Exhibiting and Visiting Egypt of Glory

Knowledge Construction of Ancient Egypt in Amos Rex Museum in the fall of 2020

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1. Introduction

1.1.   Background

The central research objective of this thesis is to examine ways in which knowledge is constructed in a museum context. It is based on an ethnographic study conducted with the visitors and creators of the Egypt of Glory – The Last Great Dynasties exhibition at Amos Rex Museum in the autumn of 2020. It focuses on the ways in which museums produce, disseminate, and present information, and how visitors receive and interact with it. In other words, this thesis examines knowledge construction as a collective process involving the museum staff and the visitors. In practice, this means examining the pedagogical practices utilized by the museum as well as visitors' reactions to and experiences of the exhibition and its topic. Therefore, this thesis draws theoretical concepts and frameworks from the fields of anthropology of education and museum anthropology. Moreover, as this thesis deals in knowledge construction, it rests on a foundation of constructivist epistemology, which has implications for the ways in which learning, education, and museum practice will be considered.

The roles and definitions of museums seem to be in a constant state of flux. Whether museums are conceptualized as collectors and preservers of heritage, as research institutes, as public educators and entertainers, or as some combination of the above, appears to vary in different historical periods and geographical locations. (Brown & Mairesse 2018: 1; Mairesse 2019: 154 – 159) Most recently at the time of this writing, the International Council of Museums (ICOM) has approved a new museum definition, which reads as follows:

> "*A museum is a not-for-profit, permanent institution in the service of society that researches, collects, conserves, interprets and exhibits tangible and intangible heritage. Open to the public, accessible and inclusive, museums foster diversity and sustainability. They operate and communicate ethically, professionally and with the participation of communities, offering varied experiences for education, enjoyment, reflection and knowledge sharing.*" (ICOM 24.8.2022; accessed 21.9.2022)

This definition reveals several principles of and objectives for museum practice, emphasizing sustainability and inclusion. What I find most interesting about this new definition is its focus

on the ways in which museum serve the public, as opposed to for example, concentrating on advancing science. This thesis is focused on the educative roles and aspects of museums, which have maintained their relevance, at least if this definition is to be believed. In this thesis, museums are conceptualized as educational institutions with specific pedagogical objectives and outcomes. However, due to the differences between museums and more conventional learning institutions, such as schools and universities, tailored theoretical frameworks are needed for examining the particular kinds of education and learning which occur in a museum.

The museum under study, Amos Rex, is a contemporary art museum located in Helsinki, Finland. Its predecessor named after its founder, the Amos Anderson Art Museum, was focused on exhibiting Finnish art from the 20th and the 21st centuries. Since its opening at the Lasipalatsi square in 2018, Amos Rex has expanded its programming to include more experimental, avant-garde, technology-driven, and internationally focused exhibitions. Adding to its innovative image is the museum's architecture, featuring eye-catching domes which shine natural light into its underground interior. (Signaporia 2022; Museokortti 2022, Amos Rex 2022) Notably, the museum garnered significant visitor and media interest through its flagship exhibition, teamLab: Massless. It famously featured immersive digital installations, which many visitors braved several hours of queuing to see and post on their social media accounts. (Kettunen 2019; Amos Rex 2022) It is at least in part due to the museum's reputation as having an innovative exhibition style that I was interested to research the Egypt of Glory -exhibition. I was curious to see how a museum which is mainly known as a contemporary art museum would approach one of the most classic museum exhibition topics – ancient Egypt.

The Egypt of Glory exhibition was on display at Amos Rex from the 9th of October 2020 to the 21st of March 2021. It was a joint exhibition with the Kumu Art Museum in Tallinn. The exhibitions in the two locations were thematically diverging, but both bore the same name. While the Kumu focused more on ancient Egyptian art, the central theme at Amos Rex was life and death in ancient Egypt. The concept was based on the collection of the Italian museum Museo Egizio, which lent the Amos Rex a large part of the objects on display. According to the museum staff, the target audience for the exhibition was young visitors and children, which was visible in the exhibition design (panels of text were situated low for children to see), pedagogical devices (an informational booklet called My Ancient Egyptian Friends), and workshops where participants could create their own ancient Egypt-inspired amulets.

The Egypt of Glory exhibition is a well-suited case study for investigating knowledge construction in a museum. The popularity of ancient Egypt as a subject for academic research, literature, popular culture, architecture, and museum exhibitions over the centuries is well documented (see Moser 2014; Dobson & Tonks 2020; Macdonald & Rice 2003; Malamud 2000). Due to its enduring presence in school education as well as popular culture, it is something that many people have formed some sort of idea about. In the Finnish curriculum, history lessons begin on the fourth grade. Ancient Egypt is largely explored in connection to early human history and the birth of civilization. (Opetushallitus 2014) Most of my research participants reported knowing some things about ancient Egypt prior to their visit, and many cited early history lessons and films as the sources of their information. Therefore, it is possible to examine whether and how visitors' conceptions and ideas changed as a consequence of their visit to the Egypt of Glory exhibition. Discussing ancient Egypt with visitors before and after their visit will reveal some of the ways in which their visit might have transformed, reinforced, or negated their previous notions about the subject. Furthermore, it will allow me to examine the ways in which they interpret and interact with the information presented to them, and how their previous experiences with the subject might affect these interpretations.

The Egypt of Glory -exhibition also serves as an example of a *representation* of ancient Egypt. The critical examination of representations is central to museum anthropology, as portrayals of the peoples and histories exhibited in museums are argued to have political implications and consequences (Macdonald 1998: 1 – 2). For example, many museums are criticized for cultural appropriation, which refers to an act of unsanctioned taking or adopting of cultural products, such as artefacts, land, and art in the context of an asymmetrical relationship of power. Especially in a museum context, cultural appropriation is intertwined with colonial relations. Many critics have pointed out that museums, through their classification and exhibiting practices, reinforce colonialist ideologies and ways of knowing. (Arya 2021: 3; 6) This criticism has been directed towards museums which collect and exhibit ancient Egyptian artefacts, sparking debates over ownership, authority, and representation (Riggs 2013). The Egypt of Glory -exhibition does not stand outside of these discourses, and the knowledge constructed by and within it will be analyzed accordingly in this thesis.

After a general introduction to the research subject of the thesis, I will discuss the research objectives and questions in more detail. I will then move on to theoretical considerations in more depth before delving into the methods I utilized in my research process. After that is a chapter exploring the findings of my research, followed by analysis and discussion. I will conclude by reflecting on my research process as well as considering potential avenues for further research.

1.2.   Research Objectives and Research Questions

The central research question of my thesis is as follows:

"How is knowledge about ancient Egypt constructed at the Glory of Egypt exhibition at Amos Rex Museum?

From this central question, I have derived these more specific questions:

- *Which practices does the museum employ to construct and disseminate information, and how? In other words, how and why does the museum educate?*
    o *What is presented in the exhibition, how, and why?*
- *How do visitors experience the impacts of these practices during their visit?*
- *What is the visitor's role in the knowledge construction process?*

To find the answers for these research questions from my data, I will utilize the concepts of constructivism, cultural production, free-choice learning, as well as the frameworks of the Contextual Model of Learning (Falk & Dierking 2012) and the object-knowledge-framework (Wood & Latham 2014). These concepts will be expanded upon in later chapters.

Museums as institutions have been extensively studied in anthropology, especially during and after the post-modern turn of the 1980s. It was at this time that many scholars turned inward and began critically examining the methods of collecting, exhibiting, and categorizing objects which, for a long time, went unquestioned. (Hooper-Greenhill 1992; Greene 2015) I have previously conducted research on the perspectives of both museum visitors and staff at the

Regional Museum of Lapland. As I examined the museum's permanent exhibition, I was struck by the lack of information on the creators of the exhibition. For example, nowhere in the exhibition was there information on the curators or designers of the exhibition. This lack of transparency regarding the processes related to exhibition-making; the research, the writing, the editing, and the physical construction, resulted in a presentation of information which almost stifled any questioning or critique. It seemed as if it was not a person or team of people, but some grander authority who was bestowing some immutable knowledge upon the visitor.

This experience piqued my interest in the processes through which exhibitions are brought about. Previous research has been conducted on exhibition construction by several scholars, many of whom focus on the networks and interactions between human and non-human actors involved (see Macdonald 2002; Vainikainen 2016). In museum anthropology, a lot of attention has been paid to the *poetics* and the *politics* of exhibiting. What this approach has pointed out is that through culturally, politically, and geographically informed processes of interpretation, classification, categorization, and display, museums construct meanings and narratives. In other words, museum practices and their results are not self-evident and are entwined in relations of power. (Hooper-Greenhill 1992; Hall 1997; Macdonald 2006)

Museum visitors have also been extensively studied in museum anthropology and museum studies. Much of the research focuses on visitor learning and experiences people have in museums (see Falk & Dierking 2012; Dierking 2005). I find that while both perspectives, the museum as an institution and the visitor as an active participant, are important pieces of the puzzle, by themselves, both have some limitations for understanding knowledge construction in a museum. Therefore, my aim in this thesis is to consider the following elements: the exhibition as a constructed knowledge-transmitting entity, the perspectives of the museum staff, and the role of the visitor.

For the sake of focus, I will specifically concentrate on the educational practices employed in the Egypt of Glory exhibition, as they provide an easily observable method of transmitting information. Educational practices include the educational materials and programs designed by the museum educator. Moreover, the exhibition and its contents themselves are considered as a knowledge-transmitting totality. By considering visitors' interactions with and reactions to these elements, as well as potential changes in their perceptions about ancient Egypt, I hope

to gain understanding of how knowledge about ancient Egypt is constructed in the Egypt of Glory exhibition. This will be supplemented by discussing the perspectives of the staff regarding the perspectives and practicalities of exhibiting practices.

This thesis is placed in the field of museum anthropology with a special focus on educational practices and outcomes. Therefore, concepts developed in the field of anthropology of education are utilized to provide a perspective on how educational practices are organized and implemented in the Egypt of Glory -exhibition. They also facilitate the examination of learning outcomes in a museum context.

2. Theoretical Perspectives for Museum Education

In order to discuss museum education and its consequences on knowledge construction, I draw theoretical frameworks and concepts from the field of anthropology of education. As previously stated, the specific frameworks are those of cultural production and free-choice learning. After discussing these concepts more thoroughly, I will examine frameworks developed in museum anthropology, namely those of the Object Knowledge Framework (Wood & Latham 2014) and the Contextual Model of Learning (Falk & Dierking 2012). I will conclude this chapter by considering how these frameworks can work together as a lens for examining knowledge construction at the Egypt of Glory exhibition.

2.1.   Constructivism & Anthropology of Knowledge

In this thesis, constructivism refers to two things. Firstly, the Egypt of Glory exhibition as well as the museum are conceptualized as constructed entities. The museum as an institution is born out of specific historical processes as well as scientific and cultural paradigms. It is continually constructed through the activities and networks of actors within and surrounding it. This influences practices of collecting, classification, display, and interpretation. In a similar vein, exhibitions are constructed both in terms of their physical structures as well as their informational content. The choices made by the museum staff regarding the topic of, the approach to, and the practicalities of exhibiting fundamentally influence the resulting exhibition. (Hooper-Greenhill 1992: Macdonald 2002)

The second meaning of constructivism refers to an epistemological position which asserts that knowledge and ways of knowing are socially and culturally constructed. This assumption is central to several ethnographies investigating systems and traditions of knowledge. Anthropology of knowledge seeks to examine knowledge in a sociocultural context. To Mary Douglas (2003), reality and knowledge about reality are socially constructed and are laden with social conventions and rules. She claims that tacit conventions, everyday knowledge, and scientific knowledge all contain processes of categorization, selection, and typification. The construction of knowledge both contains and reveals cultural rules and conceptions of morality. She goes on to argue that knowledge constructed in or about one domain of society tends to carry its underlying frameworks and rules to other domains. As an example, Douglas examines R.E. Clifford's and D.R. Venables' (1957) discussion of the Oxford academic dress code. She points out that the dress code not only reveals conventions of appropriate formal attire, but also communicates knowledge related to academic statuses and occasions. According to Douglas, an anthropologist investigating knowledge must consider the ways in which social conventions instill meaning to its construction and expression. (Douglas 2003: 11 – 13; 207 – 211; 249)

Fredrik Barth (2002) conceptualizes knowledge as something that provides people with ways to think about, to understand, and to act on the world. He distinguishes three components of knowledge for analysis: a body of ideas and statements about the world, media through which it is communicated, and the social relations within which it is distributed. The validity of knowledge is determined and governed by the criteria which arise from the interplay of these components. Facets of social organization impose constraints on what can be considered valid knowledge. Among other things, conventions of representation, instituted positions of authority, and characteristics of available media restrict the kinds of ideas that can be considered valid. According to Barth, these processes can only be observed in people's actions and practices. In other words, by analyzing the ways in which people define and organize forms of knowledge distribution as well as how they perform the transmission of knowledge within the constraints of the available media, we can uncover how knowledge and the criteria for its validity are constructed. The emphasis on human action and agency also allows for the discussion on how and why knowledge and its criteria change over time. (Barth 2002: 3 – 6)

Both Douglas (2003) and Barth (2002) understand knowledge as something constructed and mediated through social relationships and interaction. While Douglas emphasizes the significance of cultural categories and rules in the shaping of knowledge, Barth highlights the actions of knowers as the locus of knowledge construction and transmission. Douglas' focus is on the collective aspects of knowledge, the shared rules and conventions which govern and are revealed in processes of knowledge construction (Douglas 2003). While this perspective is deeply ingrained in Barth's work, he also considers the impact of individual actors (Barth 2002). Considering both the collective and individual elements of knowledge is crucial when discussing knowledge construction in the context of an authoritative institution such as the museum. This idea is foundational for this thesis, as it can be applied to educational practices and learning in a museum context. It is by examining the actions and practices of museum visitors and the museum staff that I aim to uncover how knowledge about ancient Egypt is constructed at Amos Rex.

2.2. Anthropological Perspectives on Education and Learning

Even though much of the anthropological research on education is conducted in contexts of traditional schooling, the definition of education as it is conceptualized in the field of anthropology of education is much broader. Education encompasses all forms of formal and institutional as well as informal cultural training used to produce and identify knowledgeable members of a group. (Levinson et al. 1996: 2) It is most often characterized as an intentional, goal-oriented, and calculated intervention in the learning process (Spindler & Spindler 1987: 3). Focusing on education in this way has allowed anthropologists to look beyond contexts of schooling to broader cultural processes and power structures to reveal ways in which education is related to cultural production. It has also made it possible to examine how educational institutions produce knowledge and cultural structures (see Goodenough 1976, Chee et al. 2020, Liu 2019, Ehret 2018, Allen 2017). In this thesis, education refers to the information-transmitting practices within Amos Rex: the construction and design of the exhibition and its informational content, guided tours and workshops, as well as interpretive materials. Discussion on the principles, objectives, and practices related to the Egypt of Glory exhibition therefore relates to the educative processes of the museum. Learning, in this thesis, refers to changes in visitors' perceptions of ancient Egypt.

A related concept is that of free-choice learning. It refers to an independent form of learning that is guided by one's interests, needs, and previous knowledge (Dierking 2005: 147). Free-choice learning emphasizes viewing learning as a lifelong process which often occurs on the learner's own terms (Falk et al. 2006: 323-324; Falk et al. 2007: 1). What distinguishes it from traditional classroom learning is that it is guided by the intrinsic motivation of the learner. Furthermore, instances of free-choice learning can be isolated: no continuity is required. Most importantly, the learner is in the driver's seat, as they are in control of how, what, when, where, and for how long to learn. (Bamberger & Tal 2007: 77). Free-choice learning is the kind of learning which occurs most often in museums. Aside from pre-designed workshops and tours, which often employ pedagogical models and practices from schools, museum education tends to be more unstructured (Tran 2006: 193). Visitors tend to enter museums voluntarily and guided by their own interests and needs (Falk & Dierking 2012: 42). Moreover, visitors can choose which exhibits they pay attention to, in what order, and for how long. Nevertheless, research on museum visitors shows that the physical structures of a museums influence visitors' movements in the museum space, thereby directing their attention and learning. For instance, larger objects have been shown to garner greater attention during visits and to be remembered better afterwards. (Falk, Dierking 2012: 103-130) Furthermore, a museum exhibition is invariably curated and limited, which restricts the choices a visitor can make. These restrictions and limitations imposed by museum exhibition practices will be considered in this thesis. Of particular interest will be the ways in which these practices shape visitors' experiences and learning.

Cultural production is a concept developed in the field of anthropology of education. It seeks to account for cultural continuity through the transmission of cultural knowledge as well as the ways in which individuals, guided by their own interests and traits, acquire knowledge. Cultural production conceptualizes education as a dynamic and interactive process involving active participants who produce cultural forms and knowledge through negotiation. In other words, while cultural institutions and structures may influence the behavior and activities of individuals, the production of cultural forms requires the active participation of individuals. This dialectic perspective grants the concept of cultural production the capability of explaining how cultural knowledge and structures are reproduced but also how they may shift and transform through contestation, struggle, and negotiation. (Levinson, et al. 1996: 8 – 14).

The relevance of this concept for museum education requires further elaboration. Many museum anthropologists are quick to point out the institutional power and authority which museums yield over people's perceptions of history, science, and art, as well as on their public behavior (see Hooper-Greenhill 1992; Bennett 1995). These discussions are vital for creating and upholding accountability for museums over the representations they produce and display. The information and the ways in which it is presented in museums lends validity to certain ideas and ways of knowing due to the institutional power museums hold (Macdonald 1998: 2 – 4). Therefore, the critical examination of museums and their exhibition practices remains relevant and meaningful. However, museums alone do not have sole authority over the knowledge constructed within their walls. With the concept of cultural production, it is possible to take into consideration the role of the visitor in the processes of knowledge construction. Museum visitors are not *tabula rasae* who passively absorb information presented to them in exhibitions. According to research conducted by Falk and Dierking (2012), museum visitors are guided primarily by their personal interests, needs, as well as previous experiences and knowledge. Therefore, their interactions with the information presented in the museum is individualized, resulting in unique and personal (learning) experiences. (Falk & Dierking 2012: 82 – 97) The knowledge visitors come away with is therefore not just a replica of the information displayed by the museum, but some kind of synthesis of the visitor's personal context and the contents of the exhibition (Wood & Latham 2014). Therefore, I conceptualize museums as sites of cultural production in which knowledge is constructed through the interaction between the exhibition and the visitors.

