

Creative practices after the experiential turn:  
A qualitative investigation of curatorial and artistic  
strategies

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## CREATIVE PRACTICES AFTER THE EXPERIENTIAL TURN:

### A QUALITATIVE INVESTIGATION OF CURATORIAL AND ARTISTIC STRATEGIES

#### ABSTRACT

*Since the experiential turn, creating and distributing art needs to be socially justified, meaning it must serve a greater purpose. This turn led to an increasing trend of producing experiences that actively involve audiences, changing motivations and considerations in artistic and curatorial practices. Art is becoming performative, initiating dialogue and making audiences the primary focus. Therefore, the objective of the study is to address the research question: How do curators' and artists' design-thinking strategies cater towards audience experience through exhibitions? The study uncovers the strategies used by professionals to create dynamic and immersive environments because of this shift in priorities.*

*Through in-depth interviews and thematic analysis of nine interviews with five artists and four curators based in Berlin, the research explores how they use various strategies to evoke curiosity, sustain interest, and provide a meaningful experience for their audience. The findings show that motivation and curiosity are central to design-thinking strategies. By introducing novelty and uncertainty, curators and artists capture audience interest, encouraging exploration and interaction. Furthermore, artist and curators exert their presence which provides immediate context and offers a personalized experience, highlighting the value of direct interaction in enhancing the art experience. Alongside exerting presence, curators and artists must be aware of their roles within an exhibition and consider how the space and community affect audience interpretation and engagement. This ensures that exhibitions are relevant, inclusive, and ethically sound. The findings also highlight the importance of variety-seeking tendencies and sensory-specific satiety in maintaining audience engagement. By integrating multiple sensory elements into exhibition design, curators and artists can prevent sensory overload, keeping the experience stimulating and educational.*

*The research provides a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted strategies employed by curators and artists to enhance audience engagement. It underscores the importance of balancing motivational strategies, presence, positionality, and sensory engagement to create meaningful and immersive art experiences. These findings offer valuable insights for future investigations into curatorial and artistic practices, particularly in the context of evolving audience expectations and the increasing demand for interactive and immersive art. The study also indicates that presence and sensory satiety theories from virtual reality and culinary arts, can be applied to the creation of art experiences.*

**KEYWORDS:** *artistic practices, curatorial practices, experiential turn, sensory satiety, audience experience*

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## 1. Introduction

Before the 1990s, the traditional value of artworks was rooted in the aesthetic. Art was thought to derive its truth from its beauty and virtues, which could be discerned within an ethical framework of images (Bishop, 2012). These works followed the representative regime of the arts, which is characterized by a strict hierarchy and required cultivated cultural capital for appreciation (Bishop, 2012). However, post-1990s art sought to liberate viewers and promote relational aesthetics by embracing art within the aesthetic regime devoid of hierarchies (Rancière, 2010). In this new paradigm, members of all social classes ought to be considered a relevant viewer and should have equal access to the artwork's value that was previously gatekept for and by those of a certain social status (Bishop, 2012).

The economic growth of the 1990s, driven by free market policies, facilitated the organisation of the welfare state (Bishop, 2012). During this period, political strategies aimed to address societal issues by implementing new policies and involving artists to safeguard individual liberty and foster social cohesion (Bishop, 2012). A necessary compromise was made: both the economic growth and the financial investment in art had to be economically justified to warrant subsidies within neoliberal western European countries (Bishop, 2012; Grodach, 2012). This compromise involved creating art that benefits society and fosters a sense of community. Consequently, this led to a shift in the production of art. To secure government subsidies, art could no longer be created or produced in a vacuum, where the artist was regarded as the genius in the creative field (Conor et al., 2015). Although there are examples of art being created up until the 1990s that were primarily rooted in community-based practices, this type of socially contextualized art was not widely recognized or validated as an established way of producing art in the art world (Bishop, 2012).

This socially contextualized art was constituted by a relational aesthetic (Bourriaud, 1998/2002; Bishop, 2012). Relational aesthetics specifically refers to the discursive nature of an artwork, which only became amenable in museums and galleries as from the 1990s (Bishop, 2012). This orientation towards relational art has grown exponentially since then, particularly in continental European countries with a strong tradition of public arts funding (Bishop, 2012), such as Germany, which has a long history of supporting the arts at state and municipal levels (Mulcahy, 1998). This structural change in society led to a shift in perspective within the production side of art. The artist's role changed because the role artworks played in society changed. The traditional relationship between the art object, the artists, and audience was overturned, and artists are now conceived less of an individual

producer on discrete objects but more so seen as a contributor of encounters, creating an environment for the audience wherein the artwork becomes a central prompt for action to occur (Bishop, 2012).

While previous studies have examined the functions of curators and artists in the cultural sector, there is limited research concerning the manner in which they execute their responsibilities and considerations they make in light of the shift and, more importantly, the strategies they employ to accomplish instigating an encounter in an effective manner. It is crucial to mention that previous studies have examined the trend of museums becoming more visitor-centric since the 1990s (Hoebink, 2019). This research deconstructs the various approaches and examines how the arrangement of museum elements creates distinct 'performances' that include and exclude audiences. Although the subject of study has provided valuable insights, it lacks understanding of the thought processes and decision-making that go into creating and developing these experiences, as well as how the concept can be applied beyond museum settings to art exhibition spaces more broadly. Therefore, this study addresses the following research question: How do curators' and artist's design-thinking strategies cater towards audience experience through exhibitions?

In research conducted on the premise of actor-network theory (Latour, 2009), the question of who has agency in the creation of an art experience cannot be easily answered by academia, since the creative processes behind an exhibition remain ambiguous. The ascribed delineated roles of curator and artist by Watkins (1987), may no longer hold true with the development of curatorial practices where the artist plays a more active role (Charlesworth, 2007). The increasing need to 'curate' experiences suggest a shift in autonomy towards the curator when exhibiting, as this role offers more creative freedom (Charlesworth, 2007).

Therefore, this study considers the points of view of both curators and artists to investigate the creative processes involved in curating exhibition spaces with the goal of actively engaging the public through the creation of experience-orientated performative art (Bishop, 2012). In-depth interviews were conducted with five Berlin artists and four curators. The next section discusses theories that emerged during the societal shift and concepts that informed curators and artists' strategies, followed by the methods used to discover them. The following research examines methods for eliciting intrinsic emotions from audiences and maintaining their interest and engagement after the initial encounter. These tactics were supported by awareness of their position relative to the audience they are catering to, which will be elaborated and discussed in the study below.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

### 2.1 Relational Aesthetics

The emergence and validity of *relational aesthetics* in society indicated the growing ability and interest of new audiences in engaging with an experience rather than only observing an artwork which constituted the experimental turn. Following the logic of relational aesthetics, contemporary artwork should no longer depict utopian scenarios, but approaches of life and forms of action that exist in social reality (Bourriaud, 1998/2002). In order to produce artwork that is socially inclusive, it is imperative that the artwork incorporates a *social interstice*. The concept of interstice was initially introduced by Karl Marx to refer to trading communities that operate outside the framework of capitalist economics, as they are exempt from the principles of profit (Bourriaud, 1998/2002). Applied to the art world, the utilization of socially inclusive artwork serves as a means to introduce novel modes of interaction within the context of economic expansion and the emergence of capitalist systems. Creating artwork and curating the environment in which they exist presents other avenues for trade that differ from the existing ones inside the system (Bourriaud, 1998/2002).

By establishing environments that are diametrically opposed to those encountered in daily life, contemporary art exhibitions establish a realm of representational commerce that compels discourse fostering unexpected casual encounters. This is especially relevant in highly urbanized societies like Berlin where society is extremely fragmented (Simmel, 1903/1971), consequently resulting in a bigger need to create more socially inclusive artwork that present this idea of the interstice to prompt conversation and repair social bonds (Bishop, 2012). However, one could argue that in contemporary society, social reality is subjugated to commodities and the spectacle they generate. Therefore, turning the everyday into a spectacle (an artwork) and making it relational is no longer possible because society has reached a point of passivity due to repetitive market forces, and audiences have become too desensitized (Bishop, 2012).

Nevertheless, considering the artworks ability to prompt discourse, the transition in thinking at an individual level begins. The capacity to understand and ability to perceive the contextual situatedness of an artwork is becoming the norm for the public's engagement with artworks. This contemporary thinking is critical when investigating how artists and curators consider audience engagement. If there had been no social turn, the audience's ability to think about art in a contemporary affordance would not exist. Therefore, there would be no need to cater to it because their efforts would be lost in translation.

## 2.2 Actor-network theory

The discussed capacity of artwork to incite discourse implies that all elements involved within the context of an artworks' exhibition have an influence and the dynamic between them can be understood using Latour's (2009) actor-network theory (ANT). Therefore, Latour's ANT serves as a central premise for this study to be conducted on. Latour's framework provides a lens through which the interrelationships of each component in the exhibition environment can be understood. By viewing both the spatial environment and the artwork as performative entities, and recognizing their relationship with the curator and artist, dependencies between actants are explored in this study.

The aim is to investigate the relational network that connects all the components that contribute to the overall aesthetic experience. More specifically, the focus is uncovering the intricate web of connections that exist between human and non-human agents and thereby forms the network. Even though this approach asserts that each agent has an equal amount of agency, this study focuses on human contributors; artists and curators (Appendix A). It can be argued that this network also constitutes Griswold's cultural diamond (2012) in which artists and curators are considered the creators which means they are responsible for creating the message which is relayed to the receivers (the audience) (Alexander, 2021). As contributors, they play a critical role in shaping the exhibition to curate an experience for the viewer. The investigation examines the nuanced roles played by these human contributors, by delving into how they use their agency in conjunction with other actants who are vital to the overall formation of the exhibition experience.

While artworks may not have the same agency as humans, non-human agents possess locutionary content and illocutionary force. Friedell and Liao (2022) further build upon Austin's Speech Act Theory and applied the notions of *locution* and *illocution* to artworks as they can be used to understand the impact environment and context has on the interpretation of art. Artworks possess locutionary content and an illocutionary force which can be enforced or altered through (the specificities of) their display. Locution refers to the properties of the artwork and what it says. Illocution separates the manifest intention of the speaker, in this case visual culture, from asking what it produces in the saying (Friedell & Liao, 2022). For instance, an artwork represents something but the impact it has is determined by outside factors and in some cases, especially if an artwork is site- or place-specific, the artwork's meaning can be informed by its surroundings which means that the spatial context is integral to the artwork's locutionary content and therefore strengthen its illocutionary force. These terms allow the study to address *artist-meaning* (Friedell & Liao, 2022, p.446) at a

locutionary level and how artists and curators position the aesthetic experience to determine its social function by manipulating what it is asking, requesting or needs from the audience.

Furthermore, given the rise of various media platforms that captivate and inspire audiences, production teams must carefully deliberate on when to use and what kind of media, as well as the integration of media within physical surroundings to promote active participation and visual immersion. Interaction designers are now focusing on objects and the narratives they prompt (Grimaldi et al., 2013). Previous studies have demonstrated that objects function as intricate symbols linked to both pleasure (Ahuvia, 2005) and societal standing (Bourdieu, 1984/1987). When curating and engaging in efforts to enhance an experience, curators and artists must take into account how their audience is likely to interpret the meaning of artworks (objects) utilized in the space. This comprehension empowers them to manipulate and contrast objects in order to provoke audience participation and deictic shifts (Appendix A). Artists are increasingly incorporating the audience into their performance spaces. Snapchat launched an augmented reality art exhibition with Jeff Koons (2017). Through the Snapchat Lens "ART," users were able to view digital artworks and artist sculptures in geotagged physical locations worldwide. However, this prompted a reaction whereby a New York collective defaced his Virtual balloon dog using the app in response (Codrea-Rado, 2017) showing that objects prompt a response but not always the one intended. How curators and artists take into consideration the possibility of oppositional interpretations and actions when intentionally including the audience emerged as an interesting avenue in exploring their design-thinking.

As actants (Latour, 2009) such as artworks, curators, artists, space and audience members engage (with each other) by prompting thought, they do not only 'act' within the material semiotic space but 'speak' (Lawson, 2007). Dependent on the spatial arrangement, the discursive environment therefore has the ability to facilitate a conversation through means such as relational aesthetics. This, however, can be better understood by applying Althusser's et al. (1972/ 2001) theory of interpellation. By examining the creator's perspective, an individual's engagement with an exhibited artwork can be analysed by inquiring on how they comprehend their role within a network of social practices during discourse. Even for a single person, the act of viewing is a multimodal activity that involves both the physical locations and the social practices and techniques employed during the act of looking, which contribute to the overall experience (Sturken & Cartwright, 2018). Thus, it is important to examine how images, sounds, and audio-visual media texts not only grab the viewer's attention by relating

to them, but also compel them to identify themselves as a target of communication by someone else who is part of the organizational structure in the exhibition area.

### 2.3 Reconceptualized sensibilities

It has been established that artworks form an interactive network with audiences, and relational aesthetics can be employed to actively connect these entities to one another. Relational aesthetics is built upon the principle that art has the possibility of becoming life and therefore relational in nature. This blurring between boundaries between life and art allows for a meta-politics to evolve as it enables contemporary audiences to consensually frame art from their own perspective (Rancière, 2010). Thus, transfiguring it as a form of life it liberates the viewer from pre-conceived notions and narratives present in society. The capacity of the audience to grasp contemporary cultures and appreciate artworks that have been re-aestheticized to be relational, the reconceptualized *heterogenous sensible* is needed (Tanke, 2010).

The heterogeneous sensible is the ability to recognize hegemonic discourses and is triggered when expectations do not correspond with reality. To evoke the heterogenous sensible, the public must have an understanding of what is politically correct as socially assumed. Specifically, this refers to the presence of a dominant ideology within social groups, which determines what is considered prosaic and shapes the group's assumptions (Rancière, 2010). The distribution of what is deemed sensible is known as the "aesthetics of politics" (Rancière, 2010, p.116). The shared distribution of the sensible refers to a set of self-evident sensory perceptions that reveal both a shared understanding and the boundaries that define individual roles and positions within a group (Rancière, 2010). When an artwork is imagined in the aesthetic regime of images and made relatable, the ordinary becomes extraordinary, and by using prosaic visual clues and presenting them in a way that subverts the audience's expectations of how that image would normally be presented, this heterogeneous sensible is evoked (Rancière, 2010). It should be noted that this theory has its drawbacks as the sensible depends on shared meanings that can differ between groups. Hence, it is always political and therefore vulnerable to being interpreted in oppositional ways by diverse audiences (Bishop, 2012).

