit with the four frames, Laura came up with two different narratives altogether while looking at one art piece. The second chapter of this thesis also mentioned some of the components that make a museum constructionist, according to George E. Hein. He proposed two models, one that lures visitors with components of familiarity, comfort and the known and the other which entails the lure of challenge. CAC Málaga, based on what has been studied about constructionist museums and analysed at the site, seems to function based on Hein’s second model. However, Hein also talks about how it is necessary to find the right degree of intellectual challenge that forces the visitor to engage and pursue his curiosity, the existence of which is debatable with reference to this museum. This is because in favour of this claim, it can be argued that given the lack of context, Chiara was still determined to make sense out of what was presented.

However, on the contrary, Emma's case particularly would support that the intellectual challenge was not enough to make one pursue the curiosity. But then again, this is a comparison between an art museum visitor and a non art museum visitor, which opens room for contemplation on what the right degree of intellectual challenge would be for non-visitors and/or if there is a common ground that could possibly keep visitors and the non-visitors equally engaged.

The following chapter gives a concise summary of all the findings from this chapter. It will also provide a reflection on the research and discuss its limitations as well as the prospect it opens for the practice of exhibition design, art museums and further research in the field.

5. Conclusion

This research aimed at identifying *how does a contemporary art museum incorporate constructivist learning in its exhibition design and how visitors experience it?* Based on the empirical research carried out at CAC Málaga, it can be concluded that their approach to exhibition design partially answers the question. The research led to two kinds of results that were contrary to each other. While the visitor research carried out indicated that constructivist learning did take place at the museum, the museum itself did not particularly acknowledge its position as a constructivist museum. However, it can be concluded that the museum still partially practices constructivist learning in a way, by taking conscious measures similar to that of a participatory museum and unknowingly by sticking to conventional ways of exhibition design.

Findings

The visitor research carried out explored the overall experience of visitors by delving into their personal, sociocultural and physical contexts. This helped in getting a better understanding of what kind of learning did or did not take place for the visitors. Falk and Dierking's model of contextual learning, mentioned in the second chapter, served as an appropriate basis to analyze this research. The visitor research resulted in what visitors and non-visitors look for while visiting a museum. It was found that one common criticism that all the visitors had about the museum was the lack of context or information provided on site. However, visitors who had previous experiences with, and an interest in art museums seemed to be more accepting of this approach. Irrespective of which, one of the major findings was that visitors often require some sort of context. They need somewhat of a 'nudge', which may lead to different possible directions of thinking but that 'nudge' is essential. This particular finding supports the concept of 'instructional scaffolding' discussed in the second chapter, which suggests that a collaborative effort towards learning or understanding something is more successful than compared to learning that takes place independently. In this particular case, a collaborative effort is not necessarily indicated towards collaboration amongst visitors. It could have also taken place with objects that provide the visitors with a context or a background of the exhibitions. It was also found that the art museum visitors were not amused by the ambience of the museum as it was 'too conventional' or 'nothing new' for them. From which it can be concluded that visitors seek something new or different when they visit a museum. This statement can also be supported, however not

with the same basis of the physical context but from the non-visitors point of view, who at multiple incidents during the research claimed that when they visit a museum they like to find out something that they are not already aware of. Although meant in different contexts, the findings support that people seek something new from museum visits.

It was also found that people thrive on curiosity and do engage with the museum to construct their own meanings. The visitor research helped us in identifying CAC Málaga as a museum that holds a constructivist position. Various aspects like not including texts in the museum, no set route for the visitors to follow and the evidence of how different visitors created their own meanings while they were at the museum contributed in identifying CAC Málaga as a constructivist museum. However, it was also found that the museum itself has not consciously taken any measures to incorporate constructivist learning. With respect to learning in the museum, three out of four visitors participated in some kind of learning process. Out of the four visitors, the non-visitors said that they did not find their experience to be educational. However referring to the interview with visitor 4, it was clear that she attempted in understanding and engaging with the art pieces, she even came up with her own meanings. Although she was continuously doubtful of them because she was more concerned with its 'initial meaning'. This also indicated and supported Hein's claim that a constructivist museum should provide visitors with the opportunity to construct their own meaning while also validating their conclusions. This research also evidently showed that this particular case study strongly contributes to the perception that art museums hold an elitist status. This is because CAC Málaga clearly targets audiences that are experienced art museum visitors. This is probably the biggest drawback of the museum, or any art museum for that matter, as it restricts the visitors as well as any opportunity for constructivist learning to take place.

Referring to Hein's components that largely make up a constructivist museum, CAC Málaga did not seem to relate to any. The component of familiarity with respect to space, intellectual access or surroundings was missing. Hein, in his book *Learning in Museums* particularly mentions that with respect to space, the museum should have clear signs and maps to provide clarity of orientation to the visitors. CAC Málaga can be taken as an example of how a lack of information can hinder visitor experiences altogether. Hein's suggested path of 'lure of familiarity' could not be recognised in the case of CAC, however the alternate path suggested by him, 'the lure of challenge', was one of the approaches that could be observed. Keeping visitor 1's case in mind, it can be argued that the museum provided some of the visitors with the right degree of intellectual challenge to build sufficient curiosity for them to pursue it.

Amongst other things that were found that hindered constructivist learning at the museum were inefficiency of the on-ground management team as well as the large amount of control the private company has over decisions regarding the design of the museum. As observed in the previous chapter, Juncosa claimed that the staff hands out a summary to the visitors upon entrance into the museum. However, none of the respondents ever received any such summary or introduction to the exhibitions they were about to visit. With regard to the private company that manages the museum, had their control over the decisions regarding design of the museum not been as considerable as it was, it is possible that the museum would have successfully practiced constructivism, still unbeknownst and the visitor experiences would have been more enriched. This is because Juncosa acknowledged what the museum is lacking in terms of context and design, however she did not seem to have the autonomy to make the right decisions regarding them. It can be assumed that CAC Málaga partially holds a constructivist position since it does somewhere fall in the category of a participatory museum. With respect to education and learning, the pedagogical department of the museum holds activities and workshops at the museum. Nina Simon described a participatory cultural institution as one which allows its visitors to create, share and interact with each other around the content presented. These are exactly some of the objectives that are achieved during the workshops and activities organised by the museum.

The following section provides a detailed reflection on this study and discusses some of its limitations as well as the possible course of actions that would have made it more reliable and stronger. It also discusses the implications this particular might have on future research.