The concepts discussed here offer a fruitful framework for examining the interaction between the museum and the visitor as a dialectic process which ignores neither party. Free-choice learning distinguishes the kind of learning which most often happens in museums. Therefore, it provides tools for examining the ways in which visitors organize, execute, and conceptualize their own learning. Cultural production provides a larger framework for discussing the knowledge construction which occurs as a result of the visitor's engagement with the exhibition. In this thesis, free-choice learning is conceptualized as an aspect of cultural production in museums. A museum, then is a place where visitors can engage in free-choice learning based on their personal interests and needs within the confines of the exhibition. In the following section, I will discuss relevant theoretical frameworks from the field of museum anthropology. Examining concepts formulated for the examination of museums and their visitors will deepen the discussion regarding knowledge construction in museums.

2.3.   Museum Anthropology and Visitor Perspectives

Museums started drawing the interest of anthropologists in the 1980s and 1990s during the reflexive turn. Practitioners began looking inward and critically examining ethnographic and anthropological museums as products of their own discipline. (Greene 2015: 2) Of particular interest were methods of collecting, classifying, and displaying objects and the resulting constructions of representations and meanings which had previously been left without due scrutiny (Hooper-Greenhill (1992: 6). In other words, anthropologists began examining the poetics and the politics of museum exhibitions.

The poetics of a museum exhibition have often been analyzed through the lens of semiotics. Pioneered by Ferdinand de Saussure in the early 20th century, semiotics is the study of signs. Saussure argued that communication employs a system of signification, which consists of signifiers and the signified. Signifiers are the indicators of signs, such as a sound or an image. Signifieds are the meaning of the signifiers. According to Saussure, the relationship between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary: even though signified meaning may appear intertwined with its meaning in a way that makes their connection seem natural and immutable, meaning is socially constructed. To Saussure, a sign produced by the combination of a signifier and a signified was unchangeable. This idea was later criticized by Jacques Derrida, who rejected the idea of single, fixed signs. He argued that signification is context-dependent and subject to change over time. These ideas have been used in museum studies to analyze how meaning is constructed in museum exhibitions through categorizing, displaying, and connecting polysemic and separate objects in order to establish narratives. (Macdonald 2006: 18 – 21) For example, an object is never inherently "ethnographic". An object is imbued with this status only when it is collected, categorized, and displayed as such in the appropriate context. Furthermore, the same object can be, through recontextualization or reinterpretation, be stripped of its status as "ethnographic". (Hall 1997: 199)

The poetics of exhibiting are rarely discussed without considering their politics. Indeed, many museum anthropologists consider the poetics inherently political. This line of thought has been influenced by ideas about knowledge and power formulated by Michel Foucault. (Macdonald 2006: 3). Specifically, the concepts of episteme and discourse have been useful

for examining the relations of power ingrained in the processes of constructing knowledge in museums. The episteme refers to the set of societal conditions defining the criteria of knowledge and rationality (Hooper-Greenhill 1992: 12). A discourse can be defined as a system of thoughts which consists of ideas, beliefs, and practices which construct the realities they express (Lessa 2006: 285). Crucially, Foucauldian thought asserts that reason and truth as well as their criteria are historically specific (Hooper-Greenhill 1992: 9). In museums, the practices and strategies of exhibiting can be placed under such analysis. The practices and strategies for constructing narratives are influenced by scientific paradigms, historical and cultural factors, as well as the objectives and interests of a given museum and its stakeholders. (Hooper-Greenhill 1992)

Focusing on the poetics and politics of exhibiting provides a useful perspective for examining knowledge construction in a museum. The idea that the ways in which museums construct meanings and narratives through strategies of contextualization and interpretation in a process that is fundamentally political is of central importance to this thesis. However, solely centering the museum as the only author of knowledge renders the public as unwitting and passive consumers. In order to consider the role of the visitor in the processes of interpretation and knowledge construction, I will now consider theoretical frameworks for examining visitor experiences and learning. This, in combination with the previously discussed frameworks of cultural production and free-choice learning, form the theoretical basis for this thesis.

To understand knowledge construction in a museum, it is not sufficient to only focus on the practices and strategies implemented by the museum staff. In order to better complete the "authorial puzzle" (Macdonald 2002), we must also consider the actions of the visitors. Comprehending the visitors' role requires examination of the ways in which they interact with and move through the exhibition (Falk & Dierking 2012; Wood & Latham 2014). In this section, I will discuss two theoretical frameworks formulated for this exact purpose. The first one is The Contextual Model of Learning (Falk & Dierking 1992; 2012), which analytically dissects a museum visit to three contexts. The second framework to be discussed is the Object Knowledge Framework (Wood & Latham 2014). It encompasses many of the ideas and concepts explored thus far, as it seeks to examine and conceptualize the interaction between the visitor and the exhibition.

The Contextual Model of Learning formulated by John Falk and Lynn Dierking (1992; 2012) can be used to examine three interconnected contexts of a visitor's experience. The three contexts are the personal context, the sociocultural context, and the physical context. According to Falk and Dierking, the museum experience is formed through the interaction of these contexts. The personal context refers to a visitor's individual characteristics, such as their interests, previous experiences, prior knowledge, and identity-based motivations. The personal context influences a person's decision to visit a given museum and their expectations regarding their visit. Furthermore, it plays a part in shaping the course of the visit as well as the resulting memories about it. Falk and Dierking argue that examining the personal context is helpful for recognizing and understanding different visiting patterns and learning outcomes (Falk & Dierking 2012: 26 – 27).

The sociocultural context comprises of the cultural and social background of a visitor, along with the social interactions they engage in during their visit. Among other things, a person's ethnicity, socioeconomic status, as well as the shared values and thought processes that surround them have been shown to be relevant variables in determining a visitor's museum experience. Furthermore, interactions with museum staff, other visitors, and one's own potential companions, influence a visitor's movements through the exhibition as well as their interactions with the exhibits. The level of crowdedness is also an important factor with regard to the general atmosphere and accessibility of the museum. What is more, the sociocultural context also covers the poetics and the politics of exhibiting. Broader social, historical, and cultural factors as well as scientific paradigms play a part in determining the choices made by museum staff regarding the research, display, and communication practices of the museum. These decisions may or may not align with the visitor's worldview or cultural beliefs, which will have a significant impact on the visitor's experience. (Falk & Dierking 2012: 27 – 28)

The physical context consists of the physical structures of the museum: the architecture and design of the building and galleries, along with the displayed objects, interpretive devices, and orienting instruments within them. In addition to constituting a concrete, material space, physical elements are used for creating atmospheres through design choices, lighting, soundscapes et cetera. All these elements play a part in determining how a visitor moves through the exhibition, what they choose to pay attention to, and how they feel during their visit. (Falk & Dierking 2012: 28 – 29)

Another influential factor identified by Falk and Dierking is time. It is conceptualized as permeating the aforementioned three contexts before, during, and after the visit. The meanings attached to the museum visit as well as the information learned are dynamic and change over time. A visitor's perceptions about the topic of a given exhibition tend to vary based on how much time has passed since their initial visit. (Falk & Dierking 2012: 29) In summary, The Contextual Model of Learning serves as an analytical tool for examining a visitor's experience in a museum. By dissecting a museum visit into three, analytically observable components, the model can help bring about a robust understanding of how a visitor interacts with an exhibition and with what consequences.

Building on The Contextual Model for Learning, Wood and Latham (2014) propose another framework for examining museum visitors: The Object Knowledge Framework. Its focus is directed specifically to the relationship between museum visitors and the objects on display. Wood and Latham's definition of an "object" is notably broad. To them, a museum object is anything, tangible or intangible, that a visitor pays attention to and interacts with. This includes the material aspects of an exhibition as well as the ideas and actions presented within and by it. The Object Knowledge Framework is comprised of the "objectworld" and the "lifeworld". The objectworld includes the objects as well as the ways in which they have been arranged, displayed, and interpreted by the museum staff. The lifeworld, in turn, holds within it three dimensions of experience and knowledge: the individual dimension, the group dimension, and the material dimension. The individual dimension consists of the connections between a visitor and an object, including the myriad of meanings resulting from these connections. Wood and Latham highlight the unique character of the interaction between a visitor and a museum object. (Wood & Latham 2014: 40 – 51)

The group dimension refers to the collective aspects of knowledge, such as shared narratives and ontological and epistemological theories about the nature of knowledge. For example, popular culture is shaped by and shapes people's perceptions of the world past and present. Ancient Egypt is a potent example of this phenomenon, as many of the visitors I interviewed cited films and movies as their sources of prior knowledge about it. In the context of a museum, this kind of "popular knowledge" (Wood & Latham 2014: 52), comes into contact with the expertise of the curatorial staff. This facilitates forming connections to objects and information with which visitors are in some way already familiar. (Wood & Latham 2014: 51 – 53)

The material dimension is comprised of the tangible, physical objects and the sensory experiences visitors have when interacting with them. Wood and Latham argue that materiality is formed when an object and its characteristics comes into contact with sensory experiences. To put it another way, when a visitor interacts with an object, whether it be tangible or intangible, it becomes a site for meaning-making, emotions, learning, and memories. Objects are often what make the exhibition memorable for a visitor, especially when their characteristics are consistent with the visitor's notions of authenticity and value. (Wood & Latham 2014: 53 – 54)

Wood and Latham's conceptualization of a museum experience is one in which the objectworld and lifeworld merge or overlap in a meaningful way. They assert that learning occurs in the intersection of information presented by the museum and the totality of the visitor's persona. (Wood & Latham 2014: 54) This idea crystalizes and encapsulates the frameworks and concepts discussed in this chapter as well as the theoretical aims of this thesis. By examining and analyzing this intersection, I intend to gain understanding of the ways in which knowledge can be constructed in a museum context.

In summary, examining the construction of knowledge in a museum through its educational practices and visitor responses requires a tailored theoretical approach. In this chapter, I have outlined several theoretical frameworks and concepts which will be used to analyze both exhibition practices as well as visitor experiences and learning. A constructivist approach to knowledge recognizes the constructed nature of the museum as an institution as well as that of any given exhibition. Moreover, constructivism serves as an epistemological starting point for examining the ways in which knowledge is constructed in the context of a museum visit. An anthropological perspective of knowledge emphasizes the cultural and social aspects of knowledge without ignoring the agency of individual actors. Theoretical concepts related to education and learning build upon this base by providing tools for discussing ways in which museums organize and execute educational practices and how visitors respond to them. As a general theory of education and learning, cultural production facilitates the examination of education and free choice-learning in museums. The aim of discussing the poetics and politics of exhibiting in combination with visitor experiences is to recognize the institutional power of museums over collective perceptions and shared narratives while considering the part that visitors play in these processes. The frameworks discussed in this chapter form an analytical

basis for an anthropology of museum education. Utilizing analytical tools from the fields of anthropology of education and museum anthropology is aimed at examining how Amos Rex organizes their educational practices and how visitors interact with the resulting outcome. This opens the door for looking at knowledge production about ancient Egypt in this process. In the next chapter, I will discuss the research process and methodology of this thesis.

3. Research Process and Data

In this section, the methodology and research process of this thesis are discussed. Ethnographic approaches, such as participant observation and interviews are examined. Additionally, certain aspects of my fieldwork will be discussed through the lens of autoethnography. Implications of online interviews will be explored along with other safety measures taken due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Quantitative survey data as a supplemental method will also be investigated. Included will be a discussion of ethical considerations and the researcher's positionality.

3.1.   Research Process and Positionality

The fieldwork for this research was conducted for a period of one month (5.10.-5.11.2020) at the Amos Rex Art Museum in Helsinki, Finland. I spent this month as a salaried employee at the museum, and conducting this research was my primary responsibility. Additionally, I assisted the regular customer service and guiding staff in the galleries and during workshops. Working as a conversation guide in the galleries provided opportunities for participant observation. What is more, those moments allowed me to experience and reflect upon the roles and responsibilities of a guide. This will be reflected upon through the lens of autoethnography.

My position granted me access to all the employee facilities as well as resources, such as computers and printers. Moreover, my position made it possible for me to get acquainted with the museum staff, and I was included in their pre-existing communication channels, such as Slack and Microsoft Teams. I was also permitted to conduct survey-based research within the gallery spaces. All of these factors were crucial for carrying out fieldwork.

3.2. Ethnography of Museum Education

Ethnography can be conceptualized as a set of field-based research tools suited for qualitative research. An ethnographer often spends a certain period of time in the field gathering data and taking notes. Through this process, the ethnographer becomes the research instrument, as they collect data through their own experiences, participation, observation, discussion, recording et cetera (Coffey 2018: 1 – 13.) This thesis relies on data collected through participant observation, interviews, and questionnaires. The aim of these methods is to observe and document the educational practices of the museum and their outcomes. Furthermore, my goal was to include perspectives from both the staff and visitors in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of knowledge construction at Amos Rex. Participant observation often constitutes a considerable portion of a researcher's fieldwork. It is comprised of the observation of the field and the social actors within it. Another facet is the participation in the activities of the research participants in varying degrees. (Coffey 2018: 44 – 45) Observation is a common research strategy in museum anthropology, as many researchers find it conducive to finding out how visitors interact with each other and the museum in practice rather than in theory. (Serrell 2010: 2; Hike 1989: 101 – 103)

3.2.1. Participant Observation

For this research project, participant observation consisted of observing and taking notes of the Egypt of Glory exhibition and the various activities within and around it. To begin with, I observed the physical space of the gallery: the objects, their classification and display strategies, and interpretive devices such as texts, labels, photographs, and symbols. Furthermore, I made note of the ways in which the gallery space was organized for the purposes of the exhibition. I also paid attention to the general atmosphere of the exhibition. For example, I examined ways in which lighting, architecture, and audio were used to create to produce a certain ambiance to the gallery. In addition to taking written notes of these aspects of the exhibition, I also photographed them using a smartphone.

In addition to the physical aspects of the gallery, I observed the informational content of the exhibition. I examined the thematic way in which information about life and death in ancient Egypt was divided and organized. I also read and documented the labels and texts regarding

both the individual objects as well as broader themes to which they were related. Visual methods were used to document aspects of the exhibition, primarily as a method of note-taking (Hendrickson 2008). Specifically, I photographed some of the displays and the interpretive materials which accompanied them, such as labels, pictures, and texts.

Apart from the exhibition itself, I observed the people in the exhibition, namely the staff and the visitors. I observed the behavior and movements of the visitors in the exhibition in order to see the trajectories they took, what they paid attention to, as well as and how they talked about the contents of the exhibition. Moreover, I observed how the visitors interacted with each other, the staff, and the exhibition. More in-depth participant observation was facilitated by pre-arranged participatory walking sessions with research participants. In these sessions, I was able to discuss the exhibition with research participants as they were interacting with and experiencing it. Observing the staff included participating in tours and workshops, examining conversation guides in the gallery, along with autoethnographical reflective observation in moments when I worked as a conversation guide.

Along with the day-to-day activities in the gallery, I conducted participant observation in several events surrounding it. Firstly, I participated in training sessions designed for the tour guides and conversation guides of the museum. These training sessions revealed some of the principles and philosophies which governed the work of the guides. Moreover, as they were led by the curators of the exhibition, the sessions included explanations of the central themes of the exhibition. This was illuminating for understanding what aspects of ancient Egypt were considered centrally important for the exhibition by the curatorial staff. I was also fortunate enough to attend the opening day of the exhibition and the accompanying press conferences. These situations served to elucidate those aspects of the exhibition which the museum staff saw fit to present to representatives of the media.

3.2.2. Autoethnography and Self-observation

Autoethnography is a type of self-narrative which emphasizes cultural analysis. Its foundational assumption is that culture and the individual are inextricably linked, as cultural

forms are produced, interpreted, and acted on by individuals. (Chang 2008: 44) In this thesis, self-observational data is used as a tool for reflecting on lived and embodied experience.

The collection of self-observational data is limited to instances where I worked as a conversation guide at an Augmented Reality (AR) segment of the museum. Augmented Reality refers to an interactive technology which can superimpose a virtual landscape on a real-world space using a camera and computer graphics (Mekni & Lemieux 2014: 205). When I worked at this segment, my duties involved helping the visitors access a virtual tomb (figures 3 & 4) with their mobile devices. In some cases, visitors were unable to use their own device, so I gave small tours of the tomb on the museum iPad. I also answered more general questions about the exhibition and its contents to the best of my ability whenever asked. When the influx of people was slower, I was able to take notes of my actions, emotions, and thoughts on the spot. In addition to recording aspects of the role of a conversation guide, I took notes of the interactions I had with visitors as well as the physical space I was in. By reflecting on my own actions, experiences, and reactions, I was able to form a deeper connection to the cultural, social, and physical contexts of the museum.

3.2.3. Interviews

Interviewing is often aimed at gathering information directly from the research participants regarding their experiences, beliefs, and understandings about any given topic (Coffey 2018: 49 – 51). In this research, interviews were conducted with a twofold goal. Firstly, my aim was to understand the perspective of the staff members regarding the objectives and principles guiding their operations. Specifically, I wanted to learn about how and why the staff organizes and carries out curatorial and educational practices. This was aimed at illuminating the processes behind exhibition production. I interviewed two curators of the exhibition, the head of curation at the museum, the curator of education, the head of education, the museum director, two museum guides, the consulting Egyptologist, and a communications intern. The museum director, head of curation, the museum guides, and the Egyptologist were interviewed individually. Two interviews were held in pairs, the first of which consisting of the two curators of the exhibition, and the other of the head of education and the curator of education.

In total, ten staff members (n=10) were interviewed via semi-structured theme interviews individually designed around each participant's professional point of view.