For example, consider Tracy Emin's "My Bed" created in 1998. Despite the dominant expectation of a tidy bed, Emin deliberately presents hers in a messy state, displaying items such as cigarettes, bottles of alcohol, and condoms. These items are typically deemed socially unacceptable for display within the dominant ideology of the white cube gallery space. By

subverting these norms, the artwork challenges viewers' expectations, presenting elements usually considered inappropriate for such a pristine setting. This exposure of backstage behavior in a clean, formal gallery environment prompts viewers to rethink their preconceived notions about what belongs in art spaces. Interestingly, audiences still appreciated the artwork which was reflected in its renowned status and perhaps they even related to the everyday items on display (Cohen, 2018). This connection may have helped facilitate an understanding of contemporary aesthetics by introducing a mix of familiar, diverse objects into the gallery, thereby inducing a new understanding, ergo the heterogeneous sensible.

## 2.4 Aesthetic Experiences

As outlined by Rancière (2010) the previously discussed type of encounter with an artwork can also be referred to as an *aesthetic experience*. The aesthetic experience is one of heterogeneity, in which the subject becomes the focus and autonomy lies within viewer's mode of experience, rather than with the artist. Central to this experience is the concept of *aesthetic free play* (Rancière, 2010). Free play liberates the viewer from preconceptions and hierarchies, granting them autonomy over their engagement with art. Within the liberated space of the aesthetic regime, free play fosters a relational visual form that encourages viewers to broaden their aesthetic framework of understanding (Bourriaud, 1998/2002). By democratizing the artistic space, free play establishes a new framework for the appreciation and understanding of art. The aesthetic regime grants this freedom by producing a meta-politics that reconfigures space that redefines art as political and capable of asserting itself as true politics. This capability creates a loophole in art through which individuals are able to consider narratives, other than the hegemonic ones present in society, without real-life consequences (Rancière, 2010).

The capability that free play affords new audiences, however, can be criticized for being too romanticized, particularly regarding the freedom it proposes. Free play suggests that audiences, when encountering an artwork, bypass the realm of politics and enter a meta-politics too removed from one's social reality. However, this stance fails to acknowledge that some expressive art is inevitably subject to public social criticism. Certain controversial aesthetics are more likely to become politicized regardless of the artist's intentions as a result of dominant discourses (Taylor, 2016), such as Veganism and the question of animal cruelty in art.

One particular dominant aspiration that was prevalent in the following discourse surrounding artistic and curatorial practices involved countering the narrative of the white gallery space where art is conventionally displayed. The existing model of the white gallery space normatively presents art in its ideal state through highly isolated and dramatic presentation methods free from everyday clutter. The sanctification of the exhibition space imposes a rigid set of rules and conventions such as ‘no touching’ on audiences when entering a space (Grunenberg, 1999). In order to attune the visitor to the white cube, which is so removed from everyday life, one effective strategy that has been identified in museum contexts is the use of warm-up and cool-down spaces. These areas prepare audiences for what lies ahead so that they can be fully immersed. Foyer and entrance halls are architectural elements that gradually acclimatize audiences from their daily lives to the curated setting of an exhibition. These warm-up spaces are essential for establishing the tone so that visitors enter with the proper mindset. In addition to warm-up areas, cool-down areas frequently take the form of museum gift shops or cafes that gradually reacclimatize the visitor to the outside world.

Although the use of these spaces has been primarily explored within a museum context, it is necessary to investigate how they can be applied to art exhibitions in general including galleries and other cultural institutions that display art. How curators and artists utilize the areas preceding and following an exhibition to prepare their audiences helped determine whether their strategies extend beyond the exhibition space itself. Specifically, it was explored how they encourage audience engagement and what strategical spaces were developed to help the viewer ‘break free’ from preconceived notions of prevailing spatial etiquette to improve the quality of their experience and evoke free play.

## **2.5 Aesthetic affordances**

To better understand this contemporary mindset and what it offers audiences in art (which in turn changes artists' and curators' approaches to creating artworks), Vara Sánchez's (2022) concept of *aesthetic affordances* can be applied. The principle of this notion builds on the argument that all aesthetic experiences are dependent on and mediated by an individual's bodily factors as well as their sociocultural background. Furthermore, these factors cannot be separated from the elements from which they derive. With this in mind, an aesthetic experience is simply that: an experience that takes into account everything in its environment and explains all its elements, and the agency the creators have in the aesthetic experience. The term *affordances* is used to emphasise humans' relationship with their environment (Vara

Sánchez, 2022). The immediate environment is perceived as a situation full of potential actions determined by the characteristics of one's experiences, as well as the capacity and structure of one's body (e.g. sitting, lying down, touching etc.). Therefore, the here-presented study investigated the affordances that curators and artists provide their audiences to exercise potential actions, both explicitly and implicitly, and through what means. In the context of this study, this term refers to the complementarity of the audience and the environment. Affordances provided by the curated experience are engendered by the capacity of a space and the ability of the audience in a specific environment (Vara Sánchez, 2022).

For instance, when interacting with an artwork, what the audience perceives is the possibility to carry out the action of engaging with the artwork, both because the artwork as previously established has the capacity to display a concept and the audience has the ability to grasp the concept and have an emotional or sensual reaction. This exemplifies a key aspect of affordances: the relationship between elements and features in the curated environment. Vara Sánchez (2022) emphasizes that there is always an affordance field present in any concrete, situation-specific space where the individual is responsive (De Haan et al., 2013). This affordance space is influenced by habits, abilities, and skills relevant to the current activity in which an audience is engaged. Bodily states such as emotion, hunger, or temperature perception can all have an impact on the interaction that occurs during the experience with the artwork (Vara Sánchez, 2022). This became particularly relevant when discerning curated experiences that directly engaged with the audience's senses.

As a result, when creating or curating interactive artworks, many considerations must be on account of the audience if they are to successfully engage with the work. Specifically, because of the numerous factors involved, curators and artists must have an “affect regulatory” goal (Vara Sánchez, 2022, p.71). This can be accomplished by comprehending the role of affectivity in shaping the audience's interaction with a scene because the audience's engagement with the affordance space is open to various action possibilities provided by the environment based on their specific set of skills. This criterion of consideration became especially important when the artwork displayed deviated from the constructed experience of a two-dimensional painting hanging in a white cube space and when a space itself had more features therefore more affordances, and when the artwork itself offered more possibilities for interaction such an interactive work placed outside.

## 2.6 Understanding intrinsic human motivation and curiosity

Previous research suggests that audiences are often driven by intrinsic motivations when it comes to consuming art. Since curiosity is a mental construct that underpins motivation, these terms must be discussed together. Silvia (2012) identifies three primary lines within academic discourses pertaining to curiosity and motivation. These discourses are: a) curiosity as a fundamental incentive to alleviate negative emotions; b) curiosity as an intrinsic incentive to acquire knowledge and bridge gaps in understanding; and c) the intrinsic motivational distinctions among individuals that arise from variations in objectives, expertise, and experience.

Firstly, curiosity as the principal incentive to alleviate a negative state examines the objective of diminishing states of uncertainty and novelty (a). In other words, the motivational quality of curiosity stimulates exploratory behavior in an effort to eliminate uncertainty and novelty. By engaging in the processes of learning and exploration, individuals can diminish negative states such as uncertainty resulting from a limited understanding of their surroundings. In the context of these notions, motivation can be defined as the intrinsic psychological urge that compels an individual to engage in a particular activity. This process may be better understood when considering the following example: before visiting a museum, a person is curious about the exhibits on display either by seeing a poster or hearing about it from a friend. As a result, they are motivated to research which exhibition is currently on display to minimize their level of uncertainty and increase their desire to attend. Additionally, knowing what to expect diminishes the degree of novelty.

Secondly, curiosity as an intrinsically motivating emotion that encourages investigation not only to alleviate negative emotions but also to exercise one's intellect and acquire knowledge (b). In this context, this desire for knowledge and the enthusiasm that accompanies it can be referred to as curiosity. This line of thought then explains the curiosity and motivation at the exhibition where visitors read wall texts to find out more about the artworks or artist to learn and be more informed.

Finally, the third stream of discourse recognizes the value of curiosity while emphasizing the variations that arise from individual curiosity (c). Curiosity varies among members of a group and individuals possess unique motivational systems that are consistently stimulated by perceived opportunities and stimuli. Variations in drive, curiosity, and motivation among individuals are predetermined by their distinct goals, experiences, and knowledge.

A previous study carried out by Litman (2005) provides additional clarification on two aspects of curiosity that he refers to as the I/D model for curiosity. The initial aspect pertains to curiosity as an emotion of interest (*I-curiosity*), while the subsequent aspect concerns curiosity as an emotion felt as a sense deprivation (*D-curiosiveness*). D-curiosity is defined as curiosity stimulated by the desire to reduce uncertainty caused by knowledge gaps, as opposed to I-curiosiveness, which is defined as curiosity motivated by the desire to learn and acquire knowledge. It is essential to comprehend discussions regarding motivations and curiosity in order to grasp how curators and artists can effectively utilize these emotions to captivate the audience and immerse them in the experience.

## **2.7 Sensory-specific satiety and Variety seeking tendencies**

Given that aesthetic affordances is predicated on the notion that bodily factors mediate all experiences and the term affordances is employed to underscore the human-environment relationship (Vara Sánchez, 2022), it is imperative to contemplate the influence of individual senses on cultural consumption. This can be achieved by adopting the theory of *sensory satiety* in combination with an individual's *tendency for variety seeking*. To date, empirical research on these theories has been limited to food, with an emphasis on flavor. Art provides the viewer with a sensory experience much like food, which is why this study assumes these concepts to be appropriate for the here-presented investigation nonetheless. Sensory satiety states that when a person consumes the same product characteristic, the level of variance decreases until the level of stimulation falls below the desired level. This results in the person thus becoming 'bored'. By introducing variety to increase the incongruity, the individual becomes hungry again. This concept can be better understood using the phrase "there's always room for dessert." This means that after a certain number of courses of savory foods, the brain becomes 'bored' and no longer derives the same level of pleasantness from eating that type of food. By switching to something sweet for dessert, the sensory satiety for savory food is counteracted with variety, stimulating the brain once more to have 'more room' for dessert (sweet food). It was found that the pleasure derived from eating food that share attributes like it being salty or sweet significantly dropped just after eaten while the pleasantness of food not yet consumed remained unchanged or increased (Inman, 2001).

Variety seeking is a determining factor in consumer choice regarding cultural consumption; however, this concept has not comprehensively been previously applied to the consumption of the arts. In his study discussing variety seeking tendencies Inman (2001) argued that individual's possess optimal levels of stimulation, which they actively maintain

through seeking out and managing the amount of incongruity present in their lives. Furthermore, it has been found that it is more effective to maintain incongruity by having variety on attributes that directly interact with the senses. Thus sensory-specific satiety will induce consumers to seek variety.

In his study, Inman (2001) made the further distinction between attributes that interact with the senses, like flavor, and non-sensory attributes, like the brand of food. This distinction helped develop a focus for the study, specifically on the decisions made by artists and curators who consider sensory attributes. As demonstrated by Inman (2001), the most effective way to keep the individual engaged is through directly appealing to their senses. By focusing solely on sensory attributes, this study ensures a thorough exploration of aspects that tangibly affect audience immersion and perception, which artists and curators have at their disposal in their design-thinking strategies. As a result, the study will divide the attributes they can address into the following categories: visual, tactile, olfactory, auditory, and gustatory (Lehrman, 2012).

Through the here-presented study it became evident that sensory satiety can not only be counteracted by introducing variety to keep the brain optimally stimulated (Inman, 2001) but that a further consideration must be made. The theory of *sensory overload* goes on further to elaborate what happens when there is too much variety present in an environment and the negative effects it can have (Priporas et al., 2024). Environments that affect all five senses are considered highly stimulating. Priporas et al. (2024) found that sensory overload occurs when individuals are situated in a space with a high volume of stimuli and the individual as a result must process multiple streams of information at once which leads to a mental overstimulation. Specifically, sensory overload happens when an individual is getting more input from their five senses which exceed their own sensory processing abilities. This hence has negative consequences such as a feeling of being overwhelmed, brains ‘freezing’ and reduced engagement. Moreover, the authors present that these situations occurred most often when encountered technology which inhibited participants from processing information. Technology was found to be the highest form of distraction. Therefore, the current research observes how to what extent artists and curators introduce variety and the effects it has on perceived audience engagement. Additionally, it discusses how technology is viewed by these professionals and how it is positioned as tool in their strategies is explored.

## 2.8 The rise of visitor-centered museums

The rather novel attention paid to an individual's motivations, needs, and specifically satisfaction to engage audiences on-site by delivering gratifying experiences is reflected in the rise of visitor-centered museums. Museums in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are spending much more resources into exploring these motifs which thereby reflects the validity of their effectiveness in attracting and engaging audiences (Ballantyne & Uzzell, 2011). This research has aided museums in developing strategies to employ a targeted audience such as having “themed displays” (Ballantyne & Uzzell, 2011, p.88).

Reflecting on the functions a museum is perceived to serve in the social and cultural life of people, the following motivations that have been identified for visitors to attend museums are: Education, Entertainment, Social event, Life-cycle, Place and Practical issues (Falk, 2016). Furthermore, the Smithsonian also conducted a study which identified four distinct categories of what constitutes a satisfying visitor experience that have varying focusses: Object experiences (seeing rare or valuable things), Cognitive experiences (interpretive or intellectual aspects of the experience), Introspective experiences (private feelings and experiences, such as imagining, reflecting, reminiscing, and connecting) and Social experiences (interactions with friends, family, other visitors, or museum staff) (Pekarik et al., 1999).