Limitations & Recommendations

This research did not directly answer how does an art museum incorporate constructivist learning in their exhibition design for various reasons. To begin with, the selection of the case study can be considered faulty since the research implicitly aimed at understanding how art museums that already follow a constructivist approach incorporate it in their exhibition design. Most art museums that were approached were unwilling to cooperate. Therefore, that limited the number of options to choose from as case studies. Another limiting aspect of this was geographical. The case study selected was based in Spain, which – although it was not a problem as I happened to be in the country – limited the time that could have been put

into the research as I was only there for a brief period of time. Another restraint of the case study was that even though all observations and visitor interviews indicated that CAC Málaga practices constructivism, upon speaking to the museum art director it was found that that is not their first priority as a museum. Therefore, speaking to the museum personnel before conducting visitor research might have possibly turned out to be more fruitful.

Other aspects that limited this research is the qualitative research methods adopted. The naturalistic empirical research carried out was partially unsatisfying as its application did not help in entirely answering the research question. The technical aspects of conducting the research served as the biggest restraint. As explained in the third chapter, this research method was adopted because it serves the interest of studying and understanding the dynamics of social interrelations. While it helped in giving descriptive insights into visitor research, the results from museum specific research cannot be trusted entirely. This is because the decision to inform the Artistic Director that the interview was solely for the purpose of understanding how it functions and how it is designed, it is likely that the data received was manipulated in order to portray oneself and the museum in a positive light. With respect to visitor research, even though open-ended interviews resulted to be beneficial in understanding visitor experiences, the number of interviews conducted was very low. Most visitors were unwilling to have a conversation and the two visitors who, although agreed to be interviewed, did not contribute to the research as they provided one-word responses and seemed distracted throughout the interview. Therefore, it might have been more productive and less time consuming to mention the interview while building rapport, so that it becomes clear who would and who would not be willing to contribute to the research. Time also served as a restraint in this research in the sense that ethnographic observation, which was scheduled for the day after the visitor interviews could not take place as the museum took down all temporary exhibitions and started preparing for the next shows. Hence, keeping a track of dates of all exhibitions at the museum would have prevented this and would have added more material to be analysed and get a better understanding of the museum. Another possible limitation of this research could also be the likelihood of existing literature being outdated. Nevertheless, the unstructured field observation, in addition to the detailed interviews conducted, still guarantee a certain extent of accuracy although not the kind that can be relied on entirely. Overall, this research is limiting in the sense that its results cannot be generalised because of the above mentioned restraints. However, it has still managed to give some insights and has possible implications for future research in the field of museum studies.

For Future Research

With respect to future exploration in this field of study, the results retrieved from this research, although not entirely reliable, because of the aforementioned limitations, can still provide insights into further research in the field. To begin with, the theoretical framework adopted and the literature reviewed has largely, been based on museum studies and museum education. Therefore, they can be used as groundwork for inquiry into various other aspects that belong to these fields like visitor research, exhibition design and museum pedagogies. Moreover, if the research and analysis methods adopted in this study are applied to a comparatively larger number of cases, it is likely that the results would be more fruitful and provide with a better overview of how design can enhance learning experiences. Besides, with a more number of cases, the analysis report is likely to be less descriptive and can allow avoiding minor findings. Consequently, this research can serve as a foundation for a broader research project. Furthermore, this study also opens the possibility of investigating how museum experiences can be made more enriching for the visitors by carrying out more detailed and considerable amount of visitor research. It also has interesting implications towards ways to make the practice of exhibition design better, particularly art museums. How they can be made more visitor-centric, participatory and educational. It specifically generates curiosity towards art museums, which still remains to be acknowledged as elitist institutions. As there is not much been studied about art museums, particularly contemporary art museums, it could be interesting to carry out research that explores the various design techniques that are adopted in these museums and what their general implications are. For instance, a further detailed account of Dr. Sitzia's suggested design models of discursive and immersive exhibitions could definitely benefit art museums and the practice of exhibition design as well.

For Exhibition Design

Based on the findings and the limitations of this case study as a constructivist museum, this research can also provide us with insights into the do's and don'ts for a museum that does practice constructivism. To begin with, allowing freedom and comfort of movement and making one's own interpretations is important. For this, not having set a route to follow and not adding plaques next to artworks that describe the pieces would be some of the basic design decisions that an art museum should take. However, it should also be kept in mind that not providing any information at all adds to the elitist status that is generally assumed of art museums. Therefore, like CAC Málaga, though it was not actually practiced on site, handing out a brief

about the ongoing exhibitions at the very beginning of the visit would be one of the simple ways to provide the visitors with some context while also not setting the meanings for them to consume directly. Some of the design techniques that could also help visitors make sense out of the exhibits and the museum in general, are separating themes or one exhibition from the other with the use of lighting, creating structures, and emphasising few exhibits that best represent the subject. Another interesting and probably the most direct way of promoting a constructivist learning experience would be to adapt to participatory design techniques, maybe like turning certain exhibits into interactive corners by adding a comment section or something that allows the visitor put their views forward. While these suggestions are based on incorporating constructivism within the general design of the museum, providing guided tours and holding workshops, like the CAC are also good examples to promote meaning-making.

However, these suggestions still cannot be generalised as they are based on one case study and an analyses of a very limited number of interviews. Nevertheless, this research has allowed a critical evaluation of multiple theoretical concepts and the results can also be used as evidence that support these theories. To conclude, although partially, this research gave us insights into how art museums can practice constructivist learning, often without even being aware of it. Largely, by making decisions about how much information the museum wants to put out there in terms of design and the functioning of the museum, it can promote ambiguity and allow the creation of different interpretations. Although there will always be the possibility that this might not be well-received by all visitors, the experiences of people with specific interest in art museums could definitely be enriched. But then again, this is most likely to add to the elitist stature that it already holds. The aim should be to strip it down of this reputation and make it more conceptually accessible to everyone and not just a specific set of people, simultaneously making the practice of design more efficient and bringing it to its full potential.

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Appendix A

Standard Interview Guide

Introduction

- Brief introduction of the interviewer and the purpose and direction of the interview.
 - For the visitors: Brief description of Master thesis and a background of what visitor studies are.
 - Clarifying the purpose of the interview to be solely to record their experience at CAC Málaga.
 - For the Artistic Director of CAC Málaga: Brief description of the Master thesis.
 - Clarifying the purpose of the interview is to understand the workings of the museum, what its objectives and how it is designed.
- Information on how the interviewees are expected to respond:
 - Honestly
 - As close to reality as possible
- Informing the respondents that the interview would be
 - Recorded to maintain accuracy.
 - Names could be kept confidential, if wished by the respondent.

Artistic Director: Semi Structured Interview

Below you can find an overview of questions pertaining to different topics that were chosen in order to get the best out of this interview for the research:

Museum Management and Objectives:

- Description of your position at the museum.
- What are some of your duties and responsibilities within the museum?

- How would you describe the objective or mission of this museum?
- Elaboration on Public ownership and private management, how it affects the overall functioning of the museum?