Secondly, I wanted to grasp some of the ways in which visitors perceived and conceptualized the exhibition and its topic. Moreover, my goal was to find out whether these perceptions would change after the exhibition. In semi-structured theme interviews, visitors were asked to talk about their experiences in the Egypt of Glory exhibition as well as what they could remember about its contents. Some of the visitors were interviewed twice, once before their visit and once after. In these kinds of interviews, mind maps (figure 11) were used to prompt conversation and to create a visual representation of the things visitor associated with ancient Egypt and the potential changes to these associations. The mind maps had "Ancient Egypt" in the middle, and I asked visitors to say things, people, events, phenomena etc. that they knew about or associated with ancient Egypt before entering the exhibition. After the visit, the existing mind map was reviewed and amended when the visitors found it necessary.

All interviews with visitors (n=12) apart from one were conducted one-on-one. One interview was held in a group of three people. In total, I interviewed twelve visitors, six of whom were interviewed before and after their visits. The rest were only interviewed after their visits. The interviewed visitors were demographically somewhat heterogenous, although six of the research participants were Finnish university students between the ages of twenty and twenty-five. The remaining interviewees had more diversity in terms of age, profession, and nationality. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting restrictions and safety recommendations, seven of the interviews were conducted via an online video conferencing platform, namely Zoom or Microsoft Teams. All interviews but two discussed in this thesis were conducted in Finnish. Any quotes from Finnish participants featured in the text have been translated to English.

3.3. Quantitative Methods

Quantitative methods were used as a supplementary measure to the more in-depth qualitative data provided by participant observation and interviewing. Questionnaires and surveys will be briefly discussed in this section. It is important to point out that the line between qualitative and quantitative methods is not completely clear-cut, as data is rarely purely one or the other. (Bernard 2011: 267) In spite of this messiness, I will discuss quantitative methods separately for the purposes of clarity. For this thesis, the relevant distinctions between qualitative and quantitative methods can be found in the differences in data collection and analysis. Participant observation and interviews rely on the prolonged presence of the researcher and on in-depth interactions with research participants. In contrast, quantitative methods can be used to gather broader, more surface-level data, the analysis of which is often statistical or numerical. (Neuman 2014: 17;171)

Physical questionnaire forms were used in this research to gather demographic information about visitors, visitor experiences, and perceptions about ancient Egypt. Questionnaires and pens were provided on Saturdays for visitors to fill out in the Studio Rex space at their leisure. Centrally for this thesis, the questionnaires were designed to collect a broad sample of data regarding what visitors remembered about the contents of the exhibition and whether they felt they had learned anything as a consequence of their visit. Questionnaires are often self-administered and contain a question battery which remains the same for every participant. Question types include open-ended questions, dichotomous questions, and multiple-response questions. The types of questions used determine the quality and depth of the responses and the resulting data set. (Singh 2007: 69)

In this research, a mix of question types were utilized in the questionnaires. Multiple-response questions were used to gather demographic data, such as age and gender. This question type was also used to obtain information regarding motivations for visiting and expectations of the exhibition. Questionnaires were provided in Finnish and in English. A limitation of this research is that despite the high volume of Swedish speakers in the area, no questionnaires were provided in Swedish due to the insufficient linguistic competency on part of the researcher.

An expanded agree/disagree model was used. This featured a scale with "strongly agree" and "somewhat agree" on one end and "somewhat disagree and "strongly disagree" at the other. "Don't know" was placed in the middle. These questions were designed to find out whether

respondents found the exhibition interesting, multi-sensory, truthful, and informative. Open-ended questions were utilized to allow participants to elaborate on their experiences in and opinions about the exhibition. In total, 196 visitors responded to the questionnaire, which resulted in a robust data set regarding visitor experiences in the exhibition. It must be noted here that many of the questions were designed for the purposes of gathering useful information for the museum. Therefore, they might not be entirely conducive to answering the central research question of this thesis. Consequently, this data set will primarily be used as a complementary source of information to qualitative, ethnographic field data.

3.4.   Ethical Considerations

Ethical research practices were implemented throughout this research process. Principles of informed consent, transparency, doing no harm, anonymization, and responsible storage and protection of data guided the research before, during, and after fieldwork. As outlined in the American Anthropologocial Association's code of ethics (American Anthropological Association 2012), the objectives and methods were honestly and openly communicated to the research participants. This was key to acquiring informed consent, which was accomplished through repeated conversations and consent forms with interview participants. Participants were informed of their rights to refuse from answering any and all questions and to withdraw their consent at any point of the process. Moreover, information was supplied regarding GDPR and data storage. Consent forms were not obtained for participant observation in the gallery spaces on the basis that as public spaces they are not subject to prior consent (American Anthropological Association 2012). However, each participant – excepting those who explicitly requested otherwise – have been anonymized in my data. The names of all visitors as well as the two guides interviewed have been anonymized with pseudonyms and codes. To ensure complete transparency and clarity, repeated and comprehensive conversations were had with museum staff members regarding the scope and methods of the research project.

3.5.   Summary of the Research Process

The research methods discussed in this section were selected with the objective of gathering information that will aid in answering the central research questions of this thesis. Participant observation was used as a way to gain a deep understanding of the everyday goings-on in the exhibition. Participation in workshops and tours provided additional perspective into the educational practices of the museum. Working as a conversation guide was an opportunity for gathering self-observational data and conducting reflective analysis. In general, participant observation was conducive to answering the research question of this thesis, as it provides information about the physical and informational aspects of the exhibition, as well as the activities and behavior of the visitors and the staff. Moreover, through participation I was able to get first-hand experience of the responsibility and power museums have in terms of transmitting knowledge. These perspectives are crucial for understanding the ways in which Amos Rex shapes its educational practices and how visitors interact with them.

Interviews and casual conversations provided information about what staff and visitors had to say about the Egypt of Glory exhibition. Interviews with visitors focused on their visitation experiences and perceptions of ancient Egypt. These data will allow me to understand the visitors' role in knowledge construction, as it will facilitate analysis of what people *knew* about ancient Egypt before and after the visit. With staff, discussions emphasized the principles and practicalities of their exhibiting and educational practices. These conversations assist in establishing the value judgements regarding what is worth exhibiting and how it should be exhibited. This is important for understanding some of the reasons which led to the final exhibition.

Data from interviews and participant observation was supplemented with qualitative data gathered via questionnaires. The answers to the surveys provide a wider perspective on visitor experiences, opinions, and conceptualizations of ancient Egypt.

In the next chapter, I will explore the research data collected via the methods outlined here. I will begin by describing the exhibition and galleries in more detail. This will be followed by a discussion on the work of the staff. This will include the goals and principles guiding their work, the practicalities of their educational programs and practices, as well as

autoethnographical reflections on working as a conversation guide. Later, the point of view of visitors will be explored. The experiences of visitors will be expanded upon. Specifically, learning and knowledge of ancient Egypt before and after visitation will be examined.

4. Exploring Ancient Egypt in Amos Rex

4.1.　The Egypt of Glory -Exhibition

The objective of this section is to provide a description of one potential way the Egypt of Glory exhibition can be seen. I provide a fairly detailed description of the physical layout of the exhibition and examine some of the themes and display objects within in order to give context to much of the analysis that follows. The description is based on my own observations and notes taken over a period of one month. My perception of the exhibition has undoubtedly been influenced by interactions with staff and visitors during my fieldwork. The sequence in which the exhibition is described and the content I choose to highlight are based on my own experiences as well as the trends emerging from the data. Furthermore, many of the objects and interpretive devices discussed here came up repeatedly during tours, training sessions, interviews, and in questionnaire responses. However, this is by no means the only potential way in which the exhibition could have been processed or interpreted, nor is it a complete or comprehensive account of the entirety of the gallery's contents. Of around four hundred objects on display, only a very small number are discussed here. May this description also serve as an example of how a visitor experience is influenced by a multitude of factors and is never simply a recreation of a curator's design.

The Egypt of Glory -exhibition was thematically organized into ten subthemes under the umbrella theme of death and the afterlife in ancient Egypt. The ten subthemes were as follows: Thousands of Years of Egypt, By the River Nile, Under the Rule of the Pharaohs, Beauty in Daily Life, Gods and Religion, In the Land of Osiris, Mummification and Burial Rituals, Sacred Animals, New Cults, and The Last One Thousand Years. Each subtheme had its own section in the gallery marked by an introductory text displayed on a wall as well as a character whom the visitor could read about in a free booklet called My Ancient Egyptian Friends, also referred to as the Gallery Guide. Some of the labels for the objects in the exhibition also included Gallery Guide symbols. Objects which were accompanied by this symbol were

expanded upon in the Gallery Guide. Along with general information about the themes of the exhibition, the Gallery Guide included a map of the exhibition with arrows pointing to its sections (figure 1). These arrows also indicate a sequential order of the sections, but they will be described in slightly different order here. This is to show how cues in architecture and exhibition design also play a part in how a visitor moves through an exhibition.
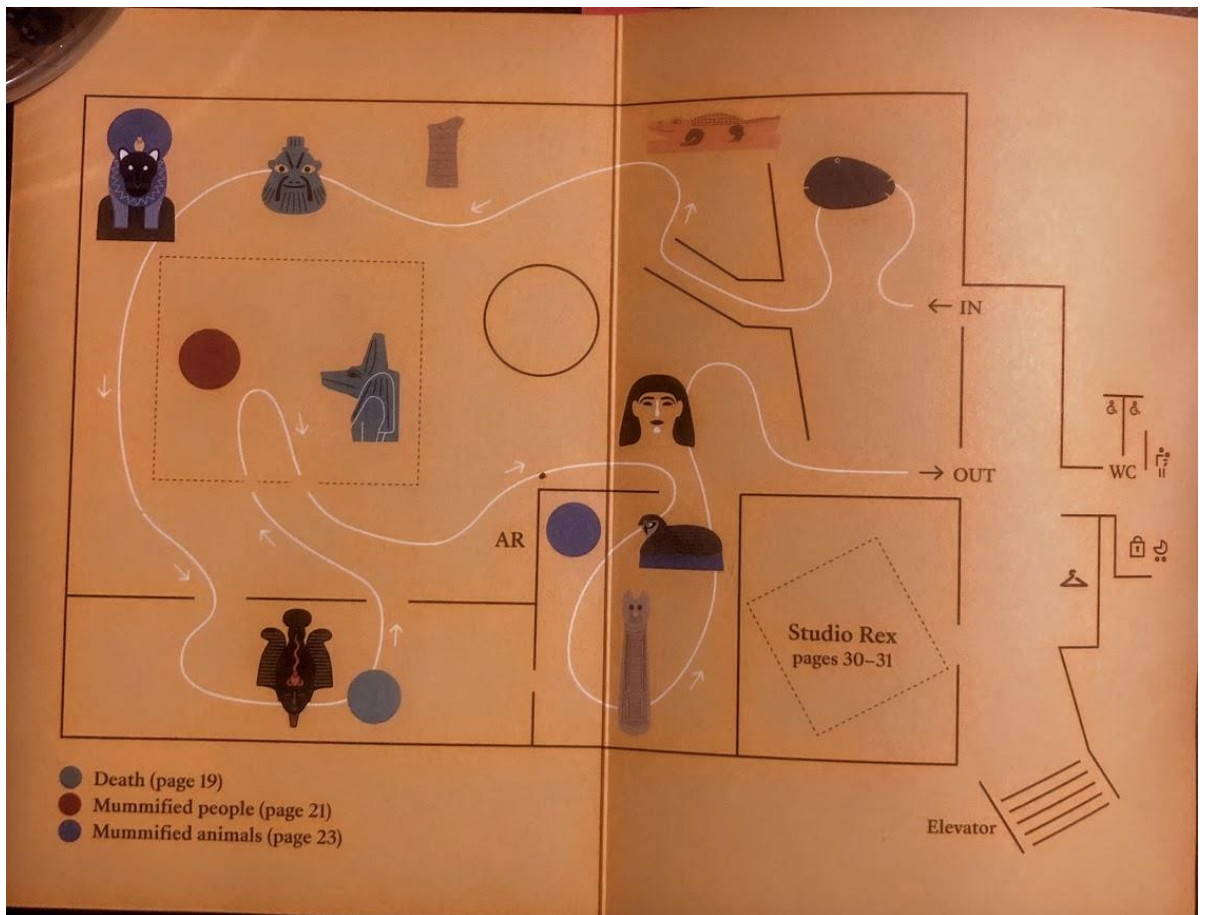

Figure 1: A map of the gallery in the Gallery Guide, showing the trajectory of the exhibition with arrows and a white line. The characters represent the ten themes of the exhibition.

In order to enter the gallery space which contained the Egypt of Glory -exhibition, the visitor had to first descend the stairs from the ticket office to the underground museum lobby. Upon entering, the visitor could help themselves to a Gallery Guide, which were provided near the entryways. Once within the exhibition, the visitor would find themselves in a dimly lit room with dark floors and ceiling. An introductory text on the wall presented background information about the exhibition, roughly outlining the chronology of ancient Egypt and emphasizing the enduring allure of the objects on display and the stories behind them. The text also disclosed that the objects were loaned from Museo Egizio in Turin, Italy.

In the same room lay the first themed section of the exhibition called Thousands of Years of Egypt. It was themed around time, its division, and its measurement. Its corresponding character in the Gallery Guide was a Fish palette. On one of its walls was "The Timeline of Ancient Egypt", which began from the predynastic period in 4000 BC and ended in the Roman Period in 30 BC. Thus, the timeline spanned over three thousand years, with each millimeter representing two years. Below were artifacts showcasing tools for measuring time, along with the oldest objects in the exhibition: three fish-shaped palettes which were explained as being used for grinding color pigments.

A disclaimer on the wall next to the timeline reminded the visitor that despite general scholarly agreement regarding the chronology of Egyptian history, complete consensus has not been reached. This is one of the only instances in which the exhibition explicitly disclosed the uncertainty and nuance regarding the Egyptological record. It is, however, interesting that this disclosure was placed right in the beginning of the exhibition, as it may have aimed to provoke skepticism and critical thought toward the rest of the exhibition.

On the left-hand side of the timeline stood a large wall structure with an archway leading to a hallway. Above the hallway was a large round light, which represented the sun. Within it was installed a soundscape which imitated the sound of wind blowing through a bed of reeds. As the visitor walked to the next room, they were instantly greeted by a brightly lit statue of Pharaoh Amenhotep II. The theme of this section was Under the Rule of the Pharaohs, and it was represented by the character Fake Beard in the Gallery Guide. Even though the section By the River Nile is indicated in the Gallery Guide as being the "second" section, the centrally placed statue of Amenhotep II guided many visitors to explore it and its related section first.

This section centered around state power and the ways in which it had manifested in ancient Egyptian society. The introductory text to this theme discussed the power hierarchy in ancient Egypt, stating that pharaohs were thought to be demigods and living incarnations of Horus, the falcon-headed god. The text went on to list some of the symbols of power often depicted in statues and paintings of pharaohs, such as the uraeus cobra, the beard, and the mace.

Multiple objects had been placed on display within this context to demonstrate the different facets of political power in ancient Egypt. Some of the objects were accompanied by more

extensive labels and texts than others. For instance, a statue of a nomarch, an ancient Egyptian state official, was placed in a display case and was accompanied by detailed background information. In contrast, other objects, such as a set of three small scarab seals were minimally described. Contextualization was in these cases limited to dating the objects and stating the material they had been made of. This display strategy was indicative of choices made regarding which objects require or are worth more extensive explanation than others. On the other hand, these decisions do not always determine what visitors look at or pay attention to. The personal context, which includes expectations, interests, motivations, and pre-existing knowledge, tend to be better predictors of museum experiences and learning than exhibition design alone (Falk & Dierking 2012: 97 – 98)

The section described above was situated between two other sections. One of them was the aforementioned By the River Nile. As its name suggests, its focus was on the role of the Nile River in the lives of ancient Egyptians. The Nile was introduced as the lifeblood of Egypt, as all aspects of Egyptian life and death depended upon it. The character associated with this section in the Gallery Guide was that of the Crocodile. In addition to the introductory text, the geography of ancient Egypt was illustrated by a map mounted on the wall. Objects displayed in this section were all related to the Nile in one way or another. For example, a model of a wooden boat with seven passengers was centrally displayed and well lit. This boat was highlighted during several guided tours as well as in the Gallery Guide, as it synthesized the significance of the Nile: the boat was a mode of transportation for goods and people. The labels also discussed its symbolic connotations, as boats were said to symbolize the journey to the kingdom of Osiris, the god of death.

On the other side of the Under the Rule of Pharaohs section was a section named Beauty in Daily Life. The objective of this section was to present the daily lives of ordinary ancient Egyptians. This theme was represented by Bes, a god tasked with protecting the household and children. The text introducing the visitor to this section explained that there is little remaining evidence about the lives of the majority of Egyptians. The text went on to describe the Egyptian's approaches to child rearing, medicine, and gardening. The objects on display in this section featured amulets, household items such as a pillow and mirrors, as well as several models of different laborers. For example, a model of a bakery featuring three figures engaged in baking was accompanied by a label discussing Egyptian burial practices. It stated that necessities entombed with the deceased as supplies in the afterlife. The bakers in the

model were to be servants of the deceased, tasked with preparing them food in the afterlife. This way of presenting created parallels between life of the ancient Egyptians and that of the visitors. Raising children, sleeping on a pillow, and baking are things many visitors of Amos Rex are likely to be familiar with. Relating to the visitor in this way served as an educational strategy to communicate to visitors a sense of shared human experience that can transcend time and distance.

Standing within this section, the visitor could already see a glimpse of the next one. A large statue of Sekhmet, a lion-headed goddess stood mounted on a square-shaped pedestal, brightly lit and surrounded by empty space (figure 2).

Figure 2: The statue of Sekhmet, the lion-headed goddess. In the right lower corner is a panel, featuring a description in Finnish, Swedish, and English.

Alongside the statue was a panel of text explaining the role of Sekhmet in ancient Egyptian mythology. It stated that Sekhmet was the goddess of war and pestilence who created hot winds in the desert with her breath. Furthermore, the panel explained the various symbols of her power featured in the statue: the solar disk and the Uraeus cobra on her head, as well as the Ankh and the Wadj Scepter in her hands. The statue's original context was described as being one of a set of hundreds of similar statues placed in the temple of Karnak in the 18th dynasty (1390 – 1352 BC). Fittingly, Sekhmet was also the Gallery Guide character associated with the section in question: Gods and Religion.