What it means to have a visitor perspective has greatly expanded over the last 20 years, initially through increased understanding of motivations, followed by determining what types of experiences best satisfy those motivations to attend museums (Falk, 2016). However, as Falk (2016) discusses, this has created a dichotomy in which these spaces are now being challenged. When curating the space for audiences, a balance must be found between “quality/education” and “quantity/entertainment” (Falk, 2016, p.2). Here, strategies are required to accommodate the varied needs of visitors. It must be acknowledged that viewing the museum experience as a social performance can be accommodated to address both poles of this dilemma (Hoebink, 2019). This means that different elements in a space can be leveraged to produce different experiences that cater towards varying motivations, i.e., elements like *mise-en-scène* (different modes of display), *social context* (the economic, political and sociological environment in which a performance is embedded), *the script* (the textual and spatial stories the audience is presented with), *actors* (people that initiate or execute the performance). By focusing on these elements, the present study was able to observe how artists and curators shape the content and presentation of art in the space to engage audiences effectively.

Despite the adaptability this approach offers, it is important to note that the majority of exhibition designs already imply how the elements in the space should be used. This can create a fallacy where the audience doesn't experience stimulating exhibition designs when the *mise-en-scène* is the dominant element, as the exhibition's purpose already dictates the design without consideration of the audience (Hoebink, 2019). While traditional art spaces, such as galleries, do not have the same obligations as museums, like serving the education of the public and delivering high standards of intellectual excellence and integrity (Falk, 2016) as a public institution of authority, they do encounter similar challenges, including funding constraints and reliance on external sources for support. The justification for such funding needs to be based on strategies to enhance visitor engagement (Falk, 2016). How individuals such as curators and artists have developed their visitor perspective and utilized these identified different elements is still unclear within academic discourses of arts and culture and needs to be explored.

## 2.9 Presence theory

Presence theory can be applied to a curated exhibition for audience experience in order to assess the impact of human actors being physically present in the space. As already established, the experience constructed for the audience by curator and actors is a mediated environment. Given the heightened autonomy of human actors, it is imperative to acknowledge their presence in the space. The concept of being present can be further divided into three categories of presence: *physical presence*, *social presence*, and *co-presence* (Riva & Ijsselsteijn, 2003). This theory is normatively applied to the domain of Virtual Reality (VR) and utilized to assess the level of immersion in a virtual environment. However, within the scope of this study, it is used to acknowledge the presence of curators and artists in an exhibition's curated space, as well as how their presence influences the experience. VR offers tailored environments designed specifically for participants, similar to curators and artists shape experiences directed towards audiences through the mediation of art and the exhibition space, both with the aim of hoping to immerse the viewer.

The term presence defined by Slater (1999) is a subjective and psychological sense. Subsequently, the definition was broadened to encompass the notion of immersion, which was defined as the degree to which computer screens are all-encompassing, expansive, matching, vivid, and comprehensive, and the resultant impact on the perception of presence (Bulu, 2012). Similar considerations can be applied to an exhibition space, given that it is a visual experience where the same must be accomplished under the guise of aesthetics. The

responsibility for establishing an environment that fosters inclusivity for the audience and exhibits a unified relational aesthetic lies with curators and artists (Bourriaud, 1998/2002).

Moreover, physical presence is contingent upon the capacity to direct attention towards specific stimuli within a given environment while distracting from irrelevant stimuli (Bulu, 2012).

Social presence refers to interactions that occur in person through various forms of communication mediums. Bulu (2012) argues further that the manner in which individuals interact in a space can be influenced by the communication medium employed, which in turn affects the level of immediacy and intimacy. The term *communication medium* comprises both textual and visual materials, as well as in-person exchanges, which curators and artists utilize to convey the exhibition's concept or narrative to the public. Bulu (2012) states that social presence increases in conjunction with the capability and quality of the communication medium. Finally, co-presence is defined as the intersection of physical and social presence, or the experience of being together in a common space (Riva and Ijsselsteijn, 2003). With regard to the present study, the salience of the curator or artist being cognitively and emotionally present in order to be completely involved in the physical environment was considered. The intersections between the various types of presence are essential for enjoyment and satisfaction in a mediated environment (Bulu, 2012). This being said, scientific investigations into the correlation between co-presence and satisfaction did not establish a causal relationship (Halsall, 201). The here-presented insights may offer an avenue to explain these coinciding concepts that does not rely on causality.

Ultimately, as directors of the presented space, the extent to which artists and curators use their presence in the space to keep the audience engaged with the artwork on display needs to be explored. Additionally, there are three determinants of presence as addressed by Ijsselsteijn and Riva (2003): the extent of sensory information presented to the participant, the level of control the participant has over the various sensor mechanisms and the participant's ability to modify the environment. These factors are all related to the form of the experience. As well as form, content is important as it relates to the artworks, actors and the environment that work together to present a logical flow of narrative in a space for the audience to follow which is essential for keeping them engaged and interested.

### **3. Methodology**

This thesis investigated the roles of curators and artists in the production network of an artwork and how the public that constitutes the audience engages with curated artwork has been taken into consideration in curatorial practices. Therefore, the central question is; How do curators and artist's design-thinking strategies cater towards audience experience in exhibitions? The research offers a deeper understanding of the thought and purpose behind the creation and presentation of an artwork. This included the examination of specific aspects of the design process that relate to the intention of creating a meaningful experience for the viewer within the exhibition space and how that related to society.

As lived experiences of individuals are frequently studied through phenomenological approaches in conjunction with qualitative methods (Worthington, 2013), this research employed these for the production of experiences as described through the lived experiences of artists and curators. Using a phenomenological approach, semi-structured in-depth interviews (Bryman, 2012, p. 471) were conducted with an interview guide (Appendix C) that aided a better understanding of the construction of experiences in an exhibition context.

Given the myriad artistic disciplines (e.g., painting, sculpture, film etc.) within the realm of art, there is no single correct approach to understanding the design process (Worthington, 2013). Therefore, to capture the diversity of interpretation and execution processes within design-thinking a qualitative approach was employed as it enables the study to examine and concentrate on the central concept of design-thinking, such as the strategies utilized by curators and artists when developing artworks (Daly et al., 2012). Nine circa one-hour expert interviews were used in this qualitative phenomenological study to investigate the above-mentioned research question one a micro-level using operationalized concepts in an interview guide.

#### **3.1 Sample**

For this study, interviews were conducted with five artists and four curators who currently work in Berlin and have a minimum of four years of experience in their respective roles. Snowball and multi-criterion sampling were used to choose participants. The following criteria were decisive; location, profession and years of experience. The first criterion employed for this study was the geographical location of Berlin in Germany. The significance of focusing on curators and artists located in Berlin lies in the rapid growth of the creative industry (CI) in Berlin and its global influence (Arandelovic, 2018). The city's CI has

experienced a significant growth, with nearly one in ten jobs in 2010 being in the creative sector (Arandelovic, 2018). Consequently, Berlin has emerged as a center for innovation in the creative sectors, housing diverse experimental creative communities of artists and curators, which is evident in the guiding principles reiterated by galleries and art institutions where the artwork is exhibited (Heebels & Van Aalst, 2010). In addition to the city's notable cultural importance in the art industry (Lange et al., 2008), the study selected participants employed in Berlin because of the researcher's accessibility to the community.

The second criterion was profession, and the aim of this study required the participating individuals to be curators or artists. These professions were crucial to focus on in the production of artworks, as both of their roles fell within the 'creators' end of Griswold's cultural diamond (2012) and they are responsible for mediating an artwork before distributed to society (Alexander, 2021). The cultural diamond emphasizes the implicit relationships between creators, art, society, and consumers. However, within the scope of this study, the focus is on how creators influence the remaining entities in the diamond when exhibiting the artwork to identify and isolate their influence on the rest of the network through design-thinking.

The last criterion used for this study is individuals who have a minimum of four years of experience working as an artist or curator. Decision-making in heuristic based practices requires years of experience and must be learned (Reber, 1989) because they are reliant on the development of an enhanced intuition. In a study conducted by Harteis (2014), it was determined that to be recognized as an 'expert' in occupations that rely on intuition, a minimum of four years is required to adequately develop the necessary skills for making informed and rational decisions. Intuition plays a crucial role in the creative design process. It is an unconscious process that influences decisions on the appropriate steps to take and the development of a strategy (de Rooij, 2021). This intuition is derived from experience (de Rooij, 2021), making it an essential criterion for thoroughly examining effective strategies employed by 'expert' artists and curators within the process of exhibiting art and creating specific audience experiences.

### **3.2 Operationalization**

The interview guide incorporated themes from the theoretical framework, which have been operationalized into the following topics: *Artistic and curatorial strategies*, *design-thinking*, *mode of address* and *multi-modality of media integration*. First, the central concept of design-thinking was operationalized as the *artistic and curatorial strategies* utilized by

curators and artists when developing artworks (Daly et al., 2012). The discussion of these strategies allowed for the investigation of the rationales and methods that the participating individuals engage in when designing and constructing a public encounter with an artwork, an experience. Specifically, it investigated the synthesis of design knowledge through strategies utilized by curators and artists within the production network to facilitate an artwork's performance. The investigation of this concept was prompted by questions like “How do you approach the design of an exhibition experience or artwork?”. An examination of the conditional variations in individuals' experiences of design revealed substantial variations in individuals' comprehension of design. The practice of curation, carried out by curators and artists when presenting artwork, is continuously shaped by ongoing social processes and interactions. Additionally, due to the innate diversity in artworks and messages they contain, a high level of flexibility was also needed. Therefore, there is no universally established set of curatorial practices (Kreps, 2003) that can be used. This gives rise to an ontological uncertainty regarding design-thinking, and it is necessary to investigate these strategies to comprehend and learn from how creators navigate this (Dewulf & Biesbroek, 2018).

Furthermore, considering artwork and contextual space as performative suggests that they operate within a relational network, as per actor-network theory (ANT). The outcome spaces of design-thinking, that manifest themselves as exhibition spaces (Daly et al., 2012) are relational. Consequently, performative arts were operationalized as a *mode of address* within the actor network (Latour, 2009). These spaces entail a variety of relationships, including those between art, its display, its creators, and its audience. Curators and the curatorial processes are characterized by their connection with the visitor and their connection to the exhibited artwork, as well as the artists responsible for creating those works (Kreps, 2003). Therefore, when artists and curators create and display artwork, they need to be conscious of the network and consider all actants involved in order to thoroughly contemplate the method of communication for conveying their message in the discursive environment of an exhibition space. For instance, to explore whether interviewees had a targeted mode of address, questions like “When designing an exhibition what kind of audience do you have in mind?” were used. When creating an experience, it is crucial to consider the target audience that the artwork intends to engage and how it impacts the overall experience, as the way it is presented has the ability to improve it.

Ultimately, active participation from the audience in a communicative setting is essential for generating a meaningful encounter. The examination of how the creators

promote audience engagement was conducted through the utilization of *multi-modality*. When curating an exhibition, it is important to take into account the growing accessibility of multi-media platforms. Hence, it is imperative to investigate how curators and artists consider the potential interpretations of artworks by their audience when selecting and placing objects that elicit reactions and subsequent actions. Interviewees were asked to describe examples of specific strategies they used to manipulate and contrast objects to stimulate audience engagement and moments of reconsideration.

However, it became apparent from the first couple of interviews that the inclusion of the topic *multi-modality* and the use of specific words caused confusion and hindered the progression of the interview. After having reflected on this issue, adjustments were made to the interview guide with the aim of fostering a more productive and meaningful conversation. The main changes made to the interview guide were the use of specific words and the final theme of *multi-modality*. For example, terms such as “techniques” and “features” used in the questions led to confusion and limited the conversation (Appendix C). Consequently, these terms were replaced with “communication” and “visual tools” (Appendix D), resulting in more effective and engaging answers to the particular questions in the following seven interviews. This change in effect may be attributed to the greater familiarity of these terms within the field, or alternatively, it can be inferred that artists and curators perceive themselves as creators of visual narratives (MacLeod et al., 2012), who employ various tools (Stephens et al., 2014) to construct their exhibitions. Furthermore, terms like “techniques” and “features” allude to a type of power that is frequently used in controlling predetermined goals (Fish, 1976). Nevertheless, in the realm of art, especially when showcasing artworks intended for audience engagement, artists and curators are limited to encoding the artwork, while the decoding process is entrusted to the audience (Hall, 1980). This suggests that the inherent unpredictability of the aesthetic experience of a displayed piece precludes any predetermined outcome. The word “tools” implies more flexibility which is needed in this case.

Furthermore, during the analysis it became apparent that the topic of multi-modality is negligible in the consideration of design-thinking, even in more technologically oriented artforms such as film. A significant proportion of the artists and curators who were interviewed exhibited a reluctance to utilise technology and multicultural media platforms beyond their promotional capacities. Hence, towards the conclusion of the interview, rather than prompting participants to reflect on their overall practice or past experiences, they were asked about their ongoing project. This question presented itself as easy to answer since they

currently dedicated their efforts to the different design stages and actively thought about them. This afforded a current account of their way of design-thinking that was distorted by retrospective biases, or memory lapses that can occur over time (Bryman, 2012).

### **3.3 Data collection & ethical considerations**

The nine interviews were conducted between the 26th of March and the 30th of April, 2024. An interview brief and informed consent form (Appendix B) was sent to participants prior to the interview which they signed digitally and sent back. This ensured transparency and disclosed confidentiality which in return safeguarded the study and its participants from social harm. The interviews were conducted remotely via video calls due to differences in location between the researcher (The Netherlands) and the interviewees (Germany). Participation was optional and the interviewees had the option to discontinue at any point. They were anonymized by means of pseudonyms. Interviews were conducted primarily in English with occasional use of German terms with an English interview guide and were transcribed verbatim with small reflections to provide better context retrospectively. The interviews were recorded using a microphone and it is crucial to acknowledge that while the interviewees did not see the microphone on camera, they were properly apprised of its presence.