Design and Education:

- Do you think that art museums, or at least CAC encourages any kind of learning through its projects?
- What about designing the space of the museum? Do you always keep this educational aspect in mind while designing an exhibition?
- What are the fundamental basis of your design decisions?
- How does CAC encourage learning?

Visitors: Unstructured Interviews

The following list of questions were not set in a questionnaire since the interviews that were to be conducted with the visitors were unstructured. The list is provided just to give an overview of what kind of information the research was seeking from these interviews.

Background:

- Where are you from?
- What do you do?
- Do you like visiting museums?
- Are you visiting alone?

Positives and Negatives of the Experience:

- How was your experience?
- What did you like about the museum?
- What did you not like about the museum?
- How could the experience have been better?

Learning/ Educational experience:

- Do you think the experience was learning in any way?
- If so, how?
- If not, why?

Wind Up

The interviews were wound up with:

- Polite conversations
- Word of thanks for cooperating and providing information
- Seeking any unresolved questions on the interviewee's part
- Asking if they want to proofread the interview transcript.

Appendix B

Interview Transcripts

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Note to reader:

The interviewer opened the interview with a clarifying, explanatory introduction. The introductory part of the interviews and the endings have been excluded from the transcripts.

Interviewee: Artistic Director

Date of interview: 03-02-2020

Location of the interview: CAC Málaga

Length of interview: 34:55 minutes

Interviewer: Naina Tripathi

List of Acronyms: IN=interviewer, AD= Artistic Director

Identifier: AD

Summary Keywords: Artist - Exhibition - Museum - Visitors - Painting - Curating - Walls - Design - Show
- Exhibit

[Start transcript 00:05:11]

IN: If it's okay with you I will start with a couple of generic questions. I would like to ask you first, a little about your position at the museum?

AD: Well, I have been working here since we opened the museum in 2003. I was working at the exhibition department. And lately, I am in the middle of conversations with the Museum because this museum is public, is public money (funding) but private management. Now, I'm like, Acting Artistic Director, but I'm not really a really big boss. Yeah, so they are still deciding.

IN: So as an acting artistic director, what are some of your duties and responsibilities within the museum?

AD: I am working with the program, and organizing the exhibitions. Organising the exhibitions as well because we are a small museum with a small team. We are doing everything related to our show. I mean say, looking for the works and the loans and organising the transport. the catalogue, and working with the artist.

We work as a producer as well. The exhibition and in terms of the organisations., we make everything related to it.

IN: Right, so I'm guessing you also decide what kind of projects and shows the museum will display?

AD: Yeah, we work with the artist in deciding the kind of project. Most of our shows are solo shows that we display with the permanent collection. But the temporary ones, most of them are solo shows, there have been sometimes group shows but mostly are like projects with recent work. So, because of that we are working closely together with the Artist, because many times, most of the works are coming directly from the studio. We work very closely with the artist.

IN: Do you mean they're emerging artists?

AD: No, not always emerging artists because we have many famous or well known artists. I mean these are not, a thesis, a thesis show. We have brought, several times, the first show of some famous artists to Spain, they were their first shows in Spain. So not depending on established or emerging, but we are working more with recent works that are mostly by international artists. Of course we have three different spaces for the temporary show. Yeah, so every year at least one is Spanish. Lately, we have more Spanish artists but when we started the museum, the idea was to have more internationals at the same time, we have to support local artists, or local I mean, not only from Malaga but also other places in Spain. But we always have more, more international programs.

IN: How would you describe the objective or mission of this museum?

AD: It's like any other museum, we're trying to support and make artists of today, of international contemporary art well-known. So we are focused like every other museum, to make the art known to everybody. And because of that we are bringing in many international artists sometimes, for the first time in Spain because we consider that they are important enough in the international art scene.

IN: Yes, but what about the educational aspect of visiting a museum? Do you think that art museums, or at least CAC encourages any kind of learning through its projects?

AD: Well we think that one of the most important roles played by any museum is education. So ever since we opened the museum in 2003, we have had an education department, where the idea is to, I think it is obvious that you have to start with the students and the kid and try to make it easier for them to experience the pieces at the museum. It's true today we have a very small department. There are already two people and in the past we had more people, mostly interns, however at the moment there are only two people. But we still manage to attend to a lot of people. The department not only attends to kids, but also different groups of people. We organize programs and workshops with regard to the schools, so it's a combined effort. We also have free guided tours, twice a week for everyone, children as well as adults, on Tuesdays and Thursdays at six o'clock, and another at seven, twice a week. We get approached by schools, especially during holidays, Christmas to organize particular kinds of workshops for them. We are showing works of another artist and it is being viewed and understood by people who visit the museum, often we invite many young artists to the opening of an exhibition, especially if it is by an established artist so that they have a platform to connect and understand and learn better.

IN: Okay. And what about designing the space of the museum? Do you always keep this educational aspect in mind while designing an exhibition?

AD: Well you know for sure, in advance which kind of a show will be more popular and which one would not. So, I think this is not the main idea that you have to follow. We bring here artists, we present them because we can see that they have something to tell I mean more because they are referenced artists. Yeah, like there are artists that are working on different subjects. I mean, paintings or language or some that are more political. So we consider them because we believe these subjects to be important. But sometimes, you know, I don't know, there are different artists that are more popular and established and we just know that they will be quite busy shows. Most of them are often more conceptual. So it does become more difficult to program such shows but you know, we have to show many different kinds of things.

IN: But how do you then exhibit these kinds of shows that are more conceptual?

AD: More or less in the same line. So yes, as I told you we don't have money for production. I mean, the walls that we have here. In theory, they are mobile walls, kind of like metallic structures, that can be taken

wherever, we could move it, but we usually don't. The space is filled with this. We don't have texts on the walls because it was a decision of my boss. So, we have this kind of information... [hands out a summary/introduction of the previous exhibition] this is a text we give for free to any one who visits the exhibition as a bit of only information that could work as a tool to help the visitors in understanding the pieces or the concept better. Sometimes, we work with lights though. They are usually white and simple but in case the artwork or the concept behind it or even the artist demands the presentation to be more dramatic, we switch to different lights, might even use fluctuations in some cases. But we don't necessarily make anything special.

IN: And why do you think that is... I don't know, maybe it's a question for your boss [laughs] but why do you think it is that you don't put texts on the walls?

AD: I don't know, it's always been like this. Yeah you know we are working for a private company so they have decided to do this and it's just how we have always designed our exhibits. I don't really know why, we would sometimes mention materials used, name of the artists, but no explanations really. So it's always harder if it's conceptual that's all.

IN: Right. So while actually designing the space, do you make conscious decisions as to where which art piece should go?

AD: Yes, we make the distributions on the walls.

IN: And how does that work, like what is the basis for it?