Gods and Religion was a section themed around religious practices and beliefs in ancient Egypt. The objects within it were placed in glass display cases along a corridor between the statue of Sekhmet and a statue of Ptah, who was introduced as her husband and the god of artists and craftsmen in the label next to the statue. Most of the objects were figurines and statuettes of gods, but religious amulets were also featured. The introductory text mounted on the wall of the corridor highlighted the diversity and shifting nature of the ancient Egyptian pantheon throughout the millennia. It also contained an explanation of the influence religion

had on ancient Egyptian society, as well as the ancient Egyptian creation myth. Communicating the diversity and the shifting sand of ancient Egyptian religious beliefs and systems was a part of a larger objective of the staff. Many staff members talked about wanting to avoid collapsing ancient Egyptian history into a set of archetypes or beliefs. Instead, they strived to present a multi-faceted and culturally heterogenous image of ancient Egypt. The Gods and Religion section is one in which this diversity was communicated explicitly, though the idea was not consistently shown throughout the exhibition.

The corridor of the Gods and Religion section led the visitor to a part of the gallery in which resided the sections related to death and burial rituals. This section, which opened up to a wide central space in the gallery was that of Mummification and Burial Rituals, represented by Anubis, the jackal-headed god of mummification (Meri 2020: 20). The most prominent artifacts in this space were three authentic mummies placed in the middle of the room. Not only were they centrally displayed, but the mummies' presence was known by many visitors interviewed in this study due to the media attention they had garnered. Two texts introducing the processes and beliefs related to death were placed the large glass display cases in which the mummies were placed. The process of mummification was described in detail, as were attitudes and beliefs about death and the deceased. One of the texts reflected on the ethics of showcasing the mummified dead, considering the fact that each mummy contained a person who had once lived. The texts suggested that visitors should approach the mummies with respect and encouraged them to contemplate on the concept of death while gazing upon the mummified corpses of the ancient persons laid before them. Not only was the exhibition educating the visitor about the mummies, but also instructing them about how they should be approached and processed. Silent reverence and respect were the recommended responses. My view is that this approach placed some of the ethical burden on the visitor: in order for the display method to be ethical, the visitors needed to behave and interact with it according to these guidelines.

From the section discussed above, another was visible: In the Land of Osiris. To enter it, visitors had to walk through an archway into a more secluded room. An imposing stone sarcophagus on a low pedestal in the center of the room visually dominated this section. On the wall behind this pedestal was depicted Amduat, the Sun god Ra's daily journey through the underworld. The funerary text this depiction is based upon was also the name and

inspiration to the soundscape installed in the room. As Ra's journey through the underworld takes twelve hours, the soundscape was divided into twelve parts, each lasting one minute.

In the Land of Osiris was fittingly represented by Osiris, the king of the afterlife, in the Gallery Guide. In the introductory text to this section, the Egyptians were said to have loved life "so much that they hoped it would continue after death.". This statement attributes the ancient Egyptian belief in the afterlife to appreciation of life. This is an interpretation which largely goes unexplained and unexplored in the rest of the exhibition. Entombment practices and the internal structure of tombs were also described. It was explained that an ancient Egyptian grave would consist of an aboveground chapel and a burial chamber.

This information was relevant for setting up a "virtual tomb" situated just outside the room. This virtual tomb was implemented using augmented reality (AR) technology, through which visitors could access an ancient Egyptian tomb on their smart devices. A rectangular shape was marked on the gallery (figure 3) within which visitors could walk around in and explore the tomb on their device screens. Accessing the tomb required downloading an application provided by the company who had created the augmented reality environment, Arilyn. Once the app had been downloaded, the visitor could scan the head of Osiris, which functioned as the access point to the tomb. At this point, they were free to delve into the grave. The tomb

Figure 3: A space marked off for exploring a virtual tomb implemented with AR-technology.
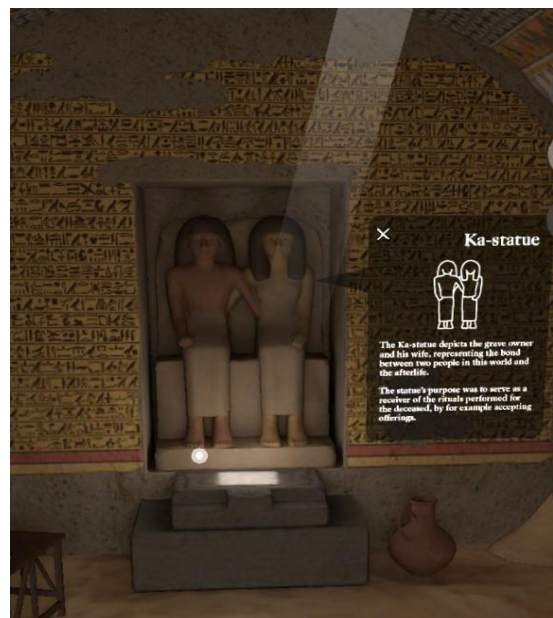

Figure 4: Inside the virtual tomb. Photo shows a depiction of a chapel, a Ka-statue, an offering table, hieroglyphics, and a vase. The Text bubble has information about the Ka-statue.

corresponded with the description given In the Land of Osiris, as it contained both an aboveground chapel and the underground tomb (figure 4). Virtual objects, such as an altar, offering tables et cetera were placed in both parts, and visitors could tap some of the objects to learn more about them.

Information about the grave was also supplied by a text written on the wall next to it. The text explained the twofold role of an ancient Egyptian tomb: a final resting place and a site where relatives of the deceased could visit and perform rituals which would secure their comfortable afterlife. Furthermore, it was disclosed that the tomb was a recreation of the tomb of Paher, located in the present-day city of El Kab. Next to this text was placed another one entitled Wealth in Ancient Egypt. It discussed the ways in which ancient Egyptians handled their finances and organized their systems of inheritance. It also claimed that because money had not been invented at the time, banks did not exist. This text was accompanied by the logo of Danske Bank, the sponsor of the virtual tomb. Incorporating a sponsorship to the educative materials of the exhibition in this way shows how commercial partnerships can influence the informational content in museums. An exhibition is not just a collection of objective truths where "facts" from the world of science are extracted for the public. Instead, it is a construct subject to the interests of diverse stakeholders. (Macdonald 2002: 6 – 7) It is unclear whether discussing the non-existence of banks in ancient Egyptian society would have been necessary if a part of the exhibition had not been sponsored by a bank.

Another more interactive element of the exhibition was placed not too far from the tomb. A small corner of the gallery was dedicated to the ancient Egyptian board game Senet, which visitors could play an adaptation of. The game was for two players, and there were two sets of equipment, including red and white pawns, a die, and a board which was drawn as a grid directly on the tables along with the rules of the game. The rules had been modified from the version the ancient Egyptians used to play, but the symbolism remained. In the Amos Rex version, the game begun with both players placing their pawns on the board. The objective was to be the first to move your pawns through the grid and off the board. The original game symbolized the journey a person must make through the underworld after their death and the dangers they must face during it (Meri 2020: 157). In the Amos Rex version, the symbolism was made extremely explicit as the board's special squares were marked with symbols (figure 5).
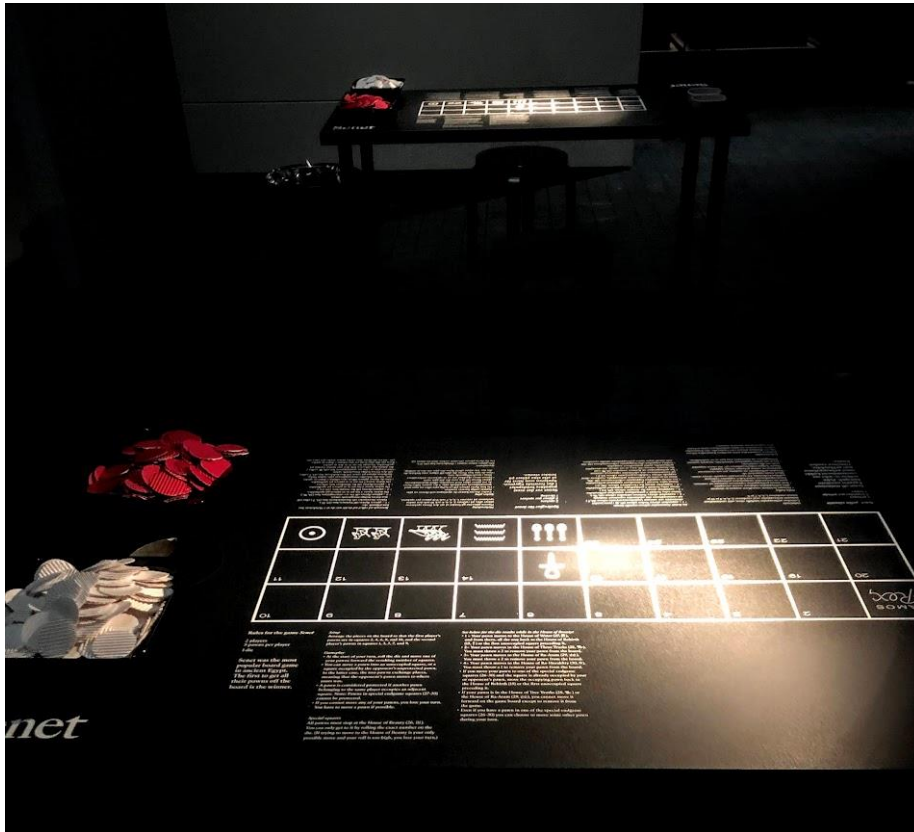
Figure 5: The board game Senet printed on two tables. Pawns and dice were provided by the museum. Pictured are the rules and symbols of the game.

The sections entitled Sacred Animals and New Cults were placed in the same room, in the center of which was a large display case containing mummified animals (figure 6). These mummies were grouped under the Sacred Animals theme, represented by Cat Mummy in the Gallery Guide. The Sacred Animals -section was introduced in the wall text, which described the position animals held in ancient Egyptian religion. The text went on to discuss the practices and institutions involved in the mummification of animals. It was revealed that mummified animals were used as votive offerings to the gods, and due to high demand, priests began manufacturing fake mummies filled with sticks and sand instead of an animal.

Figure 6: Three mummified cats in a display case. On their right are mummified birds. On the left side a wooden sarcophagus containing a fish is visible.

The New Cults section, for which the introductory text is visible in figure seven, was centered around new expressions of religion in ancient Egypt brought about by foreign influences. Its corresponding character in the Gallery Guide was Falcon-headed Scarab. The wall text introduced some syncretic gods, such as Amun-Ra, a combination of the Sun god Ra and Amun, the main god worshipped in Thebes. The text also delved into the shifts occurring in the roles and levels of popularity of gods over time and in different regions. The objects on display in this section primarily included statues and sculptures of syncretic gods and amulets.

The room which contained the New Cults and Sacred Animals also had a small area separated by a wall. Beyond the wall was a section entitled Behind the Scenes, where visitors were invited to learn about how research on ancient Egypt is conducted. The section contained photographs of archaeological sites, modern and historic research tools, as well as a video explaining how mummified animals are currently being studied.

By exiting the room discussed above, a visitor would find themselves in the very last section of the exhibition, entitled The Last One Thousand Years. As the name suggests, this part of the exhibition was about the last millennium of what is considered ancient Egypt. It was represented in the Gallery Guide by The Pharaoh's Courtier, a statue depicting the courtier of the pharaoh Psamtek. The introduction to The Last One Thousand Years discussed the Late Period (663-332 BC) as a time of flourishing art and changing social and cultural conditions. The end of the time of pharaohs and Egypt was timed in the year 30 BC, when Cleopatra died, and Egypt became a province of Rome. A notable object on display in this section was a large marble foot dated in the Roman period (30 BC – 395 AD) (figure 7). In its label, it was explained that during the last millennium, Egyptian culture merged with other Mediterranean cultures.

Figure 7: A votive foot wearing a Roman sandal. The human-headed snakes on the sides represent the gods Isis and Serapis.

According to the label, the foot represented this phenomenon, as it was primarily used as a sacrifice to Isis and Serapis, the latter of which was the underworld god and a combination of Osiris and Apis. Isis, Serapis, and Horus were stated to be the most popular god triad of the Roman period with roots to earlier times of pharaonic Egypt.

On the way to the exit of the gallery, there was a transparent glass wall, through which the visitor could see into Studio Rex, a space dedicated to workshops and peaceful reflection. On the glass wall, a size scale was printed, which showed the sizes of famous buildings in Finland compared to the Khufu pyramid (figure 8). During the Egypt of Glory exhibition, Studio Rex

contained a large pyramid (figures 8 and 9), on the inside of which was projected a short, animated story of the sun's journey to the sky accompanied by an atmospheric soundscape. A large text on the wall stated that the animation was based on the ancient Egyptian belief that the sun is swallowed at night by the sky goddess Nut (figure 9), who at dawn births the sun, thus allowing it to begin its ascent to the sky. In addition to the pyramid, the space was furnished with tables and chairs for visitors to sit and contemplate the exhibition. Furthermore, copies of consulting Egyptologist Mia Meri's book (2020) Egypti. Kala sarkofagissa & muita mysteereitä [1] were provided in Finnish and Swedish. This book was published as an accompaniment for the exhibition, and the photographs within it are of the objects on display in the Egypt of Glory exhibition.

Studio Rex was also used for pre-booked workshops primarily directed towards children. During the workshops, participants learned about ancient Egyptian amulets and were instructed to make one for themselves out of "magic dough" (a substance made of flour, water, salt, and cooking oil). These workshops will be discussed in further detail in an upcoming section. Moreover, Studio Rex was the location where the physical questionnaires for this research were made available to the visitors to fill out and submit.

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[1] Egypt. A Fish in a sarcophagus and other mysteries (my translation).
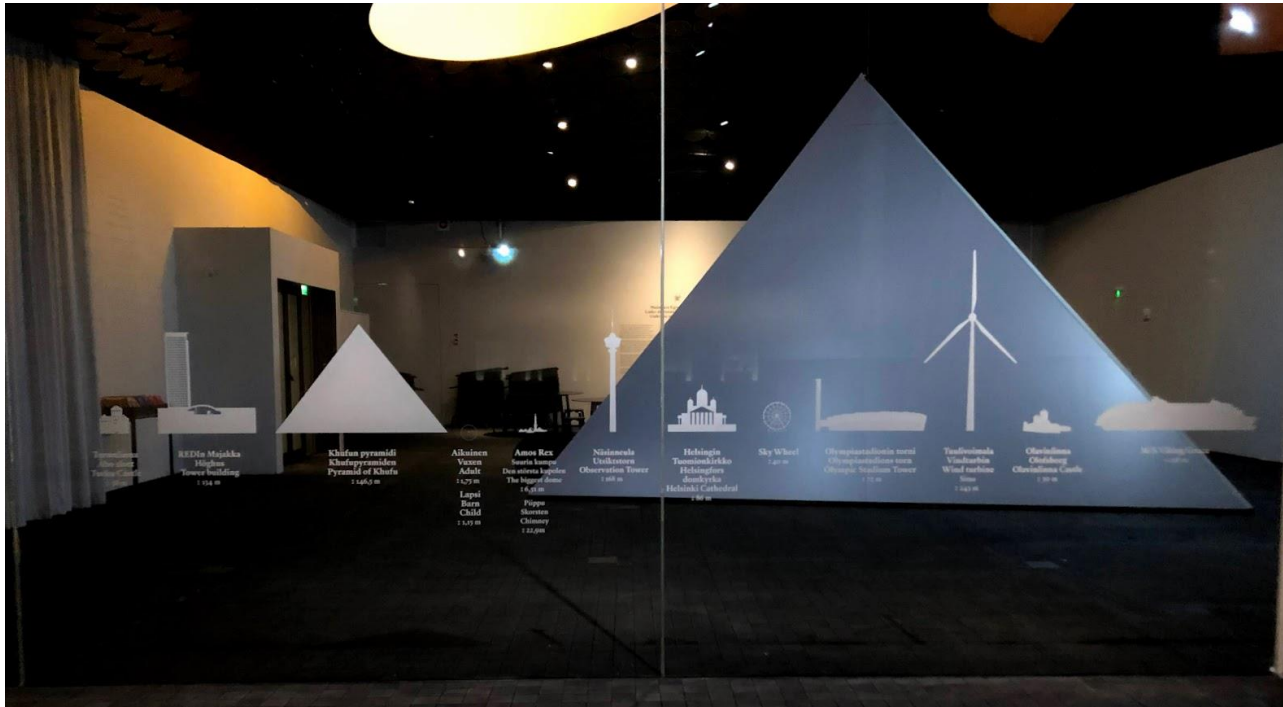
Figure 8: A glass wall with a size scale showcasing famous Finnish buildings compared to the Khufu pyramid. Behind the glass wall a space called Studio Rex is visible.
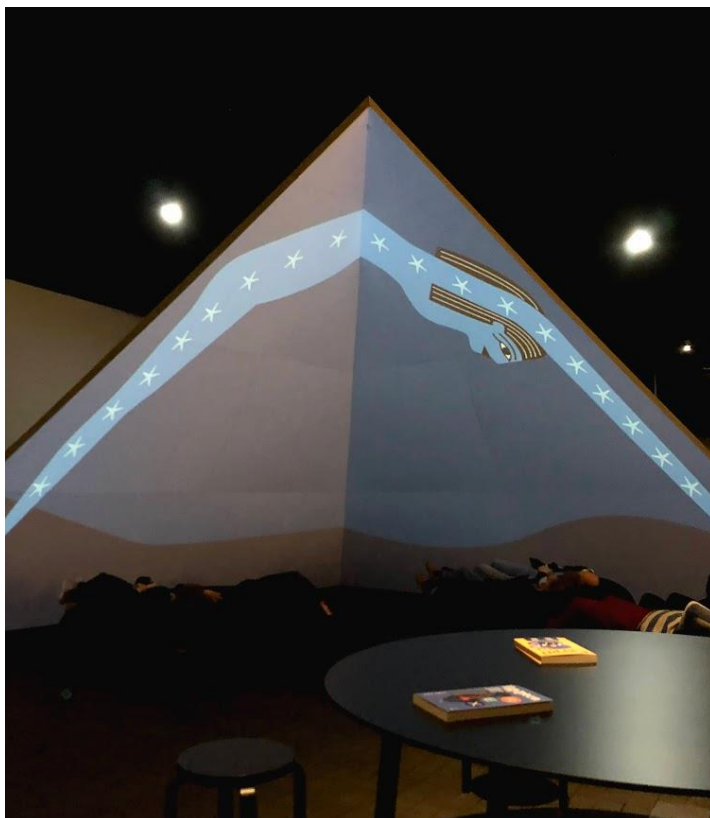

Figure 9: The pyramid in Studio Rex, onto which is projected the night goddess Nut. Inside the pyramid are soft donut-shaped cushions where visitors could lie down in and watch the animation.