### **3.4 Data Analysis**

Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the collected data using Atlas.ti. This multi-stage procedure facilitated the identification of recurring themes within the transcribed interviews. The primary objective of this method was to shed light on the interdisciplinary integrated approach in design practices (Ataman & Tunçer, 2022). By means of an iterative coding process that allowed for the emergence of thematic areas and sub-areas, thematic analysis was an efficient instrument for revealing strategies (Ataman & Tunçer, 2022). Once analysis was completed, codes were sorted into respective groups and then into over-arching themes (Appendix D). By employing this deductive method to examine the collected data, a confirmation bias was minimized and the structured approach ensured a transparent and consistent evaluation process. The process of developing themes adhered to the guidelines established by Braun and Clarke (2006). The codes and analysis exhibited clear indications that the development of strategies was based on considerations that interviewees made in their respective fields. Through this analysis, three primary overarching themes were

identified to encompass the various strategies the interviewees presented from their repertoire of lived experiences.

Following the completion of the analysis, individual profiles were generated for each interviewee (Appendix E), providing an overview of their pseudonym, gender, occupation, field of discipline such as film (if applicable), and years of experience. The purpose of the overview is to provide contextual information regarding the discipline specific background of each interviewee, thereby contributing to the study's understanding of the results.

### **3.5 Positionality**

Reflexivity is crucial to my role as the researcher for data collection and analysis (Watt, 2007). Firstly, my introspective reflexivity is essential because of my insider position in the field. Having worked in Berlin's cultural sector for a year and being an artist myself, I possess intimate knowledge of the community and its members (Greene, 2014). This experience allowed me to orient myself better within the field and relate to participants by asking meaningful questions based on prior knowledge, leading to a more authentic understanding of the data collected (Greene, 2014). Furthermore, my position granted me easier access to the community (Merriam et al., 2001), enabling me to sample participants with greater credibility due to their extensive experience.

However, my positionality may have increased my subjectivity to some extent due to assumptions made based on insider knowledge (Greene, 2014). To avoid this bias, I maintained a level of distance (Greene, 2014). This duality required me to adopt two identities: researcher and peer (Fenge et al., 2019). I utilized this awareness to navigate emotional reactions from interviewees, adopting a sympathetic role and reassuring them that they do not need to share anything that they are uncomfortable with.

As a researcher fluent in both German and English, I informed interviewees they could switch to German, especially for technical terms more naturally expressed in their professional language. This enabled interviewees to better and more fluently depict specific projects and facilitated my better understanding of the processes at hand, as German is inherently a more systematic language in respect to terminology than English (Günther et al., 2019).

Lastly, while conducting online interviews instead of face-to-face might limit certain non-verbal cues like body language, it offered greater flexibility for participants' schedules to conduct interviews which were vital in for study and had to fit into a relatively tight time frame.

## 4. Results

The themes identified through thematic analysis explicate on the experiences the interviewed curators and artists collected in relation to tactics employed to enhance audience experiences. The identified theme of *Motivation and curiosity* with the following dimensions of *reinventing through content and form* revealed that artists and curators utilize different strategies and tactics motivated by specific reasons to engage the audience's inherent curiosity. Furthermore, the themes of *Mixing and matching* and *Sensory satiety* discuss to achieve this, interviewees needed to directly appeal to audience senses and entice them into the exhibition experiences. Curators and artists effectively engaged the audience and prevented boredom by providing variety through form and content. However, the recognition that presenting excessive stimuli could potentially overwhelm the senses was fundamental as outlined by the theme of *Need for balance*. By generating effective motivation and engagement possibilities, the curators and artists successfully deliver a gratifying experience to audiences. However, it thereby becomes evident that their presence in the space is essential to facilitate interactions, provide context, and uphold a curated experience which was explored through the theme of *the need to be present* within the scope of *leveraging a physical presence to exert social presence*. The importance of actively engaging in their own curated experience highlights the need for the interviewees to be introspective and conscious of their own position in relation to the artwork, space, and community they are serving which the following theme of *maintenance of experience and awareness of position* that was delineated into *positionality to space and community*.

### 4.1 Motivation and Curiosity

The first theme identified was *motivation and curiosity*. Interviewees revealed that they understand there is curiosity present in audiences, but that certain strategies can be used to amplify this inclination. This natural inclination towards curiosity can be catered to by evoking curiosity through novelty or putting the viewer in a state of uncertainty, by catering towards the inherent desire to learn or by creating a sense of wonder within the audience that serves as a catalyst for internal dialogue. Strategies were then developed based on considerations of how to effectively motivate audiences by catering towards curiosity, so that audiences want to engage in the experience curated for them. This consideration served as the foundation for design-thinking strategies that focused on audience experiences in exhibitions. The various strategies to engage audiences that were revealed through interviews were

accomplished through either reinventing the content or reinventing the form of the exhibition experience.

#### 4.1.1 Reinventing through content

The primary purpose of an artwork's content used to be for the promotion of beauty and virtues (Bishop, 2012), but its reinvention supposes that objects in an exhibition space prompt discourse and create an encounter (through their relational nature) (Bourriaud, 1998/2002).

Hannah (Curator 1) invokes the motivational aspect of curiosity which posits that curiosity and exploratory behavior are attempts to lessen novelty and uncertainty by reinventing content. Hannah's effective strategy is especially apparent in an exhibition curated by her, *Sechzehn Objekte* wherein she brought 16 original objects from Yad Vashem and displayed them in the entrance area of the Bundestag in Berlin. Each object represented a different federal state in Germany. To present these objects, Hannah (Curator 1) uses "very reduced, hardly any text, just to lure you in", because if the text is too present then "people will stop looking" at the artwork. This shows that she makes the conscious decision to use little text because text obstructs the objective experience (Pekarik et al., 1999) and lessens the intrigue when the audience encounters the object. As well as keeping the text short, it was hidden, and the text only became visible upon closer inspection.

The idea behind this tactic is "the moment there's text, or too much text, or if the text becomes kind of so present, that people sort of immediately capitulate their kind of openness" (Hannah, Curator 1). The curator employs this technique to encourage the audience to engage in exploratory behavior by seeking out the hidden text to alleviate the state of uncertainty that the absence of text induces. This is founded on the curator's assumption that an overly present text undermines the audience's receptivity, as their openness has been 'capitulated' and a lack of text 'lures' them in. Hannah explicitly emphasizes that she doesn't want "people with their heads in the text" which is exemplified by her following personal philosophy towards design-thinking which was reiterated throughout the interview:

Hannah: It's like the question of getting the sweet spot between this is the thing I want the person to focus on and how much more do I need to give them to make them feel not too confused, but still curious that they want to go and find out more.  
(Curator 1)

This shows that Hannah's aim is to trigger exploratory behavior because of the internal deficit caused by her tactic of lack of text. However, she also demonstrates that this needs to

be approached with caution for it to be effective. As a curator, one needs to hit the ‘sweet spot’ of causing enough of a knowledge gap to evoke curiosity. Although not to the point that the audience becomes ‘too confused’ but instead feels motivated to approach the exhibit and ‘find out more’. Thus, in the exhibition *Sechzehn Objekte*, the audience became more inclined to engage in exploratory behavior as a result of the internal deficit caused by not knowing why those objects were being displayed (Silvia, 2012).

From this experience it can be deduced that the audience is motivated to investigate in order to fill in information gaps due to the uncertainty generated by the lack of context, which is typically provided by textual script displayed alongside artwork (Berlyne, 1966; Hoebink, 2019). The audience must lessen the information gap to satisfy their drive to understand the artwork. This can only be accomplished by approaching the exhibition to 'find' the text. Thus, the act of approaching the exhibit in closer proximity is subsequently reinforced (Silvia, 2012) by this curator. However, this is predicated on the notion that individuals inherently seek stimulation and that novel stimuli, such as an exhibition held in a public space, increases drive (Silvia, 2012). Hannah simply amplifies the need to approach the exhibition through the tactful display of text and lures her audience into the experience.

Rosie’s (Curator 4) strategy also reinvented content but employed curiosity slightly differently. To encourage the audience to learn and explore for their own benefit, Rosie used curiosity as an intrinsic motivator (Silvia, 2012, p. 158):

Rosie: I put the prices up on the wall, let people know that work is for sale. You know, let people sort of know what the price is because so often in the art world, that's something that's kind of hidden or secret. (Curator 4)

Rosie employs the purposeful display of the cost of each artwork in an attempt to dispel the preconceived notion that art is prohibitively expensive, and to increase level of transparency with the audience. With this approach, Rosie discloses this information publicly and encourages the audience to learn about the pricing of artwork by not keeping it a 'secret'. In doing so, she enables them to satisfy their innate curiosity, which is widely recognized as a love of knowledge in academic circles (Silvia, 2012). Additionally, the consideration she makes with the audience in mind in relation to accessibility is further exemplified below.

Rosie: this painting or this small artwork is only 500 euros... And maybe if I don't buy a couple of pairs of shoes or something...I can pay them over time, that it makes it much more accessible for the audience as well. (Curator 4)

Rosie expressed that she found this strategy piqued the curiosity of her audience, which enables them to consider purchasing the artwork resulting in positive feedback because in her

experience “people are really interested in that.” It exemplifies Rosie's mission to make artworks as accessible and attainable as buying 'a few pairs of shoes'.

With this approach, Rosie implies an assumption that coincides with Silvia's (2012) notion of curiosity as an intrinsic motivation in and of itself, not because it enables individuals to alleviate a negative state, such as uncertainty caused by a lack of text. Rosie encourages her audience to explore the possibility of engaging with a commercial artwork for their own benefit. Her design-thinking ultimately aims to satisfy the curiosity around the price of an artwork that is “so often in the art world, that's something that's kind of hidden or secret.” Therefore, by making the price readily visibly for the audience she is providing a gratifying introspective experience by catering towards the inclination to learn (Pekarik et al., 1999). This transparency enables her audience to acquire knowledge that is normally socially considered ostentatious, allowing them to exercise their intellect in this gallery and become better informed for future encounters when participating in this type of discourse. While this example does not necessarily serve as an illustration for the democratization of art, it certainly offers an instance of the democratization of knowledge about art.

Conversely, Rebecca (Artist 1) appeals to the inherent range of curiosity that exists among individuals. Rebecca designed text paintings composed of “questions or open-ended phrases that were meant to sort of start a dialogue and it were like a comment on the relationship between the viewer and the artist.” The open-ended phrases used by the artist here have a clear intention of initiating a conversation with the viewer. Rebecca caters to the urge to approach an object with an emotional state of wonder that is associated with exploratory behavior. Through the use of open-ended, introspective questions that directly address each viewer, she introduces a stimulus, namely the text painting, into the environment of the audience. This affords them the chance to engage in instinctive action with the painting while contemplating the answer to the question.

I-curiosity (Litman, 2005), which refers to curiosity as a feeling of interest, is the specific aspect of curiosity that Rebecca is addressing by affording her audience the potential to learn about themselves. This approach stands in contrast to Hannah's strategy, who caters to its counterpart, the D-curiosity, which is characterized by a sense of deprivation. Hannah appealed to the feeling of D-curiosity by not providing textual context to her exhibition. She was able to appeal to this aspect of curiosity in her audience by stimulating their desire to bridge the artificially created knowledge gap, therefore engaging them to seek out the text and reduce their current state of uncertainty.

#### 4.1.2 Reinventing through form

Aside from content, the interviewees also incited curiosity in the audience through the act of reinventing form. Form refers to the space in which the content, the art, is displayed in. Exhibiting art ordinarily follows a predetermined set of rules of presentation (form) such as paintings hanging in a white gallery space (Grunenberg, 1999). Reinvention appertains to instances that deviate from this established standard. By allowing ‘free play’, curiosity can be stimulated through reinvented form (Bourriaud, 1998/2002; Rancière, 2010). Prior to anything else, the interviewed individuals accomplished this by challenging the established norms and conventions of the art world, which are predominantly governed by the white cube gallery space (Grunenberg, 1999). By utilizing this strategy to their advantage to cater towards audience experiences, they evoke the heterogenous sensible within the viewer by delivering a sensory experience that does not coincide with the expectations of that space.

As an illustration, Chiara (Artist, 4) made an installation called *the archive is my altar* where she constructed rooms within the gallery space that represent an altar. She covered the room's walls with pages from her personal diary and left incense for visitors to burn. She even encourages audience members to take items from the installation home for their personal altar, as the room is designed on the premise that everyone has some kind of altar built of their own memories at home. The inspiration for this installation stemmed from her realization that she herself has been creating altars of her own “and a lot of us do it and so from that concept the installations are kind of like what I have at home um translated into a gallery space” (Chiara, Artist 4). With the ambition to recreate a personal altar in a gallery setting that can appeal to an audience Chiara is creating a relational environment by reinventing and ‘translating’ the artwork’s aesthetics. By re-aestheticizing the white cube gallery space to represent something people have in their own homes she is blurring the boundary between art and life (Rancière, 2010).

Traditionally, white gallery spaces adhere to a prescribed code of conduct (Grunenberg, 1999), which leads the audience to form political assumptions of how to behave correctly when entering a space like this. Chiara has now 'translated' the environment in a way that subverts the normative expectations. Counteracting the white cube gallery space with a crypt-like space serves her purpose to evoke the audience’s heterogeneous sensible through free play (Rancière, 2010). By reimagining an environment as something the audience can relate to because 'a lot of us do it', she provides an unconventional aesthetic experience that, according to Rancière (2010) and Bourriaud (1998/2002), initiates a dialogue that should encourage behavior such as tearing the work from the walls and lighting incense.

While the audience eventually exhibited a generally positive reaction and spent considerable time in the installation, Chiara had to use additional strategies to make this happen. This shows that relational aesthetics alone failed to activate the heterogeneous sensibilities within the audience and indicates that relational aesthetics primarily serve as a useful premise for design-thinking approaches but remain a theoretical notion. Having prosaic visual culture present in a space conveys the impression that it helps the producers of an experience to relate to their audience and create a moment for casual encounters to occur between the entities. Nevertheless, to fully facilitate the social interstice in an experience wherein the audience feels 'free' enough to actually interact and engage in novel modes of interaction exceeds the existing theory's capability. Therefore, new theoretical propositions need to be put forth that enhance this theory's real-world applicability like adding the component of presence as elaborated on in the following chapter. In conclusion, artists and curators successfully delivered a satisfying aesthetic experience by reinventing the form and content, thereby evoking curiosity and providing proper motivation. Additionally, they prepared the audience mentally to interact with the artwork, approach the curated environment with an open mind, and engage with the presented concepts through free play using the tools they developed.