AD: [laughs] Well, after 17 years you more or less know what makes the exhibition better or how to work with the space. This museum has mostly focused on paintings, more than anything else. We are very interested in art in that form. I mean, we are having more painting shows than any other museum in Spain. Yeah. So you know, for instance, my experiences with many different artists and with what they want, you get a better understanding of sizes and understand, you know where the better space for a particular place is.

IN: Do you mind elaborating on that a bit more?

AD: Well, there are walls, for instance, when you enter the museum you have this front wall. Its a really good one, because everybody has to enter that way because of the building. You have the entrance and the exit on the same side. So, for some that wall is quite important, because it's the first thing you see. Then inside, there's a kind of central space, which is also a good space because it is sort of enclosed. And as you start walking inside you see there is a wall here now [gestures to the left] the painting however is, if you see the wall, the painting is not here because you have a good view straight across the corridor. The wall is not very big but from a distance it has a very good view and a big installation or a painting would fit perfectly there. So you work in a way that a sculpture or a painting is visible from afar and attracts the visitors toward it. Even though it is not a big space, it still has a good relation with the surrounding walls. So you do know more or less how they work. When we are making the distribution on the walls in such an open space, we keep these things in mind. It's all about the view. It's not like any other museum that has closed spaces so you can make different themes. Everything should be a bit connected, or maybe a group of works I think that are related, so when you are making decisions regarding the design these are some of the things that you have to think about.

IN: So, what kind of works go up on these 'important', 'good' spaces? How do you decide that?

AD: It depends on the context of the show. Yeah, you have to see what kind of work we have for the show. There are always pieces that are peacefully more powerful than others, more powerful or in case when you make a show related to a specific subject, then a good representation is essential. So the work that represents the theme best becomes an important one. Because it depends on what you see when you think you have to put something important here, it doesn't necessarily have to be a painting, it could also be an installation. The aim is to get a reaction, something like a shock or a surprise. Yeah, something that makes them say, Wow. So that it actually hooks them to the exhibition a bit, right at the beginning.

IN: And what about the artists, do they get a say in how their works should be represented?

AD: Yes, sometimes. We invite them to visit the space, as I told you we work very closely with artists so their interest is very important to us. So we invite and discuss what we are planning on doing, sometimes there is disagreement, they want to put their works in big, open spaces alone, where we can fit at least two-

three art pieces. From my experience, even when we listen to them sooner or later they come back to our initial idea because obviously we know the space better.

AD: You see, our biggest issue is the budget. We are not like the Picasso museum, we cannot make productions for different exhibitions. We work with what we have. If we had the budget, I am sure we could create spaces in a way that would get the message across better.

IN: And how would you do that, if the museum had a bigger budget?

AD: Well, it obviously depends on what kind of show I'm curating. But we could produce enclosed areas that separate one theme from another, to get the message across of a particular theme better. Maybe use different lightings in different areas. I personally would also put in a bit more texts, maybe construct structures that would make the view of a particular painting or an installation better, actually to put more emphasis on the important exhibits.

[End transcript 00:34:53]

Interviewee: Visitor 1

Date of interview: 02-02-2020

Location of interview: CAC Málaga

Length of interview: 25:43 minutes

Interviewer: Naina Tripathi

List of Acronyms: IN=interviewer, V1= Chiara

Identifier: R1

Summary Keywords: Art - Museum - Contemporary Art - Artists - Educational - Visit - Ambience - Spanish

[Start transcript 00:06:02]

IN: If it's okay with you I will start with a couple of generic questions concerning your background. So
Where are you from?

V1: I'm from Italy.

IN: What are you doing in Málaga?

V1: I'm on a kind of vacation. I'm visiting a friend of mine who I met at the university and she lives here in
Málaga so she's hosting me.

IN: And what do you do?

V1: I'm currently just travelling around. I recently finished my Bachelor's.

IN: What were you studying?

V1: I did a bachelor in what you would call in English, Humanities studies with a specific focus on literature, Italian literature, but also I had a lot of elective courses which we could choose to specialize in and I specialized in History of Art.

IN: Okay. So you do like visiting Museums?

V1: Yes, a lot.

IN: What kind of museums do you like going to?

V1: Um, mostly art museums, especially modern and contemporary art museums.

IN: What, according to you, is a good art museum?

V1: V1: Well, I like museums that are neither too big nor too small. I like museums that are also a bit educational in the sense that they explain the art a bit more or a bit more about the artist, basically sort of explain what's going on, you know. The aesthetics of the museum, the interiors are important to me as well. I need to like the ambience and the consistency between different art pieces to actually like the museum.

IN: And how did you like this museum?

V1: I would say it was okay. Not great, not so bad either.

IN: Why is that?

V1: Well, the pieces were interesting. I like the Spanish focus, I mean that pretty much all the artists were Spanish. To me, it is interesting to go to a country and see and learn about the country's art and culture. But I didn't love the disposition, the aesthetic of the museum. Also, I would have liked to have more context about the art pieces as well the artists and I think that museum did not provide enough of that. I wasn't amused by the ambience of the place. I mean it wasn't even so bad, I've visited [laughs] worse museums. It wasn't amazing but yeah I did see things that I found to be interesting.

IN: Let's talk a bit more about the things that you didn't like so much, like you said there was lack of context, right?

V1: Yes. I mean, honestly I would have liked to know a little bit of biography of the artist, maybe the story behind the art piece. I love to put together the position of art pieces in the broader context of contemporary art, you know.

IN: I'm sorry, what do you mean?

V1: So, like in contemporary art, there are different types and concepts behind it. I sort of like to compare art pieces and make sense of which period of art history the artist possibly got inspired from. [Laughs] It's like a little game for myself.

IN: [Laughs] Alright. And you said you weren't amused by the ambience of the museum. Why is that?

V1: Um you know, I don't know. I can't point out anything as such. It's more about I think maybe the lights? I feel like the lighting was too, maybe cold? And especially like the, not the paintings but the installations weren't in the right place according to me, like they weren't valorised? I don't know if that's the right word [laughs] I mean they could have been given more value maybe. There was an installation with a lot of balloon-like structures, you know, that one was in a corner. I mean to me it is such an interesting piece of work it would have been so nice if it was in the center you know? To be able to see it from all sides.

IN: Yeah, that could have been interesting actually. And what about the things that you liked at the museum, let's talk about that a little.

V1: Oh, well, as I said, I like that its focus is on Spanish art and Spanish artists. I liked, let's see, I liked a lot of art pieces themselves. Like some of them were really nice and interesting. Yeah, I liked the fact that it wasn't so big. Like in such a museum, in one hour or hour and a half, you can actually really enjoy it and see everything and you don't leave the museum thinking 'did I miss something?', or you know, like, the Louvre is too big in my opinion. It's overwhelming and it's also stressful because you want to see all you can and

you always end up feeling like you saw nothing. Because even when you do, you are mostly bothered by the stuff that you didn't get to see, it's weird. Maybe it's just me but yeah I don't like it when that happens. And I hate that feeling. This museum, at least I know for sure I saw everything.