4.2.   Workshops and Guided Tours

Amos Rex regularly hosts guided tours of their exhibitions as well as workshops themed around them. In this section, the tours of Egypt of Glory as well as the associated workshops will be examined. During fieldwork, I observed numerous guided tours with different audiences. While I found that the content of the tours varied somewhat depending on the audience as well as the guide giving the tour, some common themes and patterns emerge from the data.

A guided tour was usually scheduled to last approximately 45 minutes, which imposed limitations on how much ground a group could cover. A tour would typically start from the downstairs lobby after all the participants had gathered together. The guide would begin by introducing themselves and briefly going over the itinerary of the tour. The guide would then lead the group into the gallery and walk through the exhibition, stopping at certain objects to discuss specific themes. Emphasis was commonly placed on the vast length of the time period the exhibition covered. In fact, this often formed the basis for discussion about several aspects of ancient Egyptian history: because ancient Egypt existed over a period of over 3000 years, not only did the region's culture undergo several monumental changes, but it is also difficult to have exact dates or information for events and circumstances. The trajectory of the tours typically followed the one outlined in my own description: beginning from the timeline, continuing to discuss the Nile, pharaohs, every-day life, gods and religion, moving on to the afterlife and often finishing at the animal mummies. What varied was the level of detail included in the tours: a group of 6th graders was introduced to the animal mummies and to the idea of sacred animals, but they did not get to hear about how priests began farming cats solely for the purposes of mummification, a subject which was often discussed in tours for adults and seniors.

A rhetorical device often used by the guides was to relate ancient Egyptian history and culture to modern day phenomena and the lives of contemporary people. In other words, the guides educated visitors by drawing parallels between their lives and those of ancient Egyptians. For example, when discussing ancient Egyptian mythology, guides would often compare the myths and stories about gods to current forms of entertainment, such as television and tabloids.

This was done to communicate that to the ancient Egyptians, the stories about their deities were not always so serious but were in fact told to entertain one another.

The interaction between guides and visitors was primarily one-sided, as it was the guide's responsibility to explain the history of ancient Egypt to the visitors. However, the guides would often break up their monologues by asking the visitors questions. Common questions included queries about visitors' prior knowledge about and associations with ancient Egypt. Visitors were consulted especially when discussing the ethics and problematics of exhibiting ancient Egyptian artefacts. Guides would ask visitors how they felt about the artefacts found in tombs being on display in a museum in Finland. I witnessed few visitors articulating any kind of response to these questions. Nevertheless, the guides would often explore the topic of repatriation by stating that even though displaying these objects may pose ethical challenges, they are world heritage and should be made accessible to people. Furthermore, museums were said to be appropriate keepers of these objects as they employ experts who know how to look after them. One guide even gave a lengthy explanation of Museo Egizio's exceptional track record of conservation. According to her, Museo Egizio was the only museum in the world from which Egypt had not requested repatriation of objects.

Guided tours and workshops were sometimes arranged as a package deal. After touring the exhibition, participants would move to Studio Rex where the workshop would begin. Often a guide would direct the visitors to sit on the cushions below the pyramid, after which a discussion of amulets would follow. The guide would ask the participants whether they knew what amulets were and if they had any of their own. Amulets could be defined as something which protects or brings good luck to their wearer, as they would be imbued with a secret spell cast by their maker. The participants were then asked to move to sit at the round tables in the room, where they would be handed a piece of magic dough along with tools for creating textures and shapes for their amulet. Participants were allowed to design and craft their amulets however they pleased. While the participants worked on their amulets, a guide would often encourage them to think of the power they want to imbue their amulet with. The participants were also advised to take their amulets home and paint them with colors of their choosing.

The guided tours and workshops described here are potent examples of the ways in which information was relayed in the Egypt of Glory exhibition during its stay in the gallery. It must

be noted here that only a portion of the visitors to the exhibition participated in these activities, which is why my analysis will be primarily focused on the experiences of those who visited the exhibition independently. However, I felt it was important to discuss these more structured activities, as they are one of the most concrete and explicit ways in which actors in a museum relay information. In the next section, the perspectives of staff will be examined to gain understanding about the principles and practicalities which guided the exhibiting processes before and after an exhibition's opening night.

4.3. Exhibiting Ancient Egypt

According to the head of exhibitions, Teijamari Jyrkkiö, and the museum director Kai Kartio, bringing about the Egypt of Glory -exhibition was a two-year process which required the work of several teams, experts, and institutions. The permanent staff of Amos Rex consists of six teams: administration, marketing and communications, public programmes, shop, exhibitions & collections, and Bio Rex. In this section, I will discuss some of the key actors involved in producing the exhibition. In other words, I will examine the educative processes and practices of the museum staff. My primary focus will therefore be on the exhibitions & collections department as well as the public programmes team. I will begin by examining the objectives of the museum in general, and then move on to discussing the Egypt of Glory -exhibition more specifically. This will allow me to discuss the perspective of the museum staff when it comes to the creation of the exhibition as well as the activities occurring during its presence in the museum. This section is based on the interviews conducted with staff members listed in the methodology section of this thesis.

The general principles and objectives which guide Amos Rex are explicated in a document entitled "The Amos Rex Strategic Platform" (2019) provided by Kartio. This document outlines the mission of the museum as follows: "Amos Rex is an art museum that offers surprising and comprehensive experiences and makes the world a little bit better." (my translation). It also states that the museum is aimed at providing their customers with a unique museum visit. Their target audiences are stated to consist of children and families with children, the youth and young adults, travelers, and organized groups. Furthermore, the document places emphasis on creating exhibitions with innovative architecture, surprising elements, and a cohesive visual identity. The objectives for visitor experiences are also

outlined. They highlight easily approachable interactivity, providing possibilities for resting, relevant and good information, and a favorable price-to-quality ratio. When it comes to the Egypt of Glory -exhibition, Kartio explained that the decision to organize an exhibition about ancient Egypt in Amos Rex was in part influenced by the tradition of its predecessor Amos Anderson Art Museum to occasionally produce exhibitions displaying ancient cultures. He went on to explain that the staff of Amos Rex finds it important to exhibit what they find relevant and important instead of imposing artificial restrictions on the museum.

Apart from tradition, several factors were mentioned by staff regarding the choice of topic. A significant variable seems to have been Kartio's personal interest in and familiarity with the collections of Museo Egizio. As the museum appointed Egyptologist Christian Greco as their new director in 2014, the museum began loaning their collections internationally. This was the catalyst for collaboration between Amos Rex and Museo Egizio. Kartio also cited the unique conditions provided by the gallery spaces of Amos Rex for displaying such a large exhibition of ancient Egyptian artefacts.

The actual production began in late 2018, as Museo Egizio provided Amos Rex with a list of objects they would provide along with a script of the story the exhibition would tell. The head of exhibitions, Teijamari Jyrkkiö explained that herself and curators Katariina Timonen, and Anastasia Isakova along with the consulting Egyptologist Mia Meri, then began working on the original concept suggested by Museo Egizio. The goals and principles which guided the process were manifold. While each member of the curating team had their own personal goals for their work, some common objectives emerge in the interview data. Firstly, Kartio stated that though the exhibition was to be accessible to all, it was primarily designed with children and young visitors in mind. Secondly, the curators and Egyptologist explained that it was important to the team that the exhibition tell a compelling and inspiring story while being scientifically viable and avoiding glorification and carnivalization of ancient Egypt. The team also emphasized eliminating mysticism around ancient Egypt and instead wanted to highlight the lives of ordinary people. They strived to convey the message that the objects on display had been used by real people with full lives of their own. Another idea the curators wanted to communicate was the length of time during which ancient Egypt had existed:

> "-- *people compress the entirety of ancient Egypt into one lump, even though, my God, it was several thousands of years, and how that culture also changed constantly and*

took shape and gained new characteristics and merged the old with the new, so probably understanding that span of time is what I wish people took away from this."

<div align="right">-Katariina Timonen, 2020</div>

It was also imperative to the curation team that the subject of ancient Egypt be approached respectfully. For example, the ethics of displaying mummies was often discussed, as the ones on display were in fact actual mummified human beings who had once lived. Therefore, the display area was isolated from the other sections and purposefully left without a soundscape.

The nuance of information regarding ancient Egypt presented a unique challenge for the exhibition. Meri explained that popular interest in ancient Egypt is very high, and that people want to know things about it. However, in Egyptology, everything is complicated due to the length of the time period and the nature of data sources available. Meri expressed the challenges this brings to museum exhibitions thusly:

"*– it has been super difficult to be able to express the most essential aspect of something you could write two books about and still have things left to explain. In a way I would like to say that everything that is said there in the museum, even though it is correct, it is not "correct", or it is not the truth in a way, but it is an extreme simplification. – "So then it's just like, you pick one truth and stick to it and just hold on to it, and that you have to pick one that works well enough in that situation. But these are such that a normal museum visitor, they don't realize that there's anything odd here, they read the labels, they're happy, they don't care whether Tutankhamon ruled the year blah blah or two years later, they don't really care about that kind of precision.* "

<div align="right">-Mia Meri, 2020</div>

Despite this challenge, the curators strived to provide moments of excitement and discovery in the exhibition. Both Timonen and Isakova stated that they wanted to create an exhibition that would have accessible information for everyone without being overwhelming or exhausting. Related to this goal was the aesthetic dimension of the exhibition: to have beautiful objects which anyone could observe and appreciate even if they were not interested in the informational content of the exhibition. The objects were to be the focus of the exhibition, which meant that the exhibition was otherwise visually simple. Moreover, Kartio

explained the gallery was to be spacious and atmospheric, so that visitors would feel like they had stepped into another world upon entering it.

According to Jyrkkiö, the desire to focus on the real lives of ancient Egyptians was one of the deciding factors in the formation of the ten themes of the exhibition. As previously stated, the concept was originally created by a curator of Museo Egizio and altered by the staff in Amos Rex. The curators explain that the objects had been categorized into the themes in the original concept, but that they had renamed and reorganized the themes and moved some objects from one theme to another. They went on to state that the design process of the physical structures of the exhibition relied heavily on the work of architects, who collaborated with the curation team on creating a route for the story of the exhibition.

Isakova and Timonen specified that they had been the primary producers of informational content for the exhibition, especially when it came to all of the texts and labels. This, however, had not been a straightforward process. Isakova explained that their writing had often been followed by a rigorous review process by the public programmes team, who had wanted shorter and clearer texts with simpler vocabulary. Timonen contended that even though they were the authors, the texts were not theirs but the museum's. She went on to explain that the process was one of finding a middle ground where visitors were not being underestimated but the information was still made accessible to them.

As the curators were not Egyptologists, they collaborated with the Egyptologist Mia Meri. Isakova stated that working closely with Meri allowed the team to learn about ancient Egypt along the way. Meri explained that her primary goal had been to provide information to the staff especially regarding basic background and terminology. She had also been able to use her expertise to find relevant information and provide context that otherwise would have been missing from the exhibition. Furthermore, she said that she found it crucial to inspire the staff to become curious about and fall in love with ancient Egypt so that they could find their own way to communicate ancient Egypt to the public.

The decisions made regarding the ways in which the objects would be organized and displayed influence the poetics of the exhibition. As discussed by Meri, the topic of ancient Egypt is incredibly broad, and many aspects of it are subject to disagreement among experts. The act of "picking one truth and sticking to it", as Meri put it, creates inherently incomplete but

potentially powerful narratives which are explicitly intended to influence visitor' perceptions. In the Egypt of Glory -exhibition, the ten themes were a clearly visible way of organizing objects and information to create stories. For example, for many staff members, it was important to communicate the vastness of the 3000 years during which ancient Egypt existed. In the very first section of the exhibition, "Thousands of Years of Egypt", time was of the essence, as the timeline on the wall communicated the beginning and the end of ancient Egypt. Furthermore, the objects on display were significant either due to their old age or the fact that they had been used to measure or mark time. Fish palettes used for grinding up color pigments from 4000 BC were in the section connected to a fragment of a sun clock from 664–332 BC. These objects have at least around 3000 years between them, and they had originally been used for completely different tasks. However, when placed near each other under the same theme, they both became devices of the telling the same story.

The curators were not alone in shaping public perception of ancient Egypt. The public programmes team was instrumental in designing and developing the visitor-facing aspects of the museum. Guided tours and workshops, as well as conversation guides and general customer service fall under the public programmes umbrella. I interviewed two members of this team, the head of education Elsa Hessle and a curator of education, Melanie Orenius. While their roles and responsibilities diverge in some key respects, both Hessle and Orenius were involved in deciding what and how the museum wanted to communicate to the audience. However, the design of the pedagogical content, such as the guided tours and workshops, as well as the training of the guides is mostly Orenius' responsibility.

One of the pedagogical tools designed by Orenius was the Gallery Guide. Orenius explained that as the exhibition was primarily directed towards children and younger visitors, the Gallery Guide was designed as a tool for children to get a general understanding of the themes in the exhibition. She went on to say that a guiding principle with the Gallery Guide and the museum in general was that if something is designed well enough for children, it will work just as well for adults. She stated that the content of the Gallery Guide stemmed from the objects and stories on display at the exhibition. The characters chosen to represent each theme were decided collaboratively with the curators. Hessle explained that for each theme, they wanted to choose a character that could speak on behalf of the entire theme or provide an interesting point of view to it. For example, Bes was regarded as a natural choice to represent Beauty in Daily Life because he was the protector of the home, and the section displayed objects from

everyday life and people's homes. According to her, a more unnatural but interesting choice was the fake beard, as it exemplified a status symbol of pharaonic power more broadly than for instance a statue of an actual pharaoh would have done.

Guided tours and workshops are also designed by the public programmes team. Orenius explained that for the Egypt of Glory -exhibition, the guides were provided with more background material in advance than usual due to the exceptionally large amount of information in the exhibition. Because the guides were not Egyptologists, the starting point for designing the tours was to focus on and harness the strengths of the museum and its guiding staff. This meant creating tours that emphasized interaction with visitors instead of resembling a lecture. Orenius stated that guides were also instructed to be sensitive to the group's needs and focus on the things the visitors are most interested in. The goal of this practice was to provide opportunities for visitors to have their own epiphanies and form their own connections to the exhibition. According to Hessle and Orenius, these same principles were applied to the workshops, the central purpose of which was to deepen the experience of the exhibition through activity. The decision to center the workshops around amulets was based on the idea that amulets would convey ancient Egyptian religion in a multi-faceted way. Furthermore, the aversion to the exotification of ancient Egypt was another guiding principle when designing tours and workshops:

> *"One point of the whole exhibit as well was to try to convey to people that this had been a real culture and… to not exotify too much either, but try to bring it closer somehow, that these have been real people, and these have been the lives and objects of real people. And then the amulet is something that we as modern people use as well. That all of a sudden everyone notices that I actually also have a lucky stone or a horseshoe above the door, that it is very universal as well."* -Elsa Hessle 2020

Two guides (Guide A & Guide B) participated in this research project. When asked about their work, both of them emphasized the importance of facilitating experiences which would allow visitors to form their own connections with the exhibition and be encouraged to learn more about it later. One of the guides said that her goal was to communicate to visitors that ancient people had experienced the full spectrum of life, and that the human mind had even then been broad and rich. Both guides also felt it was important for a guide to be able to connect with the visitors and to take their interests into consideration.

According to one of the guides, the content of the tours was somewhat determined by a structured script provided by Orenius, which included certain things all guides had to go over. This structure allowed some flexibility, and both guides reported being able to add elements of the exhibition they were most interested in or compelled by. Guide A stated that he wanted to avoid mystifying and exotifying ancient Egypt and to focus on universal experiences and feelings people still have to this day. Guide B explained that her tours followed the themes of the exhibition, as she felt that each theme had something relevant to impart on the visitors.

Both guides interviewed had also worked as conversation guides. The responsibilities of conversation guides and tour guides differ somewhat. Guide A explained that conversation guides are in the gallery to answer visitor's questions and to have conversations with them. However, the job also entails a lot of supervision of visitors. For example, Guide B stated that it is the conversation guides' job to tell people to move further away from objects and to not touch them. This is the capacity in which I sometimes worked at the exhibition. As previously discussed, I was mainly stationed at the Augmented Reality section with the virtual tomb, but once or twice was asked to supervise other spaces as well. I relate to the other guides' experiences when it comes to the primary responsibilities of the conversation guides. In the following field note excerpt, I reflect on an interaction between myself and a visitor. I also consider my own positionality and the implications of being perceived as knowledgeable about ancient Egypt.

"A small boy arrived at the Arilyn-point dressed as a mummy, accompanied by his sister. The boy asked me a tremendous number of questions about what ancient Egyptians died of. He suspected that they probably did not die that much since they had such skilled and knowledgeable doctors. Based on the information I had received from the curators, I told him that people probably died of war and disease, just like today. He also asked me which animal was the most dangerous one in Egypt. I told him that the Egyptians feared snakes and crocodiles hiding in the Nile. He recognized the Nile and knew its meaning to the Egyptians. --- So, the boy told me his own ideas, facts, and questions to which I responded by completing, confirming, encouraging but also by refuting claims I thought were false. However, despite some training and education on the matter, I am not an expert in this field on any level, so it is interesting, that my mere presence and nametag gave me some authority to educate and teach this boy about the

subject. My information could have been completely wrong or lacking. All of this to say, I got first-hand experience of the responsibility museums have in people's knowledge building processes."