## **4.2 The need to be present**

The second theme that characterized the strategy implemented by the interviewees was the concept of actively engaging in the environment to uphold the overall experience. The manner in which they realized their presence is thought to have an impact on the degree of audience engagement. Artists and curators made many considerations when it came to curating an experience for the audience and to ensure that the space, they had devised for the audience was presented as envisioned, their presence was required. By applying the theory of presence, which can be further subdivided into the following three types of physical presence, social presence, and co-presence, one can discern the degree to which the interviewees occupied the given space.

### **4.2.1 Leveraging a physical presence to exert a social presence**

The previous example of the altarpiece by Chiara (Artist 4) presents an anomaly among the group of interviewees, and thereby demonstrates the necessity of physical and social presence. Despite Chiara's explicit initiatives to produce art that deviated from the conventions of the gallery environment, the hegemonic discourse of the white cube continued

to impede the audience's interaction with the space. By placing interactive objects in the space, she intended to stimulate audience interaction. However, since this did not yield the desired effect, Chiara physically introduced her friends into the space to create a social presence. Her friends set an example for the audience of potential interactions with the space, reminding them of their capacity to perform actions such as lighting the incense.

Although Chiara was not physically present, she leveraged her friends' physical presence to direct attention towards specific stimuli (Bulu, 2012) like the incense within the altar environment. Her friends then exerted their social presence by activating various sensory mechanisms (Riva & IJsselsteijn, 2003) like smell and touch, thereby modifying the environment provided by Chiara. The presence of her friends actively influenced the form of the experience. Applying presence theory here allows for a more substantial assessment of the impact human actors have with their physical presence in the space.

By combining physical and social presence, people felt more at ease, as shown through their prolonged interaction in the space and their tendency to follow the example set under the artist's directive. According to Chiara, the invitation for an experience only became successful once she introduced the additional strategy of employing her friends as human actors into the space (Hoebink, 2019; Latour, 2009). An immediate environment is full of possible actions; however, Chiara acknowledges that the audience can not entirely deviate from the canon of expectations in a gallery space by merely employing relational art aesthetics (Bourriaud, 1998/2002). This example shows the limitations of form and highlights that another human ultimately serves as the greatest stimulus necessary to activate the heterogeneous sensible and motivate the audience to interact with the artwork the way the artist intended. The effectiveness of Chiara's additional strategy further exemplifies presence theory's applicability in the field of cultural consumption.

Out of the nine interviewees, this was the only case in which the initial audience engagement was unsuccessful, necessitating the artist or curator to implement supplementary strategies in order to establish an authentic aesthetic encounter. The relevance of discussing this exception is engendered by the fact that the artist changed the circumstances of her display until it resembled those presented by the other interviewees. In other words, it confirms the necessity of presence twofold, firstly by showing the failure created by absence and secondly by remedying it through presence. The hegemonic narrative of how to approach art and behave in gallery spaces is still too present in society, according to this finding. No other participant encountered this issue, which can be explained by the fact that they insist

that their presence within the space is a necessity. Each artist and curator, Chiara aside, emphasized the importance of being physically present within the space themselves.

For example, Felix (Curator 3) expresses that what is “crucial is really your presence to introduce and to be there for conversation after the film.” Similarly, Artur (Curator 2) who conveys the need to “be present during the opening, to be able for them to talk also about the artwork.” Here both curators acknowledge the importance of being present on site using social presence in conjunction with physical presence. They insert themselves into the environment as a communication medium to be available for the audience. By imparting context and expanding the narrative, they provide immediacy and a personalized experience through their presence (Bulu, 2012). The strategy of being present to introduce either the artwork or artists, as well as making themselves available for Q&As, is something both Rosie (Curator 4) and Hannah (Curator 1) also utilize in their own exhibitions.

All participants maintained a consistent presence in the exhibition space, albeit to different degrees and capacities, and emphasized the value of being present in order to effectively motivate, inform, and exert influence over the audience and direct the experience. Hannah (Curator 1), for example, uses her physical and social presence to maintain her authority as the director of the experience as shown in the following. Hannah has an opening where a historical piece of text that lists some version of the ten commandments that a father wrote to his daughter and presented on a big banner using a contemporary font. Hannah placed a bench in front of it to signify this was “a place to stop” and “kind of slow people down.” However, what happened was:

Hannah: The guards there kept putting the pile of catalogues on that bench. And I was really getting so angry because I really want people to only look at the catalogues at the end of the exhibition. Because I don't want people with their heads in the text (Curator 1).

In this case, Hannah had to use her physical presence to maintain the experience curated. More specifically, she exerted her presence to control the extent to which information was presented to the audience (Riva & Ijsselsteijn, 2003) which directed the spatial script of the exhibition (Hoebink, 2019). As previously discussed, Hannah's primary strategy is reduced text to keep her audience engaged. So, if she was not present to remove the distraction of the catalogue, the audience's capacity to immerse themselves would be compromised because they would have 'their heads in the text'. She could not control the additional given human actors who are employed by the space. As they were not subject to her direction within the

experience in the space therefore, she had to use her social presence to control the communication mediums (Bulu, 2012) and remove the catalogues.

Nevertheless, how artists and curators best utilized the theory of presence by converging social and physical presence to elicit co-presence (Riva & Ijsselsteijn, 2003) is exemplified by artists like Ming (Artist 5). Ming performed a piece wherein she brought individuals for a walk around through the district Neukölln in Berlin. The “one to one” performance took place at a selected spot where she made a proposal to the participant.

Ming: So, I asked them, so you have two choices. One is you can see me show and tell a piece that I make on the subjects or you can participate... So all the audience I get decide to participate, which is quite fascinating for me. (Artist 5)

Here Ming provides the audience with the option to either become an observer or active participant in the performance she was about to do. Almost all participants 'decided' to become active participants. As a result of the busy environment of the street, Ming was required to assume her physical presence to direct the attention of the participant towards the performance and to focus the participants' attention on her so that they would disregard the irrelevant stimuli that exist (Bulu, 2012). Even though such one-on-one performances with members of the audience are unconventional and artists do not usually go for a walk and have a 'one-to-one' with a member of the audience or go for a walk and have the artwork performed on the street, Ming broke conventions and talked them through two options about how they would like to shape their experience. By providing this aesthetic affordance (Vara Sánchez, 2022), she showed them what capacity she had to perform and gave them the agency to choose. The artist in this case was the sole communication medium and she used her social presence to her advantage to increase the level of intimacy with the participants in the experience. This level of interaction creates a very intentional encounter wherein Ming's performance morphs from that of performer-audience into performer-performer, i.e., two people having an experience of being together in a common space. This resulted in the most gratifying type of presence (Bulu, 2012; Riva & Ijsselsteijn, 2003) by becoming an experience of co-presence. The success of this strategy was reflected in the level of engagement whereby everyone made the active choice to 'participate'.

Even if the art performances occurred outside the gallery space like Ming's, the reinvention of form and content of art to become relational was insufficient to encourage audiences to deviate from the conventions of the white space previously discussed. Hence, it is also worth mentioning another interviewee, Rebecca (Artist 1), who managed to provide a satisfying experience for audiences by effectively utilizing their presence as creators to

promote interaction within gallery spaces. Rebecca (Artist 1) who created installations that remained in the conventional white gallery space of sleeping bags and hammocks accompanied with audio works, through her presence was able to properly motivate the audience to engage with the artwork (Ranci re, 2010). Rebecca had the additional concern about the audience's bodily interaction with art and the consideration of how weight could limit their engagement. She asserted her presence by using explicit communication medium like putting up “a sign...explaining how you were supposed to interact with the artwork” which encouraged them to lie in the hammocks. However, this was not enough and sometimes she had to ask audience members to please not sit on the hammocks because although she tries to make them as stable as possible “in certain cases, I didn't make the work with the intention of having someone who was, I don't know how many kilos sit on it” because she is not an “engineer.” Acknowledging this, she initiated a co-presence with the audience and completely involved herself in the environment (Bulu, 2012) whereby if the audience could not engage with the work by lying in the hammocks Rebecca would “start a conversation.” These conversations ranged from talking about the work to exchanging ideas and book recommendations. The intersection between the different types of presence used by Rebecca ensures a level of enjoyment and satisfaction among all her audience in the mediated environment (Bulu, 2012).

However, after the show initially debuting in Germany, it was shown in South Korea where she “didn't go, so I didn't, I don't know exactly what it was like, but I heard that the response was good” and “people from the local community were just hanging out on my pieces all the time.” In this case, the artist was not present, but the relational aesthetic portrayed by the artwork as well as the unconventional space (Bourriaud, 1998/2002) of the park was more than enough stimuli to encourage engagement as the audience were 'hanging out in the pieces all the time'. Rebecca did however reveal that when she could not “be there for the full installation” she provides the receiving institution with “a detailed manual” so they know “exactly how to install the work..” Despite her physical absence, she exerted a diminished level of presence through her instruction manuals, which ensured that the work was presented as intended, which yielded a positive outcome. This result may also indicate that cultural disparities between audiences can impact engagement, and that the prevailing narrative of the white cube (Grunenberg, 1999) is not as prevalent in South Korea compared to Western cultures. This needs to be acknowledged but remains at a level of speculation as the discussion thereof goes beyond the scope of this paper.

This exertion of presence presented by the interviewees, even to the limited degree presented by interviewees above nonetheless implies the insufficiency of form alone to achieve the desired engagement from the audience. Another factor which aided the audience in having a successful aesthetic experience is the communication medium that facilitated pre-emptive aesthetic regulation (Vara Sánchez, 2022). The majority of interviewees also used warm-up areas (Hoebink, 2019) to include a small introduction text to set the context for the art to come. Some warm-up areas were more explicit than others. For instance, Mia (Artist 2) for her installation of silent dinners would introduce the concept of this performance, as well as informing audiences that they had to hand in their phones and as from the next room were no longer allowed to speak. She defined this part of the performance as her “pre-silence era.” In this case, Mia used communication tools such as a text next to the artwork and herself to apply affective regulation to the experience and manage the audience's expectations by informing them of actions they could take that had a soothing effect and put the audience at ease (Vara Sánchez, 2022).

Other tactics that served the same purpose included the distribution of pamphlets such as those used by Felix where “there's short synopses that people can read...to accompany a film program or exhibition with this information, but also to introduce it yourself in terms of film program.” In addition, the organization of artist talks like Rosie (Curator 4) who has her artists present to “give an artist talk or walk through”, and the provision of texts and audios via QR codes like Chiara (Artist 4) and Rebecca (Artist 1) further serve the purpose of regulating audience's expectations by providing context.

### **4.3 The maintenance of experience and awareness of position**

It is imperative for curators and artists to be aware of their positionality within the exhibition space as a result of the evident necessity of their physical presence. This positionality can be comprehended by examining their connection to the art, space and community. The importance of awareness is further emphasized by the unpredictable nature of art and the incapability of curators and artists to foresee every eventuality, given that complications invariably emerge and audiences do not always respond as anticipated. Additionally, as one of the most international capitals in Europe, Berlin has an extremely heterogeneous audience. Therefore, in order to include, please, and encourage their audience, creators must develop a greater awareness of context.

The artists' and curators' positionality in relation to the presented artwork is demonstrated by catering towards the audience's variety seeking tendencies. They

demonstrate this understanding by offering a variety of potential actions for audience engagement. This is accomplished by directly appealing to the senses and providing multiple avenues for interaction with the artwork to keep them optimally engaged (Inman, 2001). This is discussed in greater detail in the following identified theme of *maintenance of experience and awareness of position*.

#### 4.3.1 Positionality to space

Artists and curators also needed to demonstrate an awareness of their position in relation to space, as it dictates which community they had to cater to and the historical context of the location. Several curators and artists mentioned that they frequently exhibit in unconventional spaces like Hannah (Curator 1), Jane (Artist 2), and Ming (Artist 5), whereas others more frequently exhibit in gallery-like settings. The environment in which the artwork is displayed eventually becomes part of its meaning and, more importantly, interpretation. To emphasize the importance of the participant's awareness of the impact that space has on the audience's interpretation, an Austinian distinction between locution and illocution must be made (Friedell & Liao, 2022, p. 445). Locution is what the artwork is saying, while illocution refers to the intention of what it is saying in that space.

Hannah (Curator 1), for example, sees herself as a director of concept who takes over existing public spaces, such as a run-down castle in Brandenburg which used to belong to Walter Rathnau, a Jewish German minister of foreign affairs who was assassinated in 1921. She approached the director of the place and expresses how she would adapt the castle interior into space where “there was no wallpaper left” and use “that as a sort of springboard for painting the entire walls, inspired by what was once there, but in a contemporary way.” She then curated the project in which she enlisted a group of artists to reimagine a section of wall where the original wallpaper had almost completely disintegrated and revitalize that space in a new 'contemporary way'.

In the final piece, the castle was an integral part of the artwork's meaning because its creation was informed by it. If displayed elsewhere, the castle's locutionary content would remain. However, it would eradicate the work's illocutionary force of commemorating Walter Rathnau. If it were relocated to a gallery, the artwork would still prompt people to consider the original artwork's meaning but no longer in its original context. The artistic endeavor to create a mural would take center stage in the gallery space overshadowing the historical context. The centrality and evolution of understanding the role of place can be comprehended through the classification of the artwork as *place-specific*, given that the castle provides a

sociohistorical context that influences the interpretation of the artwork. The mural was developed and influenced by the history of location (Cartiere, 2008) as it was made to commemorate the “100 years to his death, to his assassination” (Hannah, Curator 1). The castle has a clear past that has marked the site, which Hannah acknowledges by describing the castle as a “kind of little forgotten museum to him.”

The distinction of place-specificity for some artworks is important to note. The meaning’s dependency on place is not to be taken for granted but individually recognized by the curators and artists. While Hannah’s work in the castle is place-specific, Rebecca’s installation with the hammock and sleeping bags discussed above does not alter its meaning due to its location change from a German gallery to a public park in South Korea. Here the change of location did not explicitly alter the locutionary content as reflected by the positive feedback from audiences in both countries. This can be explained by the work not being place-specific which means that the installation’s content was not informed by place, but innate universal qualities felt by humans like loneliness and survival. Although its illocutionary force was apparently slightly stronger in South Korea, this may be a result of different cultural communities as disclosed earlier rather than change of space.