IN: How long did it take you to cover everything at the museum?

V1: Around I think 40 minutes or one hour, if I'm not wrong. But it honestly felt like it was too soon. Like the visit felt short, for some reason.

IN: So you think it should have been longer or is that appropriate amount of time for you to spend at a museum?

V1: I think I should have spent more time there. Yeah, I'm sure I could have spent more time. Also I was with other people, I was with some friends of mine. So I think that when you're with friends you also kind of keep up with their pace and try to not spend too much time at one piece. And so yeah, I think like, if I were alone I probably would have spent more time there. But yeah, it was good anyway. I mean, I think I really saw everything.

IN: Would you say going with your friends affected your experience a lot?

V1: Yes definitely, but both in good and bad ways [laughs]. Good, in the sense that you can comment on things, discuss your views and understand different perspectives as well. Like I went up to them to tell them about this piece that I really liked which had four frames and my friends were like 'are you joking? We were just discussing that we don't like it.' And it's interesting because the piece was a little dark and anxious and the order of the frames didn't seem right but I really liked it while they didn't like it at all. [Laughs] And that difference in opinion in itself is very interesting. But, at the same time, I love going to museums alone. I like to take my time, I'm very slow. And with people it's always like pressure, you know. Like you are taking too much time and everyone's waiting for you. But honestly, the best thing ever is to go with somebody who is independent. So you both go inside together, and then just get lost. Take your own path, at your own pace and just meet at the end once you are all done, at a particular spot. And then discuss things afterwards.

IN: Earlier you mentioned that you like museums to be educational. What exactly do you mean by that with reference to contemporary art museums considering how they are so open to interpretation and overall ambiguous?

V1: Actually, I like that this fact, what you just said about contemporary art museums, is explicit.

Sometimes, you know like at the Biennale, in Venice. There's always a little bit of context of the background of the artist. Maybe when he started, where he studied or where he is living, what he's interested in. And about the specific piece of art, like, you know, the artist statement. For me art like in the Picasso Museum that I visited recently. There was this quotation by Picasso himself, saying like, that piece of art is not the piece of art itself, but what it is, is how the visitor experiences it. And I like this to be clear, because even in contemporary art it is true that it's very, very interpretable. It's also true that sometimes there is a really specific concept behind it, that you, especially if you haven't studied art history, you don't get immediately you know. Even if you have actually a background in art history, you often miss something. And I remember that I often, like saw art pieces and I'm like, this doesn't convince me so much. I don't get it and then maybe I read something about it or about the artist's idea behind his art. And I thought, fuck, this is genius. Actually, this is so genius. I'll give you an example, I don't remember the artist but I remember this piece of art like it was an empty box, like a shoe box. And everyone's watching and it kind of didn't make sense. When actually there was all this criticism behind, it was like, against capitalism and the emptiness of capitalism and everything, it was an attempt at trying to explain the void of capitalism. And then I started loving that art, you know. And I think that there's a huge misconception about contemporary art that people think it's too easy. It's like, everybody can do it. It's just a kind of fraud. But I believe that it is actually really incredibly complex. [laughs] It's actually the hardest, the most complex art. And you, you need to know something more about it to really appreciate it. I mean, it's also nice to actually just experience it without having any context, but it really depends on the art piece and on the context in which this art piece is shown, you know, exhibited. So to actually enjoy just without any context, you still need some kind of context, maybe not written context but you know the atmosphere and the environment in which it is exposed.

IN: How do you think the environment can provide you with context?

V1: Well, I think the theme of the exhibition, definitely can help. I like exhibitions that have consistency with the theme. Also like the relation each art piece has with the other. Because that can help you understand

it, like seeing in comparison with other art pieces that are next to it or whatever can give you more context itself without the use of text really. But honestly, I always prefer texts because it's more direct and easier. And I think it's really hard to be educational without words. But when it happens is Yeah, it's amazing, of course.

IN: Would you say that this visit was educational at all, for you?

V1: Yes, I think there was something educational. I mean, just seeing the art pieces I understood a little bit about what contemporary Spanish art is at the moment, what's in trend and what's not. Also thanks to my previous experiences with art museums, there were some art pieces that made me think about all the art pieces I have seen earlier. So like there was this art piece that was a classic, a really classic example of contemporary African art. This artwork was still from a Spanish artist, but a Spanish artist with origins in Africa. And I thought, Oh, that is trendy also here. This is going on here, you know, Spain has a huge historical and cultural connection with Africa. And it was like, wow, interesting that these artists are Spanish, but they still have connections with these other cultures. And that was really interesting for me maybe the most interesting. Yeah, also another really interesting thing was that I wasn't really in love with the art pieces but they made me go 'hm.. what's going on here?' Like there was this room full of art pieces from different artists but with a connected theme. It was this kind of small black ice cream, that has been bit from a corner and inside there was like red and it was pretty much there in the majority of art pieces. Their titles were like diabolic or something connected to diablo, the devil in English. And um all these different art pieces that were like collages, paintings and photographs. So a lot of different mediums. And there was always this ice cream there and it made me think like probably these are a collective and now I'm really curious and want to check it out better to know what is that thing? How? What does it actually mean. I understood from seeing more art pieces. Taking them singularly wasn't clear but seeing them together I think it was. I understood that, again it was a criticism against capitalism and the evil behind capitalism. But yeah I'm really curious to see why these different artists that use different styles and different mediums, how did they come up with this idea, and who started this and why did people join in. And if you really look at it, it is really educational, but in a different way, not the traditional way. Because the museum itself, as I said, didn't give you any real context or written text, at least no description or anything. So it pushes, especially someone like to say 'Okay, I'm gonna do some research myself later'. And, of course, I will learn something more about it. So definitely educational at the end of the day.

IN: Would you recommend this museum to people?

V1: Not to everybody. No.

IN: Then what kind of people would you recommend it to?

V1: Only people who are genuinely interested in art. Or maybe people who have some background in the art field. I wouldn't recommend it to people who are not into contemporary art, particularly because I feel like they wouldn't appreciate it so much. Since it doesn't give you much context, for somebody who is already skeptical about contemporary art, it wouldn't help, you know. If it's somebody with an open minded attitude, I would definitely recommend it.

[End transcript 00:25:00]

Interviewee: Visitor 2

Date of interview: 02-02-2020

Location of interview: CAC Málaga

Length of interview: 23:22 minutes

Interviewer: Naina Tripathi

List of Acronyms: IN=interviewer, V2= Laura

Identifier: R2

Summary Keywords: Art - Museums - Contemporary Art - Exhibitions - Educational - Visit - Ambience - Spanish - Conventional - Interpretation

[Start transcript 00:04:59]

IN: Where are you from?

