

**RETHINKING PRACTICE: A GUIDE TO DESIGNING VISITOR-CENTERED
EXPERIENCES IN ART EXHIBITIONS**

by
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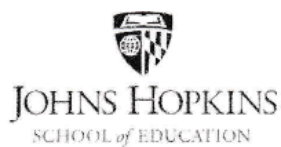
Abstract

Art exhibitions are informal learning environments that offer visitors wide-ranging possibilities for meaningful engagement with the arts. However, art exhibitions have been associated with social and cultural exclusion as specialized language in exhibition texts and labels may pose barriers to visitors unfamiliar with the art world. Through a multi-method approach, an empirical study was conducted to understand visitors' perceptions of their experience at an art exhibition in Guatemala City and the role of museum texts and labels. Findings revealed participants ($n = 13$) described their experience as connected to reflection, aesthetic appreciation, and peacefulness. The art exhibition had two types of labels. Participants perceived exhibition texts and labels both as too intellectual and oversimplified. Informed by an exploration of the literature focused on designing art exhibitions for specific purposes, this dissertation developed a guide for practice containing a framework for critical reflection, research-informed practice, and collaborative inquiry. The guide's purpose is to support practitioners by offering a tool to reflect on their work and consider the visitor as central to the process of designing an art exhibition.

Keywords: art exhibitions, visitor experience, art exhibition signage, informal learning, critical reflection, research-informed practice, collaborative inquiry

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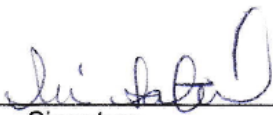

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother for her unrelenting support. It is also dedicated to *all* art exhibition visitors and designers—may we find ways to flourish through the arts.

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Executive Summary

Art exhibitions can offer individuals many different possibilities for experiencing the arts. From lifelong learning (Carr, 1992; J. H. Falk & Dierking, 2016; Ritchhart, 2007) to well-being and connection (Cotter & Pawelski, 2022), there are many benefits to visiting an art exhibition (Binnie, 2010; Carr, 1992; Cotter & Pawelski, 2022; Ritchhart, 2007). However, systemic barriers prevent some visitors from meaningfully engaging with the art on display at art exhibitions. The association between art exhibitions and social and cultural exclusion (Jensen, 2013) posits that visitors tend to be highly educated and have high incomes (Bourdieu et al., 1991; M. Falk & Katz-Gerro, 2016; Jung, 2012; Suarez-Fernandez et al., 2020). Curatorial practices, such as the use of language and design in texts and labels, may contribute to the visitor experience and perpetuate the exclusion of those unfamiliar with the art world (Bennet, 2019; Blunden, 2020; Coffee, 2008; Lachapelle, 2007).

An examination of the different systems related to visitors' experience at an art exhibition using Bronfenbrenner's (1994) ecological systems theory shed light on the different factors related to visitor experience at an art exhibition. Especially important to this study was the idea that traditional curatorial practice through the use of language in museum texts and labels may pose barriers to meaningful engagement in the arts (Bennet, 2019; Blunden, 2020; Coffee, 2008; Lachapelle, 2007). Additionally, many studies have focused on the empirical examination of aesthetic experiences (Bao et al., 2016; Kirchberg & Tröndle, 2015; Tröndle & Tschacher, 2016), and researchers have argued for the need to examine the multifaceted nature of visitor experience in different contexts (J. H. Falk, 2005; Packer et al., 2018; Packer & Ballantyne, 2016; Pekarik et al., 1999).

The empirical study in this dissertation took place in Galería Abierta, an art exhibition featuring the work of local emerging artists in Guatemala City. The purpose of the study was to explore the visitor experience at an art exhibition and examine if and how the perception of museum labels relates to that experience. Through a multi-method research approach and with a sample size of nineteen participants, data collection took place using one researcher-compiled survey and non-participant observations to understand the constructs of visitor experience, art exhibition signage, and demographic and contextual characteristics of visitors. Findings from the need assessment study revealed that most visitors reported experiencing reflective engagement and aesthetic appreciation for the works of art. Findings also revealed that participants visit art exhibitions because they are interested in the art and tend to read all or most of the content of the texts and labels on display. An interesting finding was that visitors perceived labels as both too intellectual and oversimplified, which calls for more studies to examine the content of labels in more detail.