These examples demonstrate the considerations and levels of awareness the curator or artist needs to possess when developing strategies that cater towards audiences in regard to space, especially if the work is place-specific. Spatial awareness also needs to develop in tandem with awareness of position to community. Rebecca neglected to take into account the differences in the audience or try to anticipate the potential impact it could have when relocating a place-specific artwork of hammocks. Although it turned out favorably, it could have just as easily resulted in a negative outcome, as revealed by other artists and curators.

#### **4.3.2 Positionality to community**

Where the exhibition takes place also determines the community the artists and curators need to be aware of. The artist or curator's choice of space to display the artworks resulted in working with a targeted audience (in gallery space) or a given audience (in public space). Every experience has distinct aesthetic dimensions. In the case of the interviewees, the dimensions are where the art displayed functions properly in respect to the dominant set of conventions held by the respective community (Rancière, 2010). One convention which curators and artists developed tactics towards was language to ensure readability and inclusion. Rosie (Curator 4) admits she does not “always have the time or resources” but she often tries her best “to have the text translated from English into German.” In trying to cater

to the German- as well as English-speaking audiences she shows great reflexivity on the socio-cultural context of Berlin. This is needed due to processes of globalization, as Berlin has a large heterogeneous demographic of non-German speakers whose communication language is English (Mair, 2024). If this is however not feasible, she herself speaks German and is available to audience members to elaborate in their language if needed to “at least speak to them about what they're seeing.” Language was especially a big consideration in connection to community for Felix (Curator 3). This is evident in his statement where he considers the following.

Felix: Whether our new generation is so capable in English all over the place, I don't know. And then you have people that come from other places, and they made such an effort to learn German and then they're excluded because, you know, everything is in English. (Curator 3)

Here Felix alludes even more to English as a lingua franca than Rosie and recognizes that communities, in spite of this, might still want to consume culture in the language of the country they live in. He manages this balance between the large group of internationals in Berlin and German speakers with subtitles. When a film is being shown in the original English version, he will include German subtitles and vice-versa. The curator recognizes the sizable community of internationals' shared sensibility of predominantly speaking English and what language they would expect to be confronted with when going to an exhibition in Berlin. However, unlike Rosie, he pays closer attention to those who would like German present which entails not only native speakers but those who have learned it and derive satisfaction from being able to assert that knowledge in public spaces. This strategy ultimately has an emancipatory power.

The shared sensibility of cultural context was another consideration which formed the basis for the development of the strategy to collaborate with local partners. Hannah's (Curator 1) project *Licht Zeigen* was based on a picture that was taken in Kiel in 1931 and depicted a menorah in the windowsill with the Nazi flag hung up in the background. Although the project was Hannah's initiative due to sensitive sentiment around the symbol, she realized the project “through local partners” and “distribute via the newspaper that photo. And just the Chanoekia part would be a sticker that you could remove, put in your window, take a photo of it and show what Kiel looks like today beyond the Chanoekia.” Hannah also decided to work with local partners to mitigate the feeling of the big city of Berlin imposing something on a smaller city like Kiel.

Mia (Artist 3) employs a similar strategy but with a community garden she was involved in with the intention of it becoming permanent and expressed “I think if you create pieces like that, like living pieces of work, I think it's very important to work together with the local community.” These are also considerations that currently Jane (Artist 2) is taking into account with a project in progress. All of these examples were individually successful and received substantial participation from the audience. The success of the strategic collaboration with local partners within the particular space can be comprehended by employing the notion of 'goodness'. Taylor (2016) outlines how a successful artist must adhere to ethical principles. By working with locals, the artists and curators can orientate themselves towards the reigning ethical standards outside the aesthetic dimensions of that group. Because the aesthetic experience presented differed from what the creators were accustomed to, they implemented the conventional expertise of locals to display art for a local audience that is not their own. Here, the interviewees are using 'goodness' to foster empathy during the aesthetic uptake in that local space. They recognized that the artworks' reception depended on auditors' interest in getting things 'right' (accommodating to the aesthetic dimensions of a group).

In instances where curators and artists struggled to position themselves in relation to the community, there were adverse outcomes. Artur (Curator 2) when organizing a group show was approached by a peer for not being inclusive enough. Artur and his colleague were “managing this, basically, 50-50 balance” of five artists who identified as female and five who identified as male and after being approached on it reflectively acknowledged “that we needed to do more than that new space in Berlin.” It shows that they initially failed to recognize their gender/racial/sexual position as white heterosexual cis-men at first in relation to the heterogenous audience of Berlin. However, after they were able “talk about it,” they were appreciative for the insight and said, “thank you for picking it up” because on principle, they are “always trying to get better.” By stating that they ‘needed to do more than that new space in Berlin,’ Artur indicates that the dominant group in the Berlin audiences holds a shared set of conventions (Rancière, 2010) regarding gender that transcend the binary definition. Upon receiving the feedback Artur reorientates himself towards the reigning ethical principles (Taylor, 2016) in the pursuit of inclusivity, which is reflected in the current cultural shift in arts and popular culture towards greater gender equality and diversity (MacNeill et al., 2018). This reflexivity of 'always trying to get better' thus shows the principle of goodness (Taylor, 2016), and by employing it being able thereafter to engage with audiences more proficiently.

Jane (Artist 2) encountered a situation where she found herself navigating two contrasting reactions within the same group. Even though the group, in this case vegans, share the same set of conventions, her audience interpreted her art piece with pheasants in divergent ways: one response praised her while the other criticized her. She described the situation as follows: “there was a girl, woman, a girl who complained, um, about me using animals, um, for the sake of art” and the situation escalated further online. Jane did reach out “trying to have a discussion like that, and I just was, like, just messaged them, like, hey, if you want to have a discussion, we can talk about it” but received no reply.

This reaction was contrasted by a “few vegans there, who actually came up to me and were like, we really appreciate this, the performance you did, because, um, it just makes you realize how real these animals are.” The stark contrast in conflicting opinions highlights the inherently controversial nature of the artwork which Jane is also aware of by stating “it's not a new conversation.” This quote also demonstrates her conscious position, and while it did not appeal to everyone in the audience, she actively sought to encourage discourse in order to understand the source of the contrasting responses among her audience. Jane was unable to reposition herself in this situation to accommodate the oppositional audience because it would fundamentally alter the practice surrounding the artwork, but her efforts demonstrate reflection on her part. Finally, by wanting to 'have a discussion' with those who disagree with her, she is making a deliberate effort to become more aware of her position and the implications of her work. She thereby acts on the principle of goodness by attempting to understand the ethics of the situation (Taylor, 2016).

This audience encounter Jane experiences also demonstrates the fallibility of Rancière's free play, as criticized by Taylor (2016). In the case of the artwork with the pheasants, the work was not able to transcend into the meta-politics given by free play which predicates a neutral environment for art. Instead, the aesthetic became politicized, hindering the audience from having an experience liberated from predefined political and moral constraints (Rancière, 2010). The work could not bypass the politics of animal cruelty prevalent in society, impeding open-ended engagement and interpretation which Jane could not completely resolve.

The idea of using feedback to understand one's position better is not novel in the case of this research as it was something that Mia (Artist 3) and Felix (Curator 3) also touched upon. Mia collected feedback whereby she “sent like a message afterwards and asked people to send their experiences” but disclosed after collecting the feedback that nothing had changed and she “stayed with the concept.” Conventionally, feedback is information about audience

reactions to a certain stimulus which can then be used as a basis for improvement. In this case nothing was improved, which Felix (Curator 3) elaborates on also by saying “it's never so easy to really change something fundamentally” which also was the case for Jane. These interviewees demonstrate that using feedback to better position oneself within the community to which one is catering does not always imply 'improving' the artwork. Thus, using feedback to position themselves better became viewed to be a successful strategy in and of itself, because it allows them to use the principle of goodness to evoke empathy among the audience by understanding the ethics of a given situation.

#### **4.4 Mixing and Matching**

Another important strategy used by artists and curators was to introduce variety into the audience environment through mediums, themes, and artists. In order to gain insight into the specific efficacy of this strategy and its consequential effects, such as prolonged and heightened audience engagement, one can employ the theory of sensory satiety in conjunction with an individual's proclivity for seeking variety (Inman, 2001). One of Rosie's (Curator 4) approaches is to “have a different variety of different media in the exhibition” as well as “including people who aren't often included in exhibitions, who maybe don't have a platform or a voice.” Here, Rosie has created versatility by carefully combining artists with diverse complementary disciplines under the united theme of materiality. This approach is very reminiscent of the identified strategies of ‘themed displays’ employed by visitor-centered museums to target audiences during the experiential turn of the 90s (Ballantyne & Uzzell, 2011).

Rosie reported that people at her exhibitions expressed how much they enjoyed the variety of mediums presented. She kept her audience engaged by maintaining an optimal level of stimulation (Inman, 2001) by consistently introducing new stimuli that presented new potential actions for the audience to interact (Vara Sánchez, 2022). This was achieved by upholding diversity of mediums and artists. Having said that, the motivation for including a variety of people increases relatability through representation. Rosie is also making her exhibitions more relatable through the use of variety, as it reflects the real world in Berlin (Bourriaud, 1998/2002), in contrast to what has been discussed previously regarding the consequences of underrepresentation.

Artist Rebecca introduced variety to the space by designing installations comprised of numerous distinct components that directly engaged the audience's senses.

Rebecca: I think that it can be, like it's using another sense, right? So, I mean, the work that I appreciate engaging with is really like immersive installation, more kind of relational aesthetic type works. And so, I aim to use different senses. (Artist 1)

It is clear from this message that Rebecca is deliberately considering addressing diverse senses and that she views sensory engagement as a means to connect with the audience; the greater the number of senses, the greater the potential for an immersive environment that is thereby more engaging for the audience and facilitates an experiential learning experience. In this instance she was describing her installation as a “textural spatial environment” addressing solitude and survival, connected to sleeping bags and hammocks that visitors could occupy. Furthermore, she enhances the visual appeal of her creations by focusing on “handmade, more intimate kind of work, more craft based” of her sleeping bags for instance. Because the audience could sit in her hammocks and relax, she also introduces a tactile element. This was subsequently accompanied by an audio similar to ASMR (autonomous sensory meridian response). This installation provides numerous actions, including speaking, sitting, touching, and listening. Through the medium of the audience's experiential relationship with the environment, Rebecca has produced a highly sensual piece of work (Vara Sánchez, 2022). Furthermore, in her most recent work she is conducting ongoing experimentations involving thermochromic paint. This serves to enhance the utilization of senses and highlight tactile qualities through visuals generated by the body heat of participants when touched, thereby exemplifying the pervasive aspiration to greater maximize this approach to variety.

By designing an installation in which the audience can interact with multiple elements of varying qualities, the level of variance is maintained and the desired level of stimulation is preserved (Inman, 2001). The artworks are *mise-en-scene* and are used as a dominant element to create environments which address the audience's senses for immersion (Hoebink, 2019). By tangibly influencing the immersion and perception of audience members, the curated variance of the directly addressed senses engages the viewer's mind. Three of the five senses possessed by humans are explored in this hammock installation: visual, tactile, and auditory.

#### **4.5 Sensory satiety**

Although the theory of sensory satiety has almost exclusively been applied to social scientific/cultural research on food thus far, this study shows how it can be used to demonstrate how creatives use it in their design-thinking strategies. Nonetheless, the topic of food also came up often in relation to artworks and was used in the construction of an

aesthetic experience. Jane (Artist 2) had a piece where “sloppy food was just given out to them on little ceramic plates, which was then, kind of, oozing off the side of the plates onto the tablecloth.” The idea with this was that the colorful food would spill over and naturally dye the tablecloth. The food was also served with handmade chopsticks. Here, food is not only the focus of the work but is highlighted by appealing to multiple senses directly (Inman, 2001). Not only is the food exhibited in terms of its gustatory attributes, but it is also conceptualized in a way that appeals to all five senses, as illustrated by the use of dying silk tablecloths for visual appeal and handcrafted chopsticks for tactile experience.

Additionally, Artist Mia (3) constructed a “performative silence meal” where “people would come to see the exhibition and have a good meal, but also have the experience themselves” over the course of two hours. The artist prioritized the quality of the food in this performance, as evidenced by her collaboration with a Finnish chef, and thus utilized the gustatory sense in a more conventional fashion. In this case, the food merely serves as an mediator for the experience rather than the experience itself (Sayes, 2013). The food facilitated the experience of silence. While one might infer that the silence strips the performance of a sense, an auditory one, Mia emphasizes how the silence removes her audience from their habitual auditory environment, enabling them to appreciate the various stimuli that produce sound in our surroundings such as how “very everyday sounds sound so fantastic, like pouring a water on your glass. Like it sounds like a waterfall.” Mia not only highlights the audience's ability to experience silence but also suggests that this experience, facilitated through the sharing of a meal, enhances the audience's capacity to be more "human-like."

Both artists presented versatility in these sensory experiences which addressed all five senses: visual, tactile, olfactory, auditory, as well as gustatory (Lehrman, 2012). However, introducing the gustatory sense, which is not typically addressed by conventional art forms like painting, sculpture, or film, proved to be a particularly effective method for engaging and curating art experiences for the audience. This may be attributed to food's unique ability to create a convivial atmosphere (Marovelli, 2019), specifically the sharing of food with other people. The curator and artists understand that creating a friendly environment allows for an open encounter. By offering audience members the opportunity to share a meal with one another, both artists are inducing a ritual embedded in order and hospitality, evoking a sense of 'we-ness' (Marovelli, 2019). This allows a connection with the environment as well as with each other which encompasses what Mia meant with ‘human-like’, thereby creating connections by evoking the relational aesthetic (Bourriaud, 1998/2002).