V2: I'm from Berlin, Germany.

IN: What do you do?

V2: I finished my BA in Design recently and now I am working with a design firm as an intern.

IN: Did you like your experience at CAC?

V2: I liked it. Yes. Yeah. It was definitely not the best experience, but I did like it.

IN: Do you visit a lot of museums?

V2: Yes definitely when I travel. Yeah, I do make it a point that at least see at least one art museum or an art gallery. I like visiting them.

IN: So only art museums?

V2: Yes, mostly modern and contemporary art. I like looking at paintings, also installations, but most of them you find in contemporary art and modern art museums only. So yeah I would definitely say they are the point of interest for me.

IN: Okay. Did you visit alone?

V2: I visited it with one of my friends. We're really close, and we kind of drifted away. So I could say that most of my visit was individual but not, you know, completely alone. She was there. But I did get to just see the artworks on my own.

IN: Do you generally prefer visiting museums on your own?

V2: Definitely.

IN: And why is that?

V2: Because I mostly only visit art museums. And I like to take my time. And it's also always a kind of pressure with people. Yeah, because you never know if they're actually digging the vibe of the place as much as you are. Or maybe you're not digging the vibe of the place but someone else is, so you just kind of take your own time and take your space to actually see what it's about. But yeah, like, sure I was walking around on my own my friend was away. But yeah, like, sure I was walking around on my own and my friend was away. But there were points when I was looking at an art piece and I was thinking something and then I thought that I need a second opinion. Yeah, like I want to talk about it or I want to see whether someone else is thinking the same thing or not. I can't quite say I liked walking around alone in this museum.

IN: Okay, why do you think so?

V2: I think it's mostly because of the way it was exhibited. And its content. The place, well, it's a small museum. And there weren't a lot of references. Not a lot of background. So it was a little difficult to just, you know, go around. It's also kind of nice sometimes. But yeah, I personally, at a couple of points felt like 'Where is she? I want to get her here. Make her see this art piece and ask her what she thinks so that we could actually like just to get a sort of reassurance of whether what I'm thinking of an art piece, is she thinking the same thing or not?

IN: Why did you visit CAC?

V2: I visited the museum because my friend and I, we had a free day today. We wanted to get out of the house. We wanted to go to the city. And it's a Sunday and the museum was open, so we decided to just make a day out of it. We went to the Picasso Museum later.

IN: Yeah, exactly. There were also other museums. Why did you go to CAC?

V2: I think that CAC was one of the options for me specifically, only because it has the word contemporary art in it, like the name of the museum is the center of contemporary art. And I like that kind of art. So I thought, let's give it a shot.

IN: How long did the visit take you?

V2: I think the visit was approximately 45 minutes long.

IN: Did you think that is a sufficient amount of time?

V2: Definitely. That's also one of the things that I actually liked about it. It isn't so huge, sure there were a lot of artworks there. But they were sort of assembled in a way that you get to cover everything and you don't get tired walking around and you know, spending so much time in the same place. Because it didn't take so much energy out of you. I mean, museums when you go to a museum, especially me, I mean, I like visiting

museums. It is very time consuming, takes a lot of energy out of you, sometimes. So yeah if I can cover an entire museum in anything less than an hour and a half, I think its perfect.

IN: What did you like the most about this museum?

V2: Well, I would say... I don't know about liking but... actually, I can say that I like things that I found slightly interesting. Like, there was an art piece with four photographs of a man walking into the sea, I think it was really black and white and was nice. What got me thinking was, its placement. There were four frames. One of them kind of showed him on the outside of the sea. The second one showed him inside. One showed him drowned. And there was the fourth one which was halfway. And those four frames, obviously they're together, but they were placed in a way that it kind of made you think, whether the person is walking out from a dip? Or is he committing suicide or something like that, you know, because just the colors, composition, everything the way it was placed. I got confused there. I thought is it dark or is it pleasant? You know, is it peaceful? Or? Yeah, that I think I would say I like that. There were a few more exhibits there like that. I think the exhibition was a temporary one and they had, once you enter the area, you come across all these art pieces that seem to have an ice cream, a half eaten ice cream in the color of black and red. And you see it in every art piece. But every art piece has been created by someone else. Like it's not it really isn't a collection of one particular artist, but as a whole, it is a collection. And once you start walking and seeing at least 5-10 exhibits like that you realize that there's a connection there. And it got me thinking, and that's when I wanted to speak to someone you know. It made me think that it kind of shows that every bit like it had different contexts, every imagery, every art piece, every painting photograph was completely different. They seem to have contexts, there's a photograph of a nun, there's just drawings, anything. And then there's that one ice cream. And to me, it seemed like it's, maybe I'm thinking too much, but it made me think that it's just saying that there's a little bad and everything. You know, you can be the nicest person in the world, but there's something wrong. And that's when I wanted to speak to my friend. I wanted to know what she thinks. And my friend has been born and brought up here. I caught her and I was like, ya, what do you think? she told me that the ice cream is real and is called Dracula ice cream. And it is sold in Malaga. So, then suddenly, the whole thing kind of seemed banal to me. I thought, okay, I've put too much, you know, thought into it. Maybe it isn't. Like when she told me that it is. It is an actual live stream that exists people eat it. I thought okay, maybe it's just an expression of the Spanish culture. Yeah, you know that everyone eats it maybe. And I

just put in too much thought into it. But yeah, she didn't seem to think that way, she just told me it's a thing in Malaga.

IN: What did you not like about the museum?

V2: I think one of the things that I didn't like about the museum was it was a bit typical because, you know you imagine art museums to be very elitist and slightly superficial if you would like to put it like that. And the museum did give off that kind of vibe. I've been to art museums that are not the typical image of what an art museum is like, you know, white walls and golden framed pictures and paintings. It was to me slightly traditional apart from maybe exhibiting the artworks differently like the photograph thing that I was talking about. But yeah, just the interiors in general, I think weren't attractive to me. It seemed kind of dull. Also, yes, at the museum we didn't get any sort of information to refer from, no brochures or anything were handed to us, there was no information on what the exhibition was about. Stuff like that kind of makes you feel clueless and also is a bit condescending I think? Because then it feels like 'if you are smart enough, you would understand'. And I think if we had known even the title of the exhibition, I think it would have made a lot more sense to me. Once I was out I had to Google the name of the exhibition, some description about it and I didn't find any of it present at the museum, it was only available on their website.

IN: And what do you think made it dull?

V2: I think just ambience. It was too conventional for me. Nothing new or different. Yeah, very snobbish, too many white lights, white walls and everything. And I think that is very conventional. I have been to a lot of art museums and art galleries that do not fall in the same category or follow the same aesthetics. And they seem so much nicer, the experiences there were so much better. Yeah, I think just the conventional part of it. I didn't like it so much.