-field note excerpt from 14.10.2020

In summary, there were certain central principles and goals which guided the process of exhibiting and educating about ancient Egypt in the Egypt of Glory exhibition. Firstly, the shunning of exoticism and mysticism was deemed important by nearly all of the staff members interviewed. The staff wanted to communicate to the visitors that ancient Egyptians lived full and vibrant lives with the same emotions and needs as we experience today. I noticed that this principle influenced my own way of talking about ancient Egypt to visitors, as can be read from the above excerpt. Especially the curatorial staff felt that respect for ancient Egyptian culture was of utmost important, a maxim which made its way to the exhibition, particularly in the ways in which the mummies were displayed and discussed in the texts and by guides. Secondly, many staff members wanted to provide visitor experiences which would encourage visitors to form their own relationships with ancient Egypt and would therefore foster and inspire future learning. Information was to be accurate, and the exhibition was to be accessible to all, regardless of their prior knowledge of or interest in ancient Egypt. The staff was also concerned with the ethics of displaying objects belonging to an ancient culture in the context of a Western museum for a Western audience. These concerns were openly discussed, especially in guided tours, though I saw little examination of ethical considerations in the displays or labels. The principles outlined here influenced the ways in which the exhibition was finalized in the gallery. In the next chapter, we shall discover whether and how these principles were communicated to the visitors.

4.4. Visiting Egypt of Glory

In this section, the Egypt of Glory -exhibition will be examined from the visitor's perspective. A general account of visitor learning, and experiences based on questionnaire data will be provided. To present a deeper perspective, I will then focus on the observations made during a participatory walking session I conducted with a group of three visitors. This discussion will be followed by an examination of how the visitors talked about their experiences. Learning experiences and changes in perception regarding ancient Egypt will also be considered.

To give a broader glimpse into visitor experiences in the Egypt of Glory exhibition, I will now explore answers to four questions listed in the questionnaire. These question items were statements accompanied by a scale ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree." The respondents were asked to read the statement and express their position on this scale. The statements are as follows: 1) "The information presented in the exhibition was true and valid.", 2) "The exhibition components (objects, texts, videos, tours, guides etc.) supported learning.", 3) "The exhibition taught me something new about Ancient Egypt.", and 4) "I want to continue learning about Ancient Egypt after the visit." The answers to these statements are visually represented in the charts in figure 10.

Trust in the truth and validity of the exhibition was high among the respondents (n=196). Of the 196 respondents, a slight majority strongly agreed with the statement "The information presented in the exhibition was true and valid.", with 21,94 % somewhat agreeing with it. Most respondents also either strongly or somewhat agreed that the exhibition was conducive to learning, and 59,69 % strongly agreed that the exhibition had taught them something about ancient Egypt. Some uncertainty is observable in regard to whether participants were inspired to continue learning about the topic post visit. While most participants somewhat agreed that they wished to explore further, the share of respondents strongly agreeing is considerably smaller than in the other questions. This statement also received the highest share of participants who somewhat and strongly disagreed.

The statement "The exhibition taught me something new about ancient Egypt." was accompanied by a text field where participants were asked to give examples of things they had learned. Of the respondents who selected strongly agree, somewhat agree, or neither agree nor disagree, 60,47% listed examples of things they had learned. Popular answers included the mummification of animals (specifically cats), practices, beliefs, and rituals around death and the afterlife, as well as the complexity of the ancient Egyptian pantheon.

The answers given by the respondents differ somewhat from the stated objectives of the staff. While many staff members emphasized broader concepts and themes, such as shared humanity and the implications of the length of the 3000-year time period, visitors tended to bring up more specific aspects of the exhibition. This is not to say that visitors did not expand their understanding on a broader level, but that they discussed their learning experience in much more detailed and particular terms. It must also be noted that the answers given were

most likely heavily influenced by the format of the questions. A few lines in a questionnaire are probably not conducive to profound, in-depth considerations of one's experiences. However, many of the themes which repeated themselves in the answers (mummification of animals, religion, and death) were also prevalent in more extensive conversations and interviews with visitors. This will be demonstrated in upcoming sections.
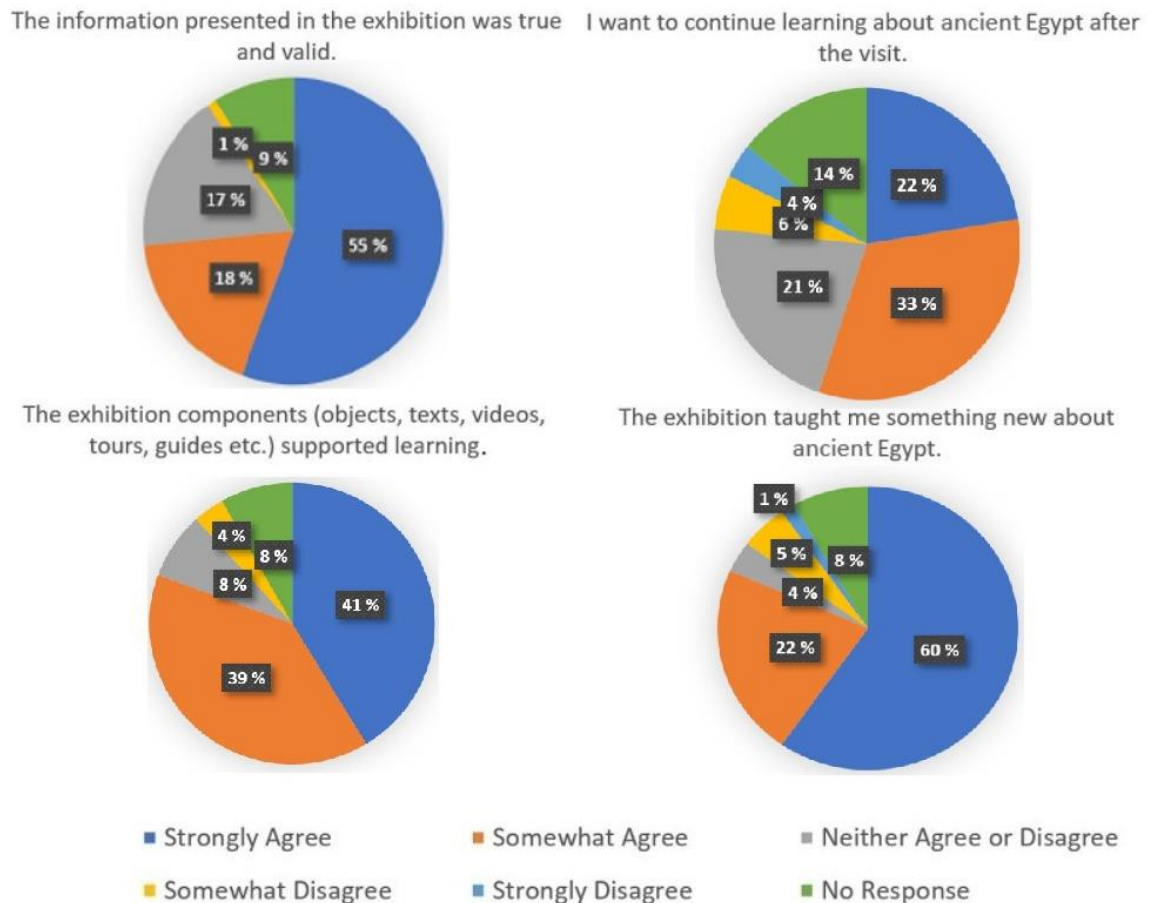

Figure 10: Pie Charts showing the share of answers for the four statements. Total number of participants is (n=196).

While these charts show that most visitors experienced some kind of learning during their visit, they do not provide insight into personal motivations, interests, or pre-existing knowledge. Furthermore, they do not explain the how of museum learning: the ways in which visitors move through the exhibition, what they pay attention to, how they interact with the displays, how social interaction influences their visit and so on. In other words, quantitative data provides little information of the personal, sociocultural, and physical contexts of the

visit. Therefore, I intend to explore the visiting experience more comprehensively by discussing a participatory walking session conducted with a group of three women: Nina, Kirsi, and Maria. All of the participants were university students in their twenties. Their expectations for the exhibition were largely based on media coverage which had emphasized the presence of mummies, which they were excited about. Nina also mentioned expecting a visually interesting exhibition, as that is the idea she had gotten from the museum's advertising campaigns. When discussing their prior knowledge and conceptions of ancient Egypt, four major themes emerged. Rulers and pharaohs were instantly mentioned, specifically Cleopatra and the incestual relationships which the group thought had been a prominent feature of the ruling class. Another prevalent theme was the technological and mathematical advancement which was seen by the group as a prerequisite for building the pyramids. The group also mentioned slavery as being a big part of ancient Egyptian culture. The fourth theme that came up was pop culture, as the group members cited films, such as The Mummy (1999) and Prince of Egypt (1998), along with books, documentaries, and podcasts as their most recent sources of information about the topic.

Upon entering the exhibition, each group member took a Gallery Guide and flipped through it for a moment, but quickly abandoned it when walking further into the exhibition. In the earlier part of their visit, the group was rather cohesive and concentrated; texts were read carefully, and objects were discussed thoroughly among the group. The cohesion began to disintegrate in the Beauty in Daily Life section, and the group members began to fluctuate between looking at things together and more independent wandering. The group reunited at times to make joint decisions on where to proceed as well as to discuss the displays. For example, in the section entitled In the Kingdom of Osiris, the group was looking at a display case showcasing Book of the Dead [2] of Imhotep, when Maria began chanting Imhotep's name, imitating a scene from the 1999 film The Mummy. This incited the group to make plans about watching the film together later on. After this section the group was already discussing what they wanted to do after their visit, but they stopped at the Sacred Animals-section and took some photographs of the mummified cats.

After the visit at the main gallery, the group and I moved to Studio Rex to discuss the exhibition. The group reported having observed their own behavior and reactions to the

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[2] a funerary text intended to guide the deceased's journey on the way to the afterlife. (Meri 2020: 88.)

exhibition more closely due to their participation in this research project. Specifically, they had noticed themselves experiencing museum fatigue as the exhibition had been so extensive. Maria reflected on this by comparing her visitation experience to playing the video game Discovery Tour by Assassin's Creed: Ancient Egypt. She explained that the game allowed the player to get familiarized with the culture and history of ancient Egypt by exploring it from a first-person perspective. To her, this experience is missing from a museum visit:

"If you're just staring at a statue, and you can't sort of imagine anything around it, or you can't imagine it in a place, you can't… it sort of gets boring."

-Maria 2020

Reflecting on the exhibition through prior knowledge and previous experiences was a common way of discussing its contents and organization. This is consistent with Falk and Dierking's (2012) Contextual Model of Learning, which theorizes that a visitor's personal context significantly influences what visitors focus on and remember after the exhibition (Falk & Dierking 2012: 27.). Nina acknowledged that the aspects of the exhibition to which she paid the most attention were things she already knew something about or were completely new. For example, she had previous knowledge of what mummies were, so it was interesting for her to see authentic ones on display and to learn more about them. In contrast, the mummification of animals and the related phenomenon of the nearly industrial level of producing animal mummies she had not heard of before, so it stuck out to her. At times, prior knowledge was at odds with the content in the exhibition. A pertinent example of this is the perception that slavery had been a fixture of ancient Egyptian society, and that the pyramids had been built by slaves. The group cited several sources for this belief, such as recently viewed documentaries and education they had received in school. The group found it odd that the exhibition made no mention of slavery despite discussing the hierarchies of ancient Egyptian society. When I pointed out that in Meri's book, it is explained that there is little evidence of there being extensive slavery in ancient Egypt, the group began discussing the definition of slavery. They decided that due to slavery being a somewhat elusive concept, it would be difficult to come to a definitive conclusion.

Despite this discrepancy, the group agreed that the information presented in the exhibition was as factually accurate as possible. All of the members stated that they trusted the Finnish museum as an institution. Nina went on to say that the values of Amos Rex aligned with hers,

which increased its credibility in her eyes, along with the consultation of qualified experts in the production of the exhibition.

When asked whether the museum had in any way influenced their conceptions of ancient Egypt, Nina and Maria said that nothing revolutionary had occurred in their perceptions, but that the visit had expanded and deepened their understanding by providing extra details and context. Specifically, Nina mentioned learning how long the time period of ancient Egypt had been and how far it had stretched geographically. Kirsi and Maria explained that the visit had inspired them to consider the ways in which they think about history and present day Egypt:

> *"Mostly I just started thinking about how much more I know about ancient Egypt than current Egypt. I know more about this stuff than… maybe I should read more."*
>
> -Maria 2020

The expansion of understanding is demonstrated in the mind map below (figure 11). The lines and phrases written in blue ink were added before the visit, and post-visit edits are written in red ink. Some red branches stem from the very center, signifying a completely new addition to the mind map. For example, "Use of cosmetics" is an item added after the visit by Kirsi, and from it stem several sub-items, such as "perfume" as well as "ointments" which branches out to "medicinal" and "aesthetic". Some of the red branches stem from blue items written down before the visit. Notably, the item "Mummification" received four new branches, suggesting an expansion in the perceptions regarding mummification processes in ancient Egypt. To all participants, the mummification of animals was a completely new piece of information, along with the accidental origins of mummification as a practice.

In other instances, the visitors did not feel that the exhibition deepened their understanding of a given topic. For example, the group had certain preconceptions about the ruling families of ancient Egypt, as demonstrated by the blue item "Ruling families & incest", and its branch "Ramses II had 100 children". However, after visiting the exhibition, the participants felt that the topic of pharaohs and dynasties was too detailed and trivial to connect it with any pre-existing knowledge. This resulted in the group finding the topic irrelevant. Another example of a subverted preconception was the significance of Cleopatra, who was not mentioned in the exhibition save for the very last section. The group had mixed reactions to this. Nina saw the

exclusion of popularized characters in favor of discussing other topics as a merit to the exhibition. Kirsi, on the other hand, would have been interested in learning more about Cleopatra and the reasons that lead her to be such a pervasive character in popular culture. In any case, their preconception of Cleopatra as a significant person in ancient Egypt was challenged by the exhibition which had all but completely omitted her.

The objective of the above description has been to demonstrate some of the ways in which visitors can interact with museum displays. Furthermore, it is intended to showcase the consequences of those interactions on visitor learning and knowledge construction. In this account, the personal context of Falk and Dierking's (2012) Contextual Model of Learning becomes particularly visible. The personal context, i.e. the visitor's interests, prior experiences, and pre-existing knowledge guided the group's visit and learning. For instance, the expansion of the group's understanding of mummification is a potent example of how pre-existing knowledge and perceptions can serve as a foundation for new learning.

The mind map serves as a visual representation of the intersection of the objectworld and the lifeworld (Wood & Latham 2014). It illustrates not only changes in perceptions, but also instances of incompatibility between the objectworld and a visitor's lifeworld. The group's pre-visit perception of ruling families as centrally important facet of ancient Egyptian society was muted by the visit, as the exhibition did not provide opportunities for effective learning on the topic. Another instance of this was the shared narrative of widespread slavery in ancient Egyptian society, which the group heavily subscribed to. Despite exploring the hierarchical aspects of ancient Egyptian society, slavery was never discussed in the exhibition. The lowest rung in the hierarchy was explained to have been farmers and servants instead of slaves. This narrative clashed with the group's preconceptions but was not enough to result in significant changes in their knowledge on this matter. These cases demonstrate the active role of a museum visitor in knowledge construction: information in the exhibition is not merely absorbed, but incorporated into existing frameworks, and in some cases, rejected altogether. This perspective will be expanded upon in the following section.
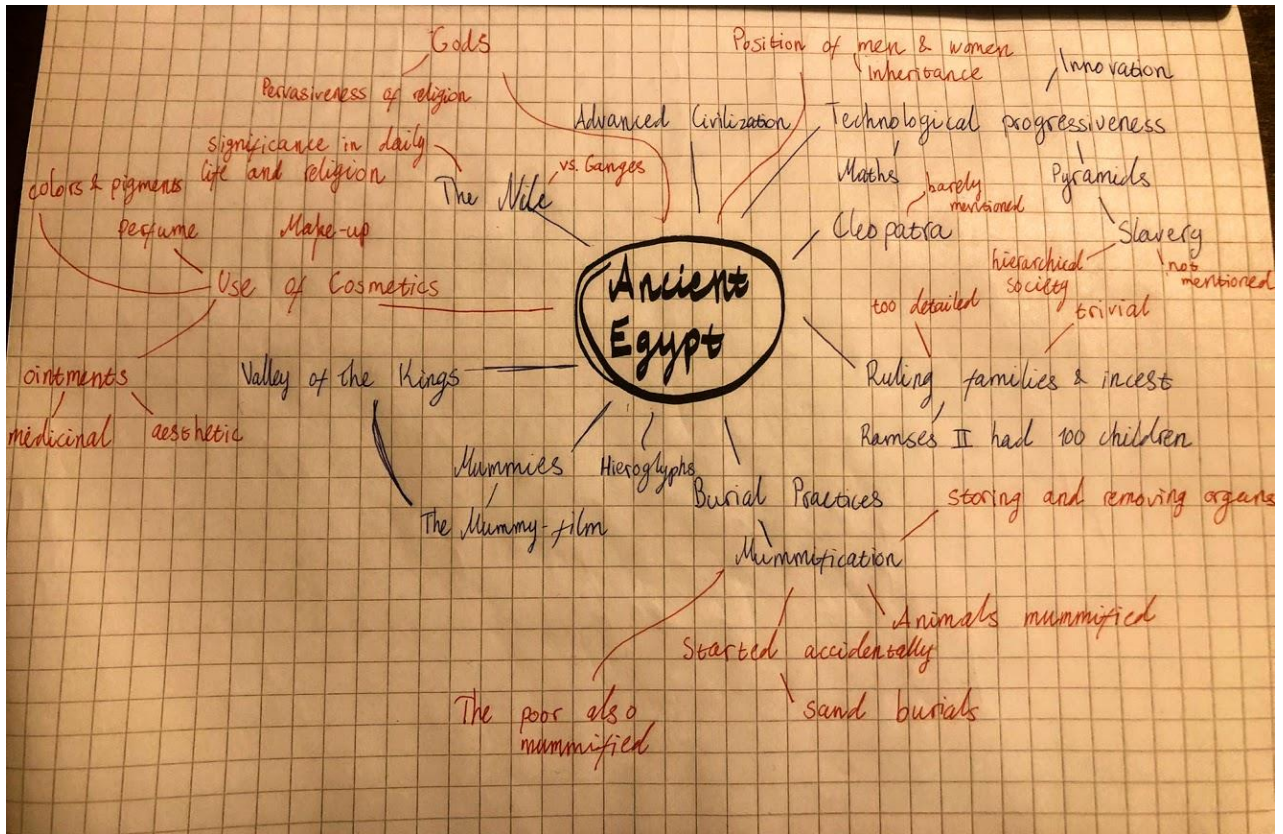
Figure 11: Mind Map drawn up with the group of three participants. Blue pen was used before the visit, red pen after. Photo showcases the changes in perceptions of ancient Egypt after the visit (aka learning).