Finally, Felix, who specializes in film curation, also curated a one-time outdoor screening that included dinner. Due to his specialization, Felix leverages this strategy in a distinctive manner compared to other participants, such as Rosie or Rebecca. While other interviewees have more freedom to experiment with materiality to introduce versatility, Felix is constrained by the demands of form required to accommodate the technical ramifications of film, such as a dark environment for visibility. This may explain why Felix is more aware and puts more consideration to avoid his audience getting bored because of sensory satiety. This is reflected in other approaches he takes that considers the audience's senses to avoid a potentially monotonous encounter.

Felix: How you put the things in space, coming to the point of taking the audience into account, how you walk through the exhibition, what you see first and what next, and so how that kind of is combined and relates to each other. So as said, I see the art of curating in there. So for film series, let's say, with different short film programs and feature length films, it's the same. So what you show first and what comes next. So this works on both levels. So content is, of course, what's the narrative you want to construct with your selection? But what counts a lot is as well, let's say, the formal aspect. So how films relate. Do certain images reappear? (Curator 3)

Here one can clearly see that Felix makes many careful considerations to introduce variety through the limited avenues he has at his disposal such as space, sequence of events, length of film, narrative and reoccurrence of imagery. The introspective questions like 'Do images reappear' he asks during his process of curation reflects the extra thought that goes into it. He further elaborates on the last consideration of wanting to avoid recurring imagery like showing shots of landscapes one after the other as well as presenting a variety of perspectives on the same topic. By alternating perspectives and imagery used in films, Felix is still able to maintain a level of variance needed to stimulate the audience keeping them present and engaged (Inman, 2001). Rather than subjecting them to an experience with repeated aesthetics which could have a negative side effect of the audience walking out. However, he is the only one who points out that it 'counts a lot' to introduce variety but when creating variety for the viewer, one needs to keep in mind the 'narrative you want to construct in your selection' because the variety present to keep audience engaged still needs to exist within a cohesive narrative where the elements 'relate' to one another.

#### 4.6 Need for balance

Felix (Curator 3) suggests, like others, that presenting a variety of pieces to avoid a monotonous experience is an effective strategy. However, he alludes to the fact that there's more to it than simply offering variety; the diversity within a space needs to be carefully balanced and curated. Only through such balance can one avoid overstimulation. Every interviewee's inherent aversion to utilizing technology emerged as a predominant theme, effectively illustrating the necessity of balancing the stimuli in the space to maintain audience engagement and prevent distractions. Hannah (Curator 1) has an “incredibly low-tech” approach, Mia (Artist 3) is “not a fan of technology” and advocates for “not using technology” and “not having your phones on” and Jane (artist 2) points out how “we're often on our phones” which can make it hard to engage in real spaces. Hannah further goes on to avoid technology orientated art like film because as “it creates a competition for attention” so what she does is “have QR codes if I want people to watch something.” This consideration can be understood using the concept of sensory overload (Priporas et al, 2024). In the context of increasingly immersive exhibitions that showcase more variety that address different senses, the use of technological devices such as phones to provide more variety may prove to be excessive, thereby surpassing the sensory processing capacity of attendees (Priporas et al., 2024). In the study conducted by Priporas et al. (2024) they prove technology's ability to become a hindrance, especially in environments that are already highly stimulating, where an individual is processing multiple streams of information at once, which is an understanding that the interviewees as demonstrated have also developed.

As discussed, there is a trend among interviewees towards presenting multiple streams of information by addressing multiple senses, thus creating a highly stimulating environment like an exhibition space geared towards grabbing your attention. This also links back to Bulu's (2012) distinction between relevant and irrelevant stimuli in an environment, where the irrelevant stimuli of a phone for instance acts as a hindrance because it distracts and takes 'attention' (Hannah) away from the relevant stimuli in the space, the artwork. Artists like Mia (3) use their physical presence to hone the audience's attention towards what is relevant. The considerations based on which stimuli are selected and how they are woven into the narrative and are relevant to the construction of the overarching theme. Anything that falls outside the narrative distracts because it overwhelms the brain with excessive input thus resulting in sensory overload and causing reduced engagement (Priporas et al., 2024).

This is something that was acknowledged particularly by Mia who thinks technology is “more dividing people because you don't know what is real and what's not.” The causal

relationship between reduced engagement and technology identified Priporas et al. (2024) may explain why Mia perceives technology as 'dividing' because technology is the factor that causes lower engagement therefore it is not unifying but the opposite. From this, one could infer that any stimuli that does pertain to the narrative presented in the space deters from the experience by stunting their immersion in the curated environment thus leading artists and curators to actively stay away from it to better engage their audience. Hence one could conclude that the introduction of technology complicates the experience and, if not used tactfully, leads to sensory overload. Some artists and curators developed strategies to include it, while others grow an aversion towards it because of the risk it poses to their engagement.

## 5. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study effectively answers the central research question: How do curators' and artists' design-thinking strategies cater towards audience experience through exhibitions? By examining various facets of curatorial and artistic practices, this research underscores the multifaceted approach necessary to engage audiences deeply and meaningfully.

The exploration of motivation and curiosity reveals that curators' and artists' understanding of how to stimulate audience interest is foundational to constructing valuable strategies. Interviewees implement strategies that evoke curiosity by introducing novelty and uncertainty as well as catering to the inherent desire to learn. This aligns with the theories of Rancière (2010) and Bourriaud (1998/2002), who advocate for relational environments that challenge conventional norms and stimulate internal dialogue. These strategies serve as the groundwork for engaging audiences through the reinvention of the form and content of an experience, establishing a framework where curiosity drives exploration and interaction.

When reinventing form, strategies are primarily devised to break the audience away from the traditional white cube gallery model (Grunenberg, 1999). To counteract the prescribed behavior of the white cube, curators and artists provide sensory experiences that present a versatility. These potential actions go beyond the standard of simply observing an artwork from a designated distance. This reinvention is not solely about aesthetic variation but about creating an interactive and dynamic environment that encourages free play and deeper engagement by having different mediums, artworks and themes present. By curating unconventional aesthetic experiences, such as environments relatable to the audience or incorporating different elements that offer new encounters, curators and artists foster an atmosphere where curiosity is continually piqued (Bourriaud, 1998/2002; Rancière, 2010; Silvia, 2012).

Furthermore, the necessity of presence became evident to ensure developed strategies were carried out as intended. The study confirms that the physical presence of curators and artists within the exhibition space enhances audience engagement and by implementing a social presence, interviewees provide context and immediacy. This actualization of presence theory demonstrates the value of direct interaction between the audience and the creator of the experience to foster a more immersive and personalized experience (Bulu, 2012; Riva & Ijsselsteijn, 2003).

As a result of the necessary presence to maintain and implement strategies to engage audiences, awareness of positionality to space and community were developed by

interviewees to effectively use their presence. Through the analysis of this theme, it became evident that curators and artists must understand how the exhibition space and its surrounding community impact audience interpretation and engagement. This spatial and community awareness ensures that exhibitions are relevant and resonant with their intended audiences, adhering to ethical principles and fostering inclusivity (Taylor, 2016). The importance of this awareness is emphasized by the unpredictable nature of (relational) art and the necessity for curators and artists to adapt to audience responses (Friedell & Liao, 2022). Understanding the audience's cultural and social context allows curators and artists to tailor the exhibition experience, making it more impactful and engaging.

The most effective design-thinking strategies discovered are those which consider multiple sensory elements and integrate them to cater towards variety seeking tendencies inherent in people. Variety prevents the audience becoming bored but too much also can result in sensory overload. This approach is believed to enhance the immersive quality of the exhibition but also facilitates experiential learning, making the art experience both stimulating and educational (Inman, 2001; Lehrman, 2012). The use of food, as seen in some exhibitions, exemplifies how engaging all five senses can create a convivial atmosphere that encourages deeper interaction and connection among audience members (Marovelli, 2019).

These findings suggest that successful curatorial and artistic strategies necessitate a balanced and multifaceted approach and support theoretical perspectives such as presence theory and the need to challenge traditional exhibition norms. However, it also suggests that these strategies must be carefully calibrated to avoid overstimulation and maintain coherence within the exhibition narrative (Priporas et al., 2024). The successful combination of motivational strategies, form and content reinvention, presence, positionality, and sensory engagement results in a comprehensive approach for enhancing the audience experience and creating meaningful art experiences.

The recognition of variety-seeking tendencies, in combination with the theory of sensory satiety, highlights the variability of cultural theories related to food. Food is sensory-centric by nature. Hence, the identification of a trend among curators and artists to create immersive experiences through sensory engagement renders theories such as sensory satiety pertinent and implementable within the realm of arts and culture. The exploration of this novel research avenue may prove to be of value as artistic encounters progress towards greater immersion. Although this trend is not yet apparent in contemporary arts, it is discernible in other cultural domains, including cuisine and technology, specifically, the merging fields and artforms such as virtual reality (VR). The growing demand for immersive

art experiences is evidenced by their success. One might infer a relation between this and a more extensive phenomenon, namely the escapism phenomenon. As predicted by sociologists such as Simmel (1903/1971), people in metropolitan life face increasing complexities, and, as Rancière (2010) suggests, art provides a moment of escape from the clutter of everyday life.

The criticality of future investigations into escapism in connection with the consideration of audience senses is underscored by the prevalent aspiration to enhance involvement from the current generation. Recent studies on sensory overload, including those by Priporas et al. (2024), indicate that escapism may serve as a mitigating factor against feelings of being overwhelmed. Hence, further investigation should be conducted to interview audiences in order to ascertain methods of enhancing their immersion, thus providing a more satisfactory escape during an art exhibition.

As such, identifying the crucial components of distraction, escapism, and aesthetic experience in future studies on audience experiences, and proposing a simplified model that encapsulates these core elements and their relationships is expected to generate in-depth insights into the field of contemporary aesthetics. Therefore, it is possible to speculate the greater the distraction provided by an aesthetic experience, the more effective the viewer's escape. Even so, future research can consider this from the perspective that audiences no longer seek distraction and escape from the "clutter" of everyday life (Rancière, 2010), but from their everyday responsibilities. This model provides an understanding of a foreshadowed trend towards aesthetic encounters that offer an experience in which the audience becomes subject to the executive authority of the art, akin to participatory art (Bishop, 2012). Creatives that achieved this most effectively in the here-presented study are those who present highly controlled environments that dictate the actions and atmosphere of the audience, as well as provide clear directives for audiences to follow in one-on-one performances. This paper hopes to inspire future research to investigate relational aesthetics in a novel manner, with a particular emphasis on experiences that momentarily relieve audiences of their responsibilities in the field of aesthetics.

## **5.1 Limitations**

Three primary limitations are present in this study. The first limitation of this study is that its results are not universally applicable. The findings are ultimately based on individual accounts of personal experiences from five artists and four curators based in the same city and thus cannot comprehensively describe or address the entirety of curatorial and artistic

practices. Nevertheless, the here-presented results and their discussion offer valuable insights that allow for further theoretical abstraction within arts and culture studies.

Secondly, the perspectives gathered from interviewees are limited to the experiences of artists and curators alone, providing little insight into the actual encounters that exhibition attendees have. The study relies on the depictions of reality provided by curators and artists, and more significantly, their subjective evaluation of what defines a successful and gratifying experience for both themselves and the audience. An ethnographic approach, for example, on a single curated experience within an exhibition space in which all participants, from artists and curators to the audience, are directly observed would enable a substantial examination of the objective success of employed strategies and the audience's perception. This being said, the here-presented study focused on the design-thinking processes of creators and their subjective accounts of success or failure fundamentally influenced their curatorial and production approaches. Furthermore, an ethnographic approach would have not provided as good of an overview, as the investigation would have been limited to a single viewpoint and experience.

Thirdly, this study combined the viewpoints of design-thinking approaches of artists and curators as creators. During interviews, the general impression received was that artists' decisions are more emotion and experience-driven, while curators seem to think more strategically and in a more structured manner, possibly due to their more naturally orientated administrative roles. A more comparative design in conjunction with (critical) discourse analysis must be employed to better consider how their mindsets differ. However, in the present study, there was more of an emphasis placed on what they hoped to achieve with their design-thinking strategies in relation to their audiences, which yielded results that comprehensively captured how they, as creators, strategize in their design processes. Ultimately, their goals did not differ significantly; both aimed to connect with the audience and increase engagement.

This study provides a solid foundation for future investigations due to its comprehensive examination of numerous curators and artists, as well as its incorporation of diverse perspectives from various practice areas. The results present introductory research conducted on curatorial and artistic practices in Berlin, as well as the approaches and strategies implemented to improve the overall quality of an art experience for the audience.

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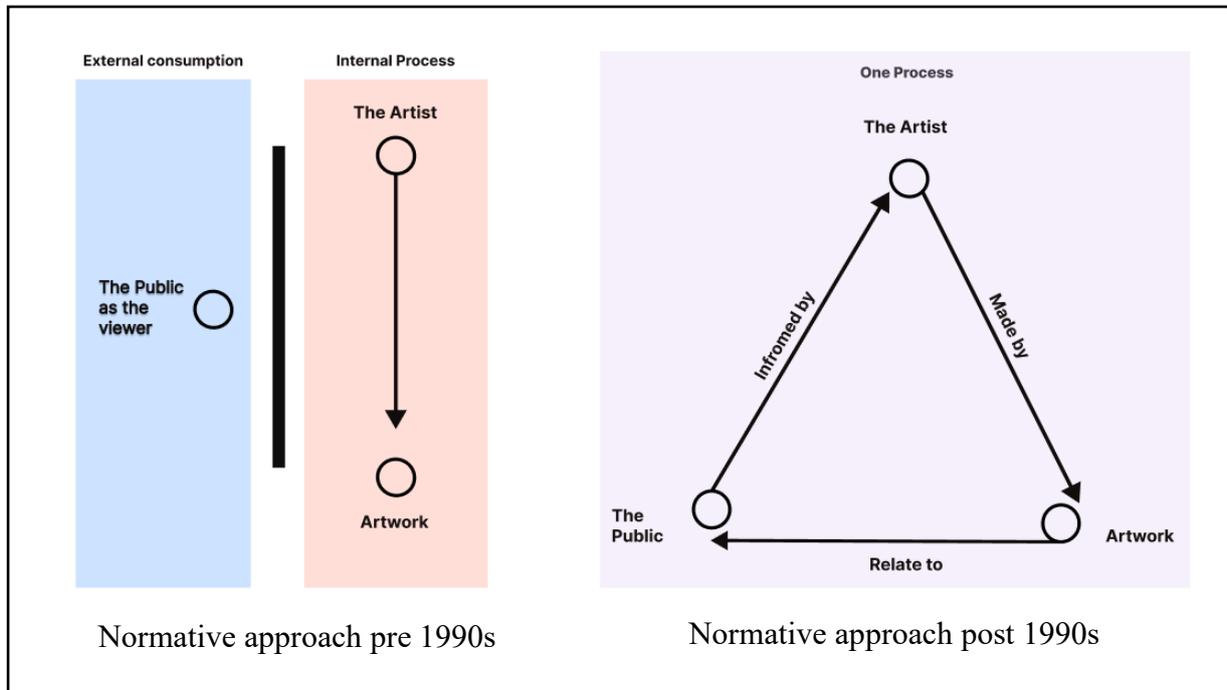
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## Appendices

### Appendix A

Diagram illustrating the network's nodes of interest and the specific relationships that were evaluated to explore the research question in response to the experiential turn.