IN: How would your experience have been better at this museum?

V2: What I would have preferred is just a little bit of context, some kind of context. Maybe something like at the entrance of the museum maybe there's a plaque that just explains, not even explain, maybe just a brief description of what the exhibition is, or just the concept behind it. You know, it doesn't have to be to point.

Just a little background, something that gives you a direction to think in a way it can go multiple ways, but, you know, just a description of the exhibition. And then I don't think it is very necessary for each artwork to have a description or anything. I think that is a good thing, it kind of makes you think in general.

IN: Did you find this experience to be educational in any way?

V2: I think yeah, I think I would call it educational in a way. Because I mean, educational is a very academic term to me. I would say, the way I understand it is that it was just, it made me think, right, there were things at the museum that made me think about something else that weren't very explicit, but my mind wandered there. It was definitely thought-provoking and that to me is enough to call it educational.

IN: Would you say you learnt anything at the museum?

V2: Well like I said earlier about certain exhibits being very interesting and thought provoking. I was caught in moments where I was looking at the same piece of artwork while thinking about it in two different ways. I think that's interesting. And that's quite insightful to me. I wouldn't call it particularly educational, but yeah it was definitely insightful.

IN: Would you recommend this museum to other people?

V2: No, no, I don't think so. Because I think it is a kind of museum. That um... really depends on who you're recommending it to. And in my social circle there aren't a lot of people that would actually like to go to this kind of museum. I don't think so. I mean, I have friends who have a background in arts and you know, specifically Fine Arts and art history and everything. But yeah, I know them. And I don't think if I were to tell them about this museum, I don't think I would suggest them to go there.

[End transcript 00:22:58]

Interviewee: Visitor 3

Date of interview: 02-02-2020

Location of interview: CAC Málaga

Length of interview: 15:20 minutes

Interviewer: Naina Tripathi

List of Acronyms: IN=interviewer, V3= Emma

Identifier: R3

Summary Keywords: Art - Museum - Contemporary Art - Artists - Educational - Visit - Ambience - Spanish
- Plaques - Information

[Start transcript 00:02:59]

IN: Where are you from?

V3: I am technically English but I grew up here in Spain.

IN: In Málaga itself?

V3: Yes.

IN: And what do you do?

V3: I work at a nursing home here in Málaga.

IN: Okay. So, why did you decide to visit CAC today?

V3: Why did I go? Um because my friends wanted to go.

IN: You would not have visited the museum if it weren't for your friends?

V3: No, most probably not.

IN: Why is that? Do you not like visiting museums?

V3: I do like to go to museums but the CAC Museum, I think is just too 'art gallery' type vibes for me.

IN: [Laughs] And you don't like those vibes?

V3: No, I would rather go to a History museum or like a museum that gives me more information.

IN: So you don't think art museums provide you with any information?

V3: Well, it depends because on the same day we also went to the Picasso Museum. And with that there was like a temporary exhibition that we saw of Picasso and I can't remember the other guy's name, and you know you have those plaques on the wall that explained what you're looking at. Or there's an audio guide that's giving you information about it, which, that's not happening in the CAC, the CAC looks like it's just an art gallery in my opinion, or, I don't really know, but that's what I would say, and I didn't really learn anything.

IN: Okay. And why did your friends want to visit CAC?

V3: Well, we were a group of four of us and two of my friends really like art, and like I think they studied more stuff related to art so for them it was really interesting. So yeah we just did a day out and they wanted to go so I kind of went along.

IN: Would you consider it a waste of time then?

V3: Um, I wouldn't say it's a waste of time because in the end you're seeing something that is nice you know and I do appreciate that there's a talent behind paintings and photography there were a few photos. I'm more interested in photography, and that was quite nice. But in general, I wouldn't say that I achieved anything from it, either. So although I didn't really feel like a waste of time. Yeah, it's definitely not something I would choose to do in my own free time.

IN: How would you describe your visit to the CAC?

V3: I would say it was, it was okay it was quick enough, I don't really know how long it took but I would say around half an hour. I don't think it took much more. Maybe 35 minutes.

IN: Is that a good thing for you?

V3: Yeah, because I don't want to be in that kind of museum for too long or any museum to be honest because I think here. It's very quiet, you're just walking around and it can make you a bit sleepy, in my opinion, but um yeah I mean the experience was fine, I did get told off by one of the security guards because there was an art piece there that really looked interactive in my opinion. It had like lots of, as compared to the rest of them (art pieces) it had a lot of cylindrical kind of things and they looked like they moved so I did move one because it really looked interactive, yeah. In fact, one of the girls I was with also said the same. So I touched it and I got told off by the security guard to touch it. Yeah, but other than that, the experience was fine but I thought, it is so obviously interactive and if it's really not why not just put a sign there, you know like a warning or something. No one wants to be put on the spot like that

IN: So you mentioned earlier that you don't particularly like going to art museums and only visited this one because of your friends. But do you also visit museums on your own? Like the History museum you were talking about?

V3: Um, I don't think I do because usually when I go to museums it's because I'm traveling to a new place and usually I'm with someone. But I would definitely if I was on my own and I, there was this kind of Museum, then I would definitely visit it on my own.

IN: And why only these kinds of museums?

V3: Um, I guess I'm just more interested at the end of the day in something that's more educational somewhat, I think, you know, recently I was in Sweden and I went to a museum in Malmo and there's not that many museums there and it's just like then their main city museum. And there was a lot of information about like natural history and stuff and a lot of plaques, lot of texts and there was also an aquarium and loads of stuff about animals so I think that's more interesting for me to go and see and actually learn about than just walk around an art museum where I'm maybe not getting as much information.

IN: So was there anything particular about the CAC museum that you didn't like?

V3: Yeah, I would just say the lack of information to be honest, because the whole, the set out of it and everything that's very nice it's very simple it's clean edges, you know what, I don't mind that personally I quite like that. But yeah, I was, you know, walking around and I didn't really take anything in spectacularly because I didn't really know what was going on or what it was about.

IN: But you like the ambience then?

V3: Yeah I like the lighting, I like the way it's set up and you know like a lot of the paintings that were there, some of the colors used I think they were very well laid out to me. And then there's this cool kind of neon lighting exhibit, which I think was quite cool. It's kind of in contrast to the rest of the part of the permanent collection I think that kind of stood out to me, so it's pleasant enough to walk around, but yeah it's not the best thing I've seen maybe.

IN: Anything else that you liked? Apart from the ambience.