5. Analysis of Educating and Learning at Amos Rex

The analysis of the data presented in this thesis is based on the theoretical frameworks and concepts discussed in chapter 2. It rests on the epistemological assumption of constructivism, which allows for the examination of social and cultural knowledge construction processes in a museum context. The museum is conceptualized as a site of cultural production, in which individuals interact with the poetics and politics of an exhibition and in which knowledge is constructed in a collaborative process of these entities. This process is examined with the use of three theoretical frameworks: free-choice learning (Dierking 2005), the Contextual Model of Learning (Falk & Dierking 2012), and the Object Knowledge Framework (Wood & Latham 2014).

This section begins with the analysis of the poetics and politics of the Egypt of Glory exhibition. What follows is an examination of visitor experiences using the Contextual Model of Learning. Finally, the Object Knowledge Framework will be used to analyze the intersection of the educational and exhibitionary practices of the museum and the visitors' experiences.

5.1. The Poetics and Politics of Egypt of Glory

Ancient Egypt has, for a long time, held a strong position in the Western imagination. In different points in history, interest in ancient Egypt has made several resurgences in science, literature, art, architecture, fashion and popular culture. A potent example of this "Egyptomania" is the opening of Tutankhamon's tomb in 1922 and the subsequent "Tutmania". Worth mentioning are also the several on-screen fictionalized dramatizations of ancient Egypt, such as the 1963 film Cleopatra starring Elizabeth Taylor, and the 1999 film The Mummy. (Dobson & Tonks 2020: 127–144; 229–246) Appropriation of ancient Egyptian imagery in Western cultural products entails processes of selection on the terms of Western institutions, audiences, and consumers, often resulting in collapsing historical eras into one set of symbols or archetypes (Malamud 2000). In Western museums, the popularity of ancient Egypt as a topic is often a double-edged sword: while popular interest in ancient Egypt often attracts visitors, it also has bred stubborn misconceptions. (MacDonald 2003: 87 – 99)

A related challenge for contemporary Western museums is reconciling with the legacy and ongoing consequences of colonialism. Western museums have a long-standing tradition of collecting and exhibiting objects from ancient and "foreign" cultures. This tradition is deeply embedded in the colonialist and imperialist projects, in which Western systems of classification and interpretation were imposed on objects acquired from colonized peoples. (Barringer & Flynn 1998: 11). This form of cultural appropriation is an extensively discussed topic in museum anthropology, as museums attempt to reconcile with their past and its effects on their current practices and frameworks (Arya 2021: 6 – 8). It is this political landscape in which I analyze the poetics and the politics of the Egypt of Glory -exhibition. In Amos Rex, decolonization was actively and explicitly approached not only through exhibitionary practices, but also by collaborating with the Aalto University on a project by the name of Egyptin varjo.[3] This project centered around questions of authority over histories, the statements and silences of museum exhibitions, and the (lack of) discourse on colonialism (Hohti et al. 2022: 101). This project shows that the staff was aware of and willing to discuss the legacy of colonialism and its implications for the Egypt of Glory exhibition. The materials of this project have been made available to the public on the Amos Rex website.

The display methods and interpretation processes in the Egypt of Glory -exhibition seemed to be constructed around the inclination to reject colonialist traditions, such as carnivalizing and exotifying exhibiting practices. Many staff members expressed distaste for ancient Egypt-themed exhibitions in other museums, which they thought had approached the topic disrespectfully and with a colonialist undertone. Therefore, by diverging from problematic and otherizing methods of classification and display, Amos Rex strived to create a narrative which would subvert colonialist assumptions and paradigms. The narrative in question was one of a diverse 3000-year period during which real people lived full lives in the context of a constantly changing and shifting cultural landscape.

The exhibiting practices which were mentioned as conducive to this goal by the staff were the lighting strategies, the thematic organization, and textual interpretive devices. According to the curators of the exhibition, the dimness of the gallery was primarily intended to protect the ancient objects from the dangers of harsh lighting. However, the lighting also has interpretive implications. The contrast of a dark gallery space and objects under spotlights was used as a

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[3] Shadow of Egypt (My translation in text.)

device to emphasize the objects in and of themselves. While it was at times challenging to see the gallery architecture or labels, the objects always shone out from the midst of the darkness. The emphasis, then, was removed from the interpretive tools of the museum, such as labels, and placed instead on the objects themselves. Museums and exhibitions built during colonialist rule often communicated a message of imperial sovereignty while promoting modern Western science and classification systems (Coombes 1998: 60 – 61; Bennett 1995: 111 – 112) and are often brightly-lit all around. The lighting strategy implemented in the Egypt of Glory -exhibition functioned as a visual metaphor which diminished the importance and grandeur of the museum and highlighted the significance of the objects, thus granting them the agency to, in a way, represent themselves.

However, this is not the only way in which the darkness of the gallery was be interpreted. In a text entitled Varjot, Kaavat[4], a student involved in the Egyptin varjo project ponders on the shadows created by the spotlight cast on the statue of Sekhmet. They point out that upon looking at the statue, its shadow gets mixed with those of the viewer and the museum building. (Ekholm et al. 2021) In this interpretation, the shadows resulting from the lighting strategy obfuscate the lines between the viewer, the object, and the museum institution. When the shadow of the museum mixes with the shadow of the object, the institution fades from view along with its political and historical burdens and biases. The darkness could, therefore, be interpreted as a method of obscuring the power relations and politics inherent in the act of exhibiting. (Hooper-Greenhill 1992)

The thematic organization of the exhibition also conveyed specific narrative messages. In interviews with Jyrkkiö and Meri, it is apparent that the selection of the themes stemmed from the desire to communicate different facets of ancient Egyptian life and to remove any mysticism surrounding it. By displaying objects which real people had used and been buried with (or in), the exhibition strived to create and relate to visitors a sense of shared humanity that transcends time and geography. This approach aimed to dispel the image of ancient Egypt as a land of mysticism which is still prominent in current imagination, as exemplified by tropes such as the mummy's curse in popular culture (Dobson & Tonks 2020). This is especially prominent in the Beauty in Daily life -section, where an ancient Egyptian pillow and sandals were displayed in the same context as protective amulets. Contextualizing these objects in this

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[4] Shadows, Patterns (my translation).

manner conveyed the message that religious beliefs were incorporated into the everyday lives of ordinary people and did not necessarily have much to do with casting curses on mummies to plague future aristocrats. This idea repeated itself in the workshops and guided tours, where guides regularly pointed out ways in which aspects of ancient Egyptian life are currently existent or in some way relatable to the visitors.

The sequence of the themes in the exhibition also functioned as an educative device about ancient Egypt:

> *"– it builds the information, that you start like, understand the time, understand the place, understand how this place (Egypt) is built, then you have religion and then you get the deaths and such. And then you see right at the very end how it has changed during the last millennium."*
>
> -Mia Meri 2020

Though the exhibition was built without a definitively imposed trajectory, the architecture as well as the Gallery Guide contained cues of an intended sequence (figure 1). Though not explicitly chronological, this sequential ordering of the themes did define a beginning and an end to ancient Egypt. The oldest objects of the exhibition (the fish palette: ~4000–3200 BC.) could be found in the very first room of the gallery, and the newest object (The Votive Foot: 30 BC – 395 AD) was in the space right next to the exit to the gallery. This sequence contained a journey beginning from the concept of time itself, moving through life, followed by death and ending in the start of a new era; a trajectory which conformed to the ancient Egyptian understanding of the life cycle as explained in the exhibition.

The textual interpretive devices, namely labels and wall texts, were written by the curators with the visitors in mind. Timonen stated that the objective was to provide substantial information about ancient Egypt without causing museum fatigue. The texts, then, functioned as the most explicit media of providing information about ancient Egypt. In the exhibition, the most visible texts were the ones placed on the walls to provide general background information about each section. Additionally, some objects were described in labels placed next to them. There was a significant difference between the visibility of these two types of text: the wall texts were quite large, while the labels were written in a small font and often placed quite low, forcing especially adult visitors to bend down to read them (figure 12). This

difference created a distinction between general information and more specialized information, the acquisition of which required some physical exertion. This also speaks to the relationship between the artefacts and the labels, as almost all objects were placed higher and were thus easier to see. Again, the objects were prioritized over the interpretation the museum had made regarding them.

Figure 12: A visitor bending over to read the label providing information about the Sekhmet-statue.

The content of the texts, however, did not always follow this principle. As previously discussed, the complexity of ancient Egyptian history necessitates severe summarization in the context of a museum exhibition. Meri explained that during the 3000 year-period, there was no unified culture:

"— *many people are like," Yeah, Tutankhamon was like this, so that means that Cleopatra was like that and the pyramids like that", and actually all of these live a thousand years apart from each other. So no, it's no longer the same culture*."

-Mia Meri 2020

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The wall texts in Amos Rex seldom reflected this Egyptological complexity. For instance, the wall text introducing the section entitled "In the Kingdom of Osiris" began with the claim that ancient Egyptians believed in the afterlife due to their love for life. This claim implies a unified and shared emotional basis for a highly complex belief system and a set of funerary practices which saw several changes over the millennia (Cooney 2011). This was an example of processes of selection and omission which are often an inherent part of curation (Hooper-Greenhill 1992: 6.). In these instances, the museum's interpretation was visually presented as authoritative, and its limitations were seldom discussed.

The Gallery Guide was another interpretive/educative device used in the Egypt of Glory exhibition. Within it were texts providing further information about each of its themes. The theme of relating ancient Egyptian life to the visitors can be observed in these texts. For example, pages 16 – 17 discuss the theme Gods and Religion represented by Sekhmet (figure 13). The text highlights the things which mortals and gods have in common: loving, hating, making mistakes, crying, et cetera. Furthermore, all the characters are introduced according to a list of attributes (name, age, home, hobbies, etc.) much like a profile on a website. The rhetoric is also rather tongue-in-cheek, thus closing the gap between ancient gods and modern mortals even further.
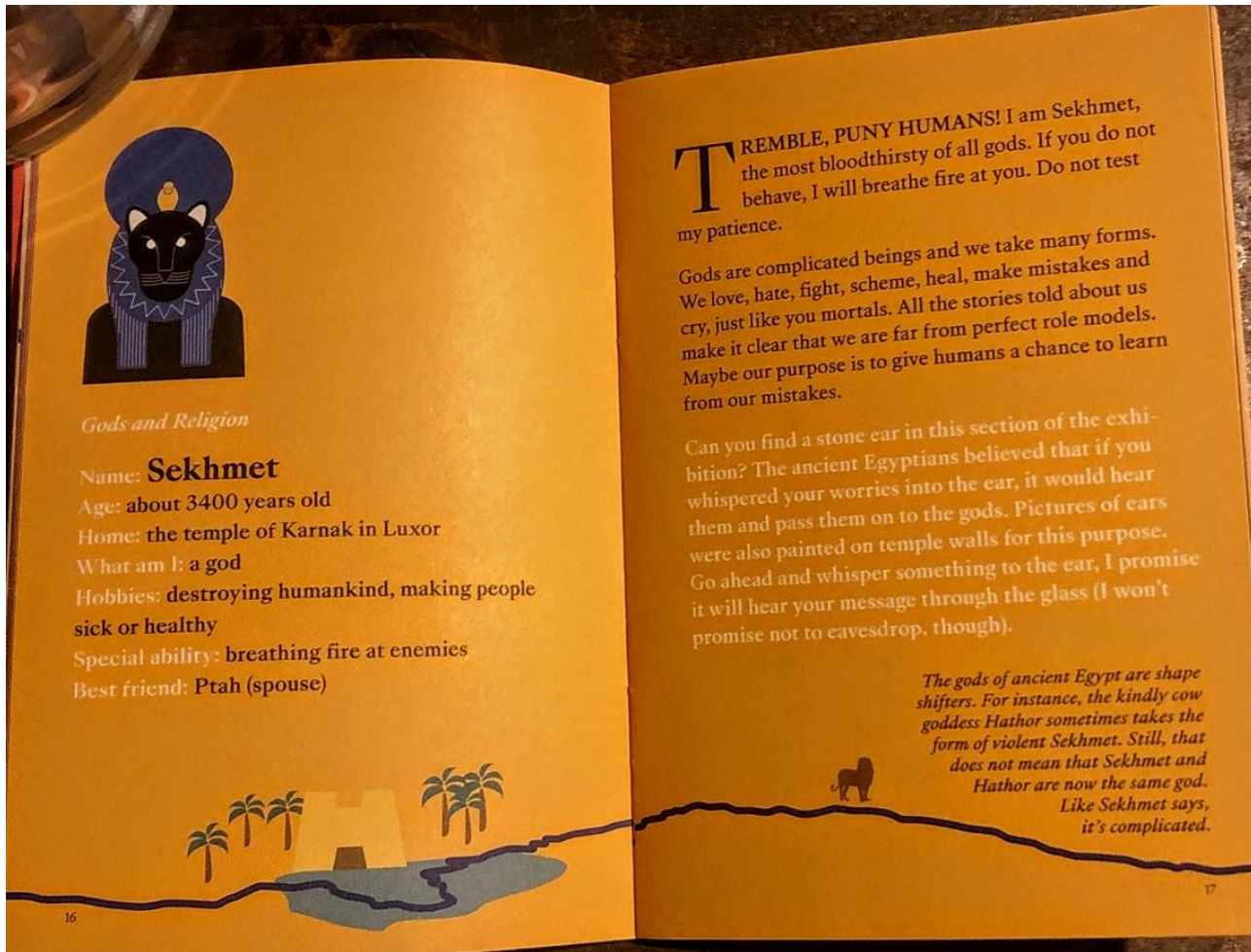
Figure 13: A page of the Gallery Guide featuring the section Gods and Religion represented by Sekhmet.

The exhibition also communicated its narrative not only through displays and texts, but also via omissions and silences. The exhibition made little mention of some of the most popular "characters" of ancient Egypt, such as Cleopatra and Tutankhamon. Instead of placing emphasis on the archetypes of ancient Egypt which continue to dominate the modern Western imagination, the Egypt of Glory focused on a broader telling of ancient Egyptian history. (Dobson & Tonks 2020: 183 – 197; 229 – 248; 127 – 144) This choice was conducive to the goal of highlighting ordinary people's lives and demystifying ancient Egypt; there was much more to ancient Egypt than its legendary rulers.

In summary, the exhibitionary and educational practices implemented in the Egypt of Glory exhibition were designed to support the objective of rejecting colonialist and orientalist

traditions of presenting and interpreting ancient Egypt. Based on the interviews with staff members as well as observations made of the gallery space, I surmise that the intention was to build an exhibition telling the story of a period of 3000 years of diverse human life and death that does not differ so much from our own.

> " -- that people would understand that they have such a long common history which comes from 3000 BC, and so many things from there have made their way to us, that all kinds of dichotomization is silly and unnecessary because in different parts of Europe and different continents, all of us draw things from Egypt."
>
> -Teijamari Jyrkkiö 2020

This may have been the narrative the staff of Amos Rex created in the exhibition. However, this is not to say that it was necessarily what visitors came away with. In the next section, I will use the Contextual Model of Learning and the Object Knowledge Framework to analyze how the visitors' interactions with the content of the exhibition influenced their experiences and learning.

5.2. Analysis of Visitor Experiences

The responses to the questionnaires gathered in this study demonstrate that for most respondents, changes occurred in their perceptions of ancient Egypt. In other words, most participants learned something new from the exhibition. Specifically, many respondents reported having learned about the mummification of animals as well as ancient Egyptian religious beliefs and practices. The primarily quantitative and surface-level data provided by the questionnaires may contribute to a general understanding of whether learning occurred among the visitors to the Egypt of Glory exhibition. However, this thesis is aimed at examining museum learning more profoundly. This requires analysis of the totality of a visitor experience.

The learning which took place in the Egypt of Glory -exhibition among the visitors I observed and interviewed could be categorized as free-choice learning. As previously described, the visitors moved through the exhibition guided by their own interests, focused on some things more than others, and remembered the things that had interested them the most. Their

experiences were, however, curtailed by the contents and design of the exhibition: cues in the architecture, such as tall walls, hallways, and signs influenced their movements. Moreover, they could only engage with information presented and edited by museum staff.

To effectively discuss these experiences, I will utilize the Contextual Model of Learning (Falk & Dierking 2012) to dissect and analyze the totality of the visitor experience. To delve deeper into the interaction between the visitors and the content of the museum, I will employ the Object Knowledge Framework (Wood & Latham 2014). This approach will allow me to examine the visitor's role in the knowledge construction process.

Let us now examine the visit of the group described in section 4.4. through the lens of the Contextual Model of Learning. In the Contextual Model of Learning, the personal context of a museum visit consists of a visitor's interests, prior knowledge, and motivations for visiting (Falk & Dierking 2012: 27). The participants of the group I observed and interviewed all reported visiting museums casually a few times a year especially when they are travelling abroad. Furthermore, they had all visited Amos Rex before, and especially Nina stated that due to positive prior experiences, she expected the museum to portray ancient Egypt well. Kirsi, however, reported feeling a bit apprehensive as she usually finds object-centered historical exhibitions tiresome. For Maria, a key visitation motivation was to spend time with her friends, as she stated that she would not have visited if Nina had not arranged the outing. When it comes to prior knowledge of ancient Egypt, the participants had plenty of related preconceptions and associations. Notably, all group members reported starting to learn about ancient Egypt in elementary school. Therefore, they had formed a connection to ancient Egypt at a young age which seemed to have a persisting influence. When asked about what they thought when they heard the words "ancient Egypt", the very first thing that was said was:

> "*Cleopatra. She was such a character for me as a child.*"
> -Maria 2020

As previously discussed, the members of the group had other preconceptions about ancient Egypt related to technological advancement and slavery, to name a few. This prior knowledge influenced what the participants focused on during their visit. More notably, it had an effect on what they remembered afterwards. Even though I observed the group looking through the exhibition quite diligently especially in the beginning, their post-visit interview reflected a

high degree of selectivity regarding what they actually had paid attention to. Nina's statement about mainly having focused on what she already knew or conversely on what was completely new, emphasizes this point. Their interests and preferences also had an effect on their visitor experience. Kirsi, who preferred art exhibitions to historical ones, reported feeling fatigued and having had a hard time staying interested in the exhibition. Prior experiences visiting museums in general, and Amos Rex more specifically, also influenced their evaluations of the accuracy of information in the exhibition. The participants' trust in Finnish museums and in Amos Rex in particular contributed to them evaluating the information presented as being truthful.