**Appendix B**

Consent form sent to interviewees prior to interviewers outlining the parameters of the study.

**INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

<b>Project Title and version</b>	Design-thinking strategies to enhance audience engagement
<b>Name of Principal Investigator</b>	Sophie Luck
<b>Name of Organization</b>	Erasmus University Rotterdam – Erasmus School of History, Culture, and Communication.
<b>Purpose of the Study</b>	This research is being conducted by Sophie Luck. I am inviting you to participate in this research project that research how the experiential turn in society has influenced creatives approach towards making and displaying art. The purpose of this research project is to investigate the considerations and design-thinking strategies curators and artists employ to enhance audience engagement.
<b>Procedures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- You will participate in an interview lasting approximately 60 minutes. You will be asked questions about your creative practices, thought process, and approach to curation within the field. Sample questions include: “Can you walk me through the procedures you take in exhibiting a work of art?”</li> </ul> <p>You must be at least 18 years old.</p>
<b>Potential and anticipated Risks and Discomforts</b>	There are no obvious physical, legal or economic risks associated with participating in this study. You do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to answer. Your participation is voluntary, and you are free to discontinue your participation at any time.
<b>Potential Benefits</b>	Participation in this study does not guarantee any beneficial results to you. As a result of participating, you may better understand your approach to curation in relation to audience engagement. The broader goal of this research is to gain insight into the design-thinking strategies and considerations made in relation to making and exhibiting artwork.
<b>Sharing the results</b>	The study will only be shared as part of the degree for the Arts, Culture and Society Master. Once the assignment has been submitted to the course lecturer on 22 <sup>nd</sup> May 2024, it can be viewed by participants upon request. The paper will not be published outside the university setting.

<b>Confidentiality</b>	<p>Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law. No personally identifiable information will be reported in any research product. Moreover, only trained research staff will have access to your responses. Within these restrictions, results of this study will be made available to you upon request.</p> <p>As indicated above, this research project involves making audio recordings of interviews with you. Transcribed segments from the audio recordings are not used in published forms, but pseudonyms will be used in any case. The audio recordings, forms, and other documents created or collected as part of this study will be stored in a secure location in the researchers' offices or on the researchers' password-protected computers and will be destroyed within ten years of the initiation of the study.</p>	
<b>Right to Withdraw and Questions</b>	<p>Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalised or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify.</p> <p>If you decide to stop taking part in the study, if you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or if you need to report an injury related to the research, please contact the primary investigator:</p> <p>Sophie Luck  Sophie.luck@eur.nl  +491704647101</p>	
<b>Statement of Consent</b>	<p>Your signature indicates that you are at least 18 years of age; you have read this consent form or have had it read to you; your questions have been answered to your satisfaction and you voluntarily agree that you will participate in this research study. You will receive a copy of this signed consent form.</p> <p>If you agree to participate, please sign your name below.</p>	
<b>Audio recording</b> (if applicable)	<p>I consent to have my interview audio recorded</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> yes  <input type="checkbox"/> no</p>	
<b>Secondary use</b> (if applicable)	<p>I consent to have the anonymised data be used for secondary analysis</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> yes  <input type="checkbox"/> no</p>	
<b>Signature and Date</b>	<b>NAME PARTICIPANT</b>	<b>NAME PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR</b>

		<b>Sophie Luck</b>
	<b>SIGNATURE</b>	<b>SIGNATURE</b>
	<b>DATE</b>	<b>DATE</b>

## Appendix C

Interview guide 1 (original) & 2 (revised version) used to conduct interviews.

### Interview guide 1

First Interview guide used for the the first two interviews with Hannah (Curator 1) and Artur (Curator 2).

#### Instructions

- Prepare for interview in advance by reading Interview guide
- Introduce research topic/ question to interviewee and purpose of study
- Check that interviewee has understood and given informed consent**
  - **Ask them if they are comfortable and if they have any additional questions.**
- Make interviewee feel comfortable before starting interview
- Thank Interviewee for participation

#### Introduction

I am a Master student at the Arts and Culture department of Erasmus University Rotterdam , and I am conducting research into how do curators and artist's design-thinking practices cater towards audience experience in exhibitions. I would like to thank you for taking the time to participate in this research. Any inquiries that make you feel uncomfortable can be stopped at any point, and you are not required to answer them. The following interview's data will only be utilised for academic purposes and kept anonymous through codenames and inaccessible to third parties. The interview will last approximately 60 minutes, small breaks can be taken if needed. At any time during the conversation or interview, feel free to ask for clarification if necessary.

Socio-economic background	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Could you tell me something about yourself?</li> <li>2. could you tell me something more about your professional background.</li> <li>3. Can you tell me something about your artistic background.</li> </ol>
Topics	Questions

<p>Part 1: Artistic and Curatorial Strategies (15 minutes)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How do you approach the design of an exhibition experience or artwork?</li> <li>- Can you describe the techniques or approaches you have?</li> <li>- Can you walk me through the procedures you take in exhibiting a work of art?</li> <li>- Are there any specific methods you find particularly effective in engaging audiences through presented artwork?</li> <li>- Can you share an example where your strategic choices had a notable impact on the audience's experience?</li> <li>- why did you pick this particular example?</li> </ul>
<p>1a: Design-Thinking (15min)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How do you consider the audience when making an exhibition?</li> <li>- Do you have a typical process you go to when designing an exhibition?</li> <li>- Can you talk about any problems you run into when you implement design strategies?</li> </ul>
<p>Part 2: Mode of Address (15min)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- When designing an exhibition what kind of audience do you have in mind?</li> <li>- What features do you use to highlight an artwork?</li> <li>- What considerations do you need to make concerning individual visitors?</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Can you share an experience where a situation really stood out in terms of audience engagement?</li></ul>
<p>Part 3: Multi-modality</p> <p>Media Integration and Audience Engagement (15min)</p> <p>(Later removed)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Considering the growing accessibility of multimedia platforms, how do you incorporate different media platforms in your exhibition or artwork curation?</li><li>- Can you describe an instance where an exhibition of yours elicited a reaction?</li><li>- Was it anticipated?</li><li>- Can you provide an example where you used the integration of multimedia platforms?</li></ul>

**Interview guide 2**

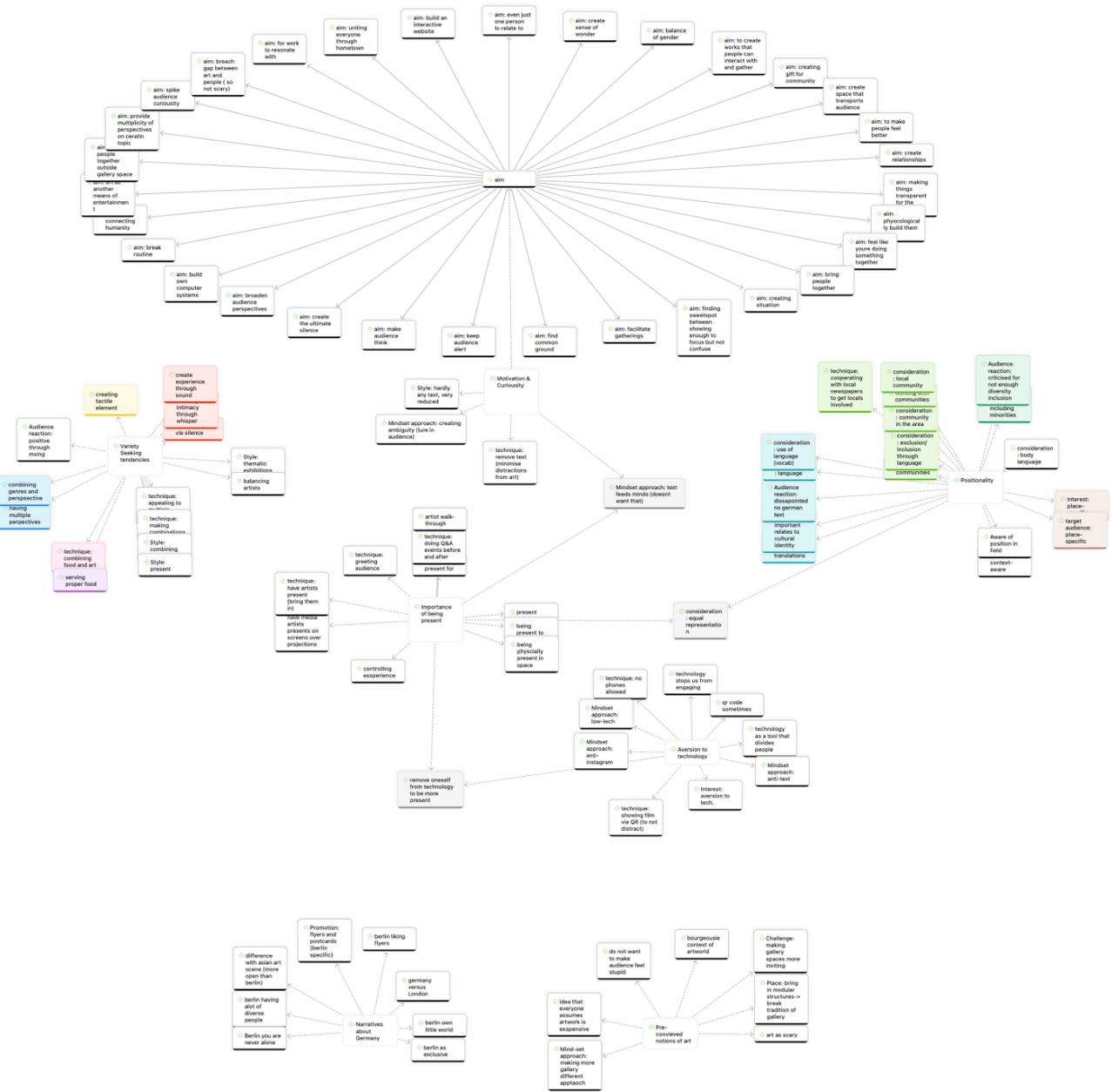
Second revised Interview guide used for remainder of interviews.

<p>Socio-economic background</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Could you tell me something about yourself?</li> <li>2. could you tell me something more about your professional background.</li> <li>3. Can you tell me something about your artistic background.</li> </ol>
<p>Topics</p>	<p>Questions</p>
<p>Part 1: Artistic and Curatorial Strategies (15 minutes)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How do you approach the design of an exhibition experience or artwork?</li> <li>- Can you describe approaches you have?</li> <li>- What kind of tools do you use in your approach?</li> <li>- Can you walk me through the procedures you take in exhibiting a work of art?</li> <li>- Are there any specific methods you find particularly effective in engaging audiences through presented artwork?</li> <li>- Can you share an example where your strategic choices had a notable impact on the audience's experience?</li> <li>- Why did you pick this particular example?</li> </ul>
<p>1a: Design-Thinking (15min)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How do you consider the audience when making an exhibition?</li> <li>- Do you have a typical process you go to when designing an exhibition?</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Can you talk about any problems you run into when you implement design strategies?</li> </ul>
Part 2: Mode of Address (15min)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- When designing an exhibition what kind of audience do you have in mind?</li> <li>- What communication tools do you use in an exhibition space?</li> <li>- What considerations do you need to make concerning individual visitors?</li> <li>- Can you share an experience where a situation really stood out in terms of audience engagement?</li> </ul>
Revised Theme: Current projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What are working on at the moment?</li> <li>- Can you tell me about a bit about the design stage you are currently at?</li> <li>- What are you hoping to achieve with this work?</li> </ul>

### Appendix D

Code tree developed using Atlas ti identifying the central themes of the study and how they relate to one another.



**Appendix E**

## Interviewee profile overviews

**Curator 1**

Pseudonym	Hannah
Gender	Female
Occupation	Curator
Workplace	Independent
Years of experience	25+

**Curator 2**

Pseudonym	Artur
Gender	Male
Occupation	Curator
Workplace	Independent (works a lot in a team with another curator/artist)
Years of experience	7.5 years

**Curator 3**

Pseudonym	Felix
Gender	Male
Occupation	Curator (with previous experience as visual artist)
Type	Film
Years of experience	20+

**Curator 4**

Pseudonym	Rosie
Gender	Female
Occupation	Curator
Workplace	Independent
Years of experience	15

**Artist 1**

Pseudonym	Rebecca
Gender	Female
Occupation	Artist
Field of discipline	Multi-disciplinary (sculpture, audio, installation)
Years of experience	17 years

**Artist 2**

Pseudonym	Jane
Gender	Female
Occupation	Artist
Field of discipline	Primarily painter, but also multi-disciplinary
Years of experience	15+

**Artist 3**

Pseudonym	Mia
Gender	Female
Occupation	Artist
Type	Installation & community projects
Years of experience	30+

**Artist 4**

Pseudonym	Chiara
Gender	Female
Occupation	Artist
Field of discipline	Photography & Installation
Years of experience	10

**Artist 5**

Pseudonym	Ming
Gender	Female
Occupation	Artist
Field of discipline	Performance
Years of experience	7 years