V3: Um.. some of the collections of course. Some of the works were pleasing to the eye but I don't think I found anything particularly interesting. There was one that I really didn't like though, I don't know if that applies as well. There were a series of four photos in which a naked body is getting into water. And it's a sequence of photos but it doesn't seem like in a natural sequence. And I don't yeah I don't like that and then there were two screens of like these people, very slowly walking off, and I think like short videos. I think

that's quite disturbing. I didn't really like that either. I would have preferred it to be in order. It was like for me something needs to be in a Zed sequence so from left to right, bottom left to bottom right. Yeah, and this was more top left then bottom left than top right, then bottom right, and it just doesn't seem natural to look at in that way.

IN: Do you think going to this museum with your friends had any effect on your experience?

V3: Yeah, I mean, it definitely made it better. I can't imagine what it would be like if I went alone. [Laughs] If I went alone I would just walk around very fast. I was somewhat grateful that it was free you know because I wouldn't really want to spend money on it. Um, but yeah, it's different because the girls I went with, you know one of them, wasn't as interested, either. And so, yeah, it's nice to kind of not joke or, or you know to make fun of it but just not to take it so seriously because I do think that people in art museums in particular, among other museums, do take what they're looking at way more seriously. Probably because they're very passionate about it, they very much like it. But, they just take it a bit more seriously so it was nice to go with someone that kind of made me share my opinion without the fear of being judged for it and I can say oh yeah what do you think of that.

IN: What do you think would have made the museum better for you?

V3: Yeah, I would suggest adding either an audio guide and if they're not into audio guide for a particular reason then at least, I don't know a brochure or catalog, some thing, whether it's on paper, or whether it's already on the wall or something. But just something that I can understand what I'm looking at because just a small plaque next to it with the title. And thankfully I speak Spanish, and so I could understand the plaques when it says oil on canvas and such, I can understand that but that's I mean Spanish yeah so I think that for contemporary art museums, it should maybe be different, in English as is universal language. But yeah, just some, some more information, some more context about the whole thing because to me it's just pictures on a wall in the big room and, and that was all it was.

[End transcript 00:15:00]

Interviewee: Visitor 4

Date of interview: 02-02-2020

Location of interview: CAC Málaga

Length of interview: 16:59 minutes

Interviewer: Naina Tripathi

List of Acronyms: IN=interviewer, V4= Rita

Identifier: R4

Summary Keywords: Art - Museum - Contemporary Art - Artists - Educational - Visit - Ambience - Spanish - Plaques - Information

[Start transcript 00:04:21]

IN: Where are you from?

V3: I'm from Portugal.

IN: What are you doing in Málaga?

V3: I'm on a solo trip.

IN: Oh nice. Do you like visiting museums?

V3: Yes.

IN: What kind of museums do you go to?

V3: Different ones. Like I like knowing about different things, not so big on art museums but I do visit them every once in a while.

IN: Do you usually go to museums on your own?

V3: I like going on my own. Because then I can take my time with whichever artwork I'm interested in most. But also it's nice to go with other people where we can discuss what we've seen and how we each interpreted things differently.

IN: How did you like this museum?

V3: It was an interesting combination of works. I liked that the rooms had similar themes of the artworks. It was quite short, I feel. I didn't really get too in depth with the artworks. It was a very short interpretation each time I looked at the art pieces.

IN: Why do you think you couldn't get too in depth with the artworks?

V3: Mostly because the artworks were too abstract for me I think. I didn't understand what was going on, like something felt like they were connected or maybe forming a pattern but then suddenly I would come across something that felt out of context. Besides, the context I'm talking about is something I'm probably making up myself because the museum didn't really provide any background at all.

IN: And why did you decide to visit the CAC today?

V3: I was just walking around the city yesterday and had covered pretty much all the things I wanted to see in Málaga. On my walk, I had crossed this Museum and I thought I have one more day here, might as well visit this museum to kill some time.

IN: How long did it take you to cover the entire museum?

V3: About 50minutes I'd say.

IN: So what did you like about the museum?

V3: I liked that there were works from different artists. It wasn't an exhibition by just one artist. And I could sort of connect the dots a little at one instance. It was in a different corner of the museum, think it was a separate exhibition altogether. There were artworks with one similar ice cream in each of them. And while, one piece alone didn't mean much, but then when it was repeated, it was repeated in different contexts. I could try to interpret what the ice cream means or symbolises. I also liked that the museum was spacious and there was a lot of room to walk around in. Also, there was no one route so I could just take whichever route I want and end up back at the same point. Another thing was the ambience, like the lighting. The museum in itself was too white and I think it kind of helped focus, it put the focus on artworks.

IN: What is it that you expect out of your museum visits?

V3: Well, I always want to know something different than what I know when I walk into the museum. So something that makes me think about life differently.

IN: And do you think you got that out of this visit?

V3: In a slight way, yes. Some of the artworks did make me think of some things, but I guess it's not really for certain because it's only my interpretation of it.

IN: Do you think you learnt anything at the museum or found it to be educational in any way?

V3: Educational? Not so much? Because I didn't really feel like I learned anything new more than I interpreted some things in a certain way. But it's not really confirmed. So it's just thoughts that I have and obviously they came from me, because of the artworks but I'm not entirely sure of their initial meaning.

IN: Okay. And what did you not like about the museum?

V3: I feel like there was so much variance between the different pieces and some pieces were too abstract to not have any explanation and it doesn't really look like they're there on purpose but they're there so it's probably on purpose. There was also an instance when I got screamed at [laughs]. Well, there was an art piece that looked very interactive and it had different symbols, like it's supposed to be a puzzle that you solve. And they were within rolling pins and they obviously can rotate . So, once I touched it the guards screamed at me. Yeah, that was very strange. I mean first, it seems a bit overkill to have an interactive artwork that you can't interact with and second, even if it isn't meant to be interacted with. Maybe a warning or something, a text, absolutely anything could be put up there next to it because it seemed to be very obviously interactive. I mean there already isn't any information about any of the artworks, which I also don't like but yeah something like this should be put up there.

IN: And what would you maybe change about the museum to make it more to your liking?

V3: I think the whole environment could be more engaging than simply paintings on the wall. I think they tried to change that by placing some objects. I think there were like three random balls of fabric. But there was no context whatsoever, next to very colorful paintings, but it just seemed like it just got placed there by mistake. You don't really feel a connection between the whole thing.

[End transcript 00:16:01]

Appendix C

Coding Table

Open Codes (10)	Axial Codes (5)	Final Themes (3)
Interest in Museums: whether or not they are frequent visitors	Visitors/ Non-Visitors	Personal Context
Personal background: what they do, origin		
Experience at CAC: overall museum experience	Criticism	
Dislikes: what they disliked about the museum		
Likes: what they liked about the museum	Preferences	
Educational aspects: whether or not learning took place		
Motivation: reasons for visit	Social factors	Sociocultural Context
Company: visiting solo or with people		
Time: duration of the visit		
Ambience: opinion on the design and ambience of the museum	Physical Factors	Physical Context