The sociocultural context refers to the visitor's cultural background as well as the social interactions which occur during the visit. (Falk & Dierking 2012: 27 – 28). The group's visit featured heavy internal social interactions, as the members discussed the exhibition with each other, asked questions, joked around, and made plans for after the visit. Notably, the presence of other visitors also influenced their visitor experiences. Maria mentioned that the crowdedness of the gallery hindered the flow of the visit and forced her to go back and forth between displays to ensure she saw everything. This meant that instead of following her own interests or preferences, she had to chase an empty space that would allow her to see the objects. Nina also stated that at times she felt that she could not stay to look at an object for too long so as not to block other visitors.

The physical context encompasses the material aspects of the museum (Falk & Dierking 2012: 28 – 29). This may influence the ways in which visitors move in the gallery and therefore may have an effect on what visitors can see and pay attention to. For example, the low placement of the labels in the Egypt of Glory exhibition at times hindered visitors' ability to read them, thus creating a limitation on what they could learn. The physical context of the group I observed influenced the direction of movement in the exhibition and therefore the order in which they saw the exhibition. A direct effect of this was that towards the end of their visit, they no longer had the energy or interest to pay as much attention to the information as they did in the beginning. Both Nina and Kirsi described the exhibition as being very long and heavy on the details, which resulted in them feeling depleted at the end of it. The sheer quantity of objects and detail actually made it harder to maintain interest in the information on display.

The texts are also regarded as a part of the physical context of a museum visit (Falk & Dierking 2012: 116 – 118). The group reported finding the wall texts beneficial, as they were the appropriate length and size to understand the historical context of the objects on display. Both Kirsi and Maria stated that without the texts, the exhibition would not have been comprehensible. To Nina, the texts functioned well in establishing and defining the themes of the exhibition.

To summarize, the members of the group each had their own motivations for visiting, expectations for the exhibition, as well as prior knowledge and experience regarding its topic. This had a considerable impact on what they latched onto in the exhibition and on what they remembered afterwards. Mummified cats were remembered due to their novelty, and the absence of the topic of slavery was questioned due to previously acquired ideas of ancient Egyptian society. The physical structures and objects determined the range of options of what the group could see in the gallery and how they were able to move through it. However, their movement and trajectories were also influenced by the level of crowdedness in the gallery. The experience, then, was a totality of multiple factors and variables and not just a result of the selections and decisions made by the staff. In the next section, I will delve deeper into the intersection of the information presented in the exhibition and the visitors' individualized experience through the Object Knowledge Framework.

5.3. Fitting it all together – The Object Knowledge Framework

The Object Knowledge Framework consists of the objectworld and the lifeworld, the former referring to the objects in the exhibition and the latter to the visitor's experience and knowledge (Wood & Latham 2014: 41). In Amos Rex, the objectworld could be conceived of consisting of the objects and texts and their placement. For example, the thematic sectioning of the Egypt of Glory exhibition was an act of interpretation which created connections between otherwise disparate objects. A mummified cat placed in the Beauty in Daily Life section next to a pillow and some sandals became an example of a household pet. A similar object placed in the section entitled Sacred Animals produced connotations of religious customs and beliefs. The lifeworld, which is further divided into the individual dimension, the group dimension, and the material dimension, becomes visible in the visitor's behavior in and their considerations of the exhibition (Wood & Latham 2014: 48 – 54).

As an illustrative example of the use of this framework, I will discuss the section entitled Mummification and Burial Rituals. More specifically, I will examine the ways in which the mummies were presented and interpreted by the museum and how visitors reacted to this way of presenting. The exhibition featured three mummies placed in large glass cases in a semi-walled off space in the exhibition (the red circle in figure 1). The curators explained that due to the ethical dilemma presented by displaying real mummies, specific arrangements were necessary for ensuring a respectful environment. This is why the mummies were separated slightly from the rest of the exhibition. The need for respect also explains the choice to leave the space without a soundscape. The wall text placed next to the mummies also urged visitors to silent reflection. The objectworld, in this case, consisted of three mummies with a specific display strategy designed to communicate and encourage respect and reverence.

During my fieldwork, I noticed few visitors following this recommendation, as many of them commented on the displays just as they did in other sections of the exhibition. This was also true for Nina, Kirsi, and Maria, who discussed them openly, with Nina remarking upon how odd it was to see a real person's corpse in this way. This experience of feeling a sense of strangeness is an example of the individual dimension (Wood & Latham: 34). In contrast, Maria reported feeling surprised at the media attention the mummies had garnered:

> "I *actually was surprised there, that the cadavers had risen to the headlines in Helsingin Sanomat. I didn't think they were… I remember being in Berlin or was it London, there were mummies – without the wrappings, because they had been opened. And there wasn't any mention there either warning you that you were about to see them. I was surprised because they were quite… Nothing was showing there.*"
>
> -Maria 2020

Kirsi found the ethical questions posed by the museum interesting. She said that this way of presenting the mummies linked them to the visitors as viewers. These different reactions to the mummies showcase the unique nature of the individual dimension. Especially Maria's experience demonstrates the effects of the personal context, namely expectations and prior experiences, on the connection a visitor forms with an object.

The group dimension, which refers to shared, cultural aspects of knowledge, came into view especially in situations when the group made references to popular culture. Kirsi reflected on the prevalence of mummies in films, television series, and books:'

> "--- *"we also joked around a lot about the Mummy-film, and what I was thinking about before this, is that how in my childhood in all the series and books have dealt with, and probably "mummy" as a word is the most used popular culture theme from history."*
>
> -Kirsi 2020

Kirsi, along with the other group members, cited popular culture as having been influential in the way she conceptualized and thought about ancient Egypt. In the Egypt of Glory exhibition, these perceptions came into contact with the information provided by and the interpretations made by the museum staff.

The material dimension consists of the physical context of the gallery, specifically the characteristics of the objects within it. Importantly, it also encompasses the sensory experience which results in the creation of meaning (Wood & Latham 2014: 53 – 54). When interacting with the mummies in the Egypt of Glory exhibition, the only sensory experience available was to look at them. However, this was enough for Kirsi to expand her perception of mummification. She reported later that she had believed mummification to be the privilege of the rich. Upon seeing a mummy of lesser quality next to a well-preserved one, she came to understand that mummification was a broader practice which was also available to less wealthy members of society.

The intersection of the objectworld of the Mummification and Burial Rituals -section and the lifeworlds of the group resulted in some kind of learning or expansion of prior perceptions for all of the participants. The museum had positioned the mummies as something which should incite respect and reverence as well as ethical considerations. Instead of stopping to ponder upon their own mortality, the group members seemed to approach the mummies with fascination and enthusiasm to learn more about them. Before their visit, the group members talked about mummies more superficially and in the context of popular culture. After their visit, several members discussed learning more details about the mummification process, as can be seen in Kirsi's thoughts on the implications of social class on mummification.

When considering the objectworld of the exhibition in its entirety, similar tendencies emerge in the data. The principles and objectives of the curatorial and public-facing staff were directed to create a specific narrative for the exhibition, which formed the basis for its objectworld. However, the messages which interpretive decisions might have intended to send were often re-interpreted by the visitors according to their own lifeworld. Moreover, the visitors reacted strongly to not only what the exhibition contained, but also to what it did not: the silences of the exhibition were a notable source of discussion and at times, contention. To Nina, the near absence of well-known and popularized figures, such as Cleopatra, was a welcome approach:

> *"— I liked the fact that this gave equal attention to different themes and eras in a way that they didn't put on a pedestal these characters that have been popularized in Western countries, like Cleopatra and Tutankhamon and such, so I thought it [the exhibition] was interesting in its restraint."*

<div align="right">

-Nina 2020
</div>

Other silences, such as the one surrounding the topic of slavery, were met with suspicion and even rejection. From these accounts, it is evident that the objectworld contains within it silences and omissions which visitors often notice and take into account when forming their own interpretations. Of course, it would be counterproductive to place too much emphasis on recounting the all the silences of any museum exhibition, as they are always incomplete in some way. The omissions and absences I have discussed here were explored because they were brought up by staff members as well as by visitors. In this regard, these silences were ones that were "loud" and played roles in visitors' meaning making processes.

Upon reflecting on the exhibition as a whole, Nina stated that it had provided a broad view of ancient Egyptian culture, including everyday life, religion, and mystique. According to Katri, the exhibition had revolved around religion and gods. She stated that both the exhibition and ancient Egyptian society had been built entirely around gods and religion as the central driving force of the culture. These interpretations of the exhibition's central themes and narratives differ somewhat from what the staff might have intended. However, based on the theory of cultural production and my own observations, I would that this is by no means indicative of any kind of failure of communication, but an inherent facet of the cultural production process through which knowledge is constructed in a museum. As the objectworld of the museum collides with the lifeworld of the visitor, unique interpretations and narratives are created.

6. Conclusion

The central research objective of this thesis has been to identify the ways in which knowledge construction about ancient Egypt occurred at the Amos Rex Museum. More specifically, this thesis has examined the practices employed by the museum to construct and disseminate information through its educational and exhibitionary practices. The visitor's role in the knowledge production processes has also been considered.

The primary way Amos Rex categorized and presented information at the Egypt of Glory exhibition was through a thematic division of the exhibition into ten separate sections. These sections were used to create contexts for and connections between disparate objects to form a cohesive narrative. Interpretive devices, such as texts, labels and the Gallery Guide, were used to provide information that was appropriate for each theme. Inclusions and omissions of information were used to emphasize the lives of everyday people and the diversity of ancient Egyptian society and history. This method of presenting ancient Egypt or aspects of it stemmed from specific principles and the shared objectives of the staff. In general, the staff strove to create an exhibition about ancient Egypt which would avoid its mystification and carnivalization. By emphasizing the objects through their placement and lighting strategies, members of staff stated that they aimed to produce a respectful display scheme. Moreover, the information presented in the exhibition highlighted the vastness of the 3000-year period and was aimed to create a sense of shared humanity.

The exhibition is tied to broader discourses around the enduring impacts of colonialist paradigms as well as cultural appropriation. In the Egypt of Glory exhibition, these discourses were taken into consideration in the exhibition design and in guided tours and workshops. Furthermore, community engagement, namely the Egyptin varjo project, was used as a way to explore and reckon with the relationship between colonialism and museums. The exhibition design reflected the staff's goals to strip ancient Egypt of mysticism and relate ancient Egyptian society to that of our own. Issues arising from debates around the ethics of displaying mummies and repatriation were discussed especially by guides during guided tours. In these discussions, ancient Egyptian artefacts were often framed as globally shared cultural heritage which is best looked after and researched by museums. While this perspective may be

consistent with the exhibition's efforts to relate ancient Egyptian history to contemporary visitors, it is uncritical of the colonial relations which made many Western museums the keepers of ancient Egyptian culture in the first place (Barringer 1998). The relative one-sidedness of the museum's framing contrasts with its goal to present ancient Egyptian artifacts in a respectful way. Furthermore, the intention of creating a decolonizing display method did not always come through to visitors. One visitor interviewed in this study stated that the approach of the exhibition strongly resembled those he had seen before:

> *"-- it wasn't super fresh to me. It was a collection of ancient Egyptian artefacts, grouped by similarity to each other in rooms. I don't really know if it felt like a unique experience among the Ancient Egyptian exhibitions I've been to. -- Display boxes with tiny descriptions that you see in every museum in the world. Like, what in that was meant to be innovative? "*

> \- Seamus 2020

Despite the attempts to reckon with the legacy of colonialism, many of the display strategies, such as glass display cases, upheld traditional exhibitionary practices, which themselves are burdened with colonialist baggage (Ames 1992: 3 – 4). For a museum seeking to address the legacy of colonialism, it may not be sufficient to confine discussions about it to workshops and projects external to the physical exhibition. However, radical changes in display strategies present a formidable challenge to museums, as glass display cases also serve as protection for cultural heritage. The question remains: how can we challenge colonialist paradigms through a medium that has been forged in their flames?

In short, the Egypt of Glory exhibition presented information about ancient Egypt through thematic sections and specific display strategies, such as contrast-creating lighting practices, placing disparate objects close together, and textual contextualization. These strategies were intended to tell the story of a multi-faceted and expansive time period characterized by changes in politics, culture, religion, and everyday life. Issues related to colonialism, repatriation, and cultural appropriation were addressed in various degrees in the exhibition design and surrounding projects. However, visitors interviewed and observed in this study seldom interpreted the exhibition through these concepts.

The choices made by the staff regarding the exhibition design and interpretive devices determined the physical context of visitors' experiences. For instance, these choices influenced the ways in which the participants moved in and through the exhibition. Large wall texts often served as signposts for new sections, so visitors tended to follow them as they went through the exhibition. Factors of the social context, namely the level of crowdedness, also seemed to be a contributing factor for the sequence in which the visitors toured the exhibition, as they tended to favor more open spaces. This was compounded by the recommendations related to preventing the spread of COVID-19.

The physical context of a visit was also affected by lighting strategies. In Amos Rex, the darkness of the gallery contrasted by brightly lit objects was intended to highlight the significance of the objects "as they were" instead of the interpretation of the museum. However, the visitors I interviewed and observed found that the murky space made looking at objects and reading labels more difficult. Similar challenges were also caused by the placement of the texts and their relatively small font size. While this choice may have indeed placed more focus on the objects themselves rather than the texts, it did not necessarily serve the needs of the visitors with regard to learning.

The choices and actions of the staff also shaped the information that was available to the visitors. The curators and consulting Egyptologist had to make decisions regarding which versions of the vast and contested Egyptological record they would include in the exhibition. To visitors, this process is largely invisible, though the visitors interviewed were largely aware of the nuanced nature of information regarding ancient Egypt. This awareness was also visible in the questionnaire data, as there was no clear consensus on the level of "truthfulness" of the information in the exhibition. In any case, a visitor's personal context and lifeworld were crucial in determining how they interpreted the information they were presented with. Due to the flexibility afforded by the free-choice learning environment of the Egypt of Glory exhibition, its visitors were able to let their interests, needs, and previous experiences guide their learning. For the visitors interviewed in this study, this resulted in a process of selection on their part, in which some pieces of information were incorporated into pre-existing knowledge frameworks, while others were questioned and rejected. In general, changes in perceptions of ancient Egypt did occur, but on the visitors' terms.

Even though the visitors discussed in this thesis reported learning new things based on the information presented by the museum, this learning was not a process of complete absorption of information. Within the confines of the exhibition, the visitors themselves actively selected what they wanted to focus on and what they were interested in. Their previous experiences and knowledge also influenced how they interacted with the presentations and interpretations of ancient Egypt made by the museum. This resulted in knowledge that was a combination of the objectworld of the exhibition and the lifeworlds of the visitors. From this, it follows that the role of the visitor in the knowledge construction process is that of an interpreter or co-constructor, but never a passive recipient.

In conclusion, knowledge about ancient Egypt was constructed at the Glory of Egypt exhibition in the interaction between the objectworld of the exhibition and the lifeworld of the visitor. This indicates that there is no single narrative or a uniform knowledge which emerged from the exhibition, as these interactions are unique and highly individualized. From this perspective, a museum becomes a site for cultural production in which various knowledges are constructed in a collaborative and interactive processes. The responsibility of a museum is still recognized within this framework, as it determines and limits the available information and interprets it from a position of institutional power.

Though this thesis has strived for a multi-faceted account of the interactions between an exhibition and its visitors, it has some consequential limitations. Firstly, older visitors were entirely excluded from interview data despite the exhibition being quite popular with older generations. Their perspective might have proven insightful for understanding how visitors with more extensive life-experience interacted with the exhibition. Furthermore, the study is limited to a relatively short observational window. More longitudinal research would be beneficial for exploring ways in which the passing of time influences visitors' memories and interpretations of the exhibition as well as its topic. These limitations might serve as inspiration for future research.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Themes of the Questionnaires

1. Demographic Questions (age, gender)
2. Multiple-choice questions related to visitation motivations (Why did you visit the museum?)
3. Statements regarding the content of the exhibition with response options ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree
4. Open-ended questions regarding the visitor experiences and opinions. (What was your favorite/least favorite part of the exhibition?)

Appendix 2: Interview Structure for Staff Members

1. Please describe your position at Amos Rex.
    a. What kinds of tasks do you have?
    b. What do you consider as the primary goal of your work?
2. Could you tell me about the Egypt of Glory exhibition?
    a. What was the exhibition production process like?
    b. How and why was the topic of ancient Egypt selected?
    c. What were the successes and failures of the process?
3. Can you tell me about the museum's collaboration with external institutions or organizations?
4. What is your relationship like with the visitors of the museum?
5. What is the most important thing you wish for the visitors to learn from the exhibition and why?
6. Has COVID-19 affected the exhibition process?

Appendix 3: Interview Structure for Visitors Before the Visit

1. Do you visit museums often?
2. Have you visited Amos Rex before?
3. Do you have expectations for your visit?
4. What comes to mind when you think of ancient Egypt? (mind map)

Appendix 4: Interview Structure for Visitors After the Visit

1. Why did you decide to visit Amos Rex?
2. Could you describe your visit?
   a. What do you remember about the exhibit?
3. What did you like/dislike about the exhibition?
4. Do you think the exhibition changed your perceptions of ancient Egypt?
5. Do you think the information presented in the exhibition was true and accurate?
6. What comes to mind when you think of ancient Egypt now, after the visit? (mind map revision)

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