A second literature review examined research that supports visitor experience through evidence-based practices to foster inclusion for all visitors. Art exhibition designers at the Arts Education and Culture Department (AECD) of the Municipality of Guatemala have the opportunity to create evidence-based programs to fulfill the mission of the institution of offering visitors cultural activities that promote flourishing (Cotter & Pawelski, 2022). To offer the art exhibition team at the AECD, the final chapter of this dissertation presents the development of a guide for practice with a set of recommendations for the art exhibition team in the AECD of the Municipality of Guatemala. The guide bridges research and practice through a framework for critical reflection, research-informed practice, and collaborative inquiry. The guide offers the art

exhibition team a practical way to rethink current practices and consider placing the visitor in the center of designing an art exhibition (Mayer, 2005).

Chapter 1

Understanding Visitors' Experiences at an Art Exhibition

Public spaces are an important part of cities that have the potential to enable community-building and support social connection (Latham & Layton, 2019). Cultural institutions, such as museums and art galleries, are a part of the social infrastructure of cities that facilitate human connection (Carr, 1992; Latham & Layton, 2019). Infrastructure in a city refers to the basic fabric that supports, in this case, social and cultural life (Latham & Layton, 2019).

As part of a city's social and cultural infrastructure, art exhibitions are complex systems (Cabrera & Cabrera, 2015), offering individuals a wide range of possibilities for experiencing the arts. From supporting lifelong learning (Carr, 1992; J. H. Falk & Dierking, 2016; Ritchhart, 2007) to promoting well-being and connection (Cotter & Pawelski, 2022), the benefits of visiting art exhibitions are wide-ranging and have been well-documented (Binnie, 2010; Carr, 1992; Ritchhart, 2007; Cotter & Pawelski, 2022). However, systemic barriers prevent some visitors from meaningfully engaging with the art on display at art exhibitions.

Art exhibitions have historically been associated with social and cultural exclusion (Jensen, 2013); visitors tend to be highly educated and have high incomes (Bourdieu et al., 1991; M. Falk & Katz-Gerro, 2016; Jung, 2014; Suarez-Fernandez et al., 2020). Traditional practices in art exhibitions, such as the use of language and design in texts and labels, may contribute to the visitor experience and perpetuate excluding those unfamiliar with the art world (Bennett, 2019; Blunden, 2020; Coffee, 2007; Lachapelle, 2007). Art museum and exhibition administrators and curators are, in most cases, visual arts experts and assume that “art historical and philosophical approaches are the only ways to respond intelligently to a work of art” (Lachapelle, 2007, p.

123). This bias may translate into a professional practices that unknowingly further perpetuate exclusion.

This chapter examines factors associated with visitors' experiences at an art exhibition. It also looks at the systems and practices that prevent visitors from meaningfully engaging with the art on display. First, the chapter describes the problem of visitor experience in the context of museum exhibits and defines the major terms in this work. Then, the chapter explains the theoretical framework that organizes the factors associated with the problem of practice. Bronfenbrenner's (1994) ecological systems theory guides the organization of the contributing factors. Finally, Chapter 1 concludes with a rationale behind the choice of factors used to guide the empirical study described in Chapter 2.

Problem of Practice

Art exhibitions are informal learning environments for a broad range of individuals to obtain meaningful learning experiences through the arts (J. H. Falk & Dierking, 2016; Ritchhart, 2007). Exhibitions also offer the opportunity to connect with others and promote wellbeing (Jensen, 2013). Unfortunately, attendance at art exhibitions has historically been associated with higher levels of education and wealth (Bordieu et al., 1991; M. Falk & Katz-Gerro, 2016; Jung, 2014; Notten et al., 2015; Suarez-Fernandez et al., 2020), making art exhibition spaces susceptible of social and cultural exclusion (Jensen, 2013). In Guatemala City, municipal public art exhibitions are one of the few ways to offer arts programs to a broader population (Ministerio de Educación, 2017; Municipalidad de Guatemala, 2021).

The Arts Education and Culture Department of the Municipality of Guatemala (AECD) is a branch of local government that aims to offer community members meaningful ways of engaging with the arts (Municipalidad de Guatemala, 2021). One of the many goals of the AECD

is to offer members of Guatemala City opportunities for excellent education through the arts as well as meaningful ways of engaging with art (Municipalidad de Guatemala, 2021). Free public art exhibitions are one way the AECD hopes to achieve this aim. Although efforts are being made to design educational programs that connect audiences with these public exhibitions, the extent to which these programs achieve a learning experience or reach out to a broad public remains unclear. In Guatemala City, this problem gains relevance because the art exhibitions examined in this study are publicly funded, and the city's local government handles creating educational programs through the arts that benefit the community they serve.

Local government has important ties to the public art of cities (Johanson, Kershaw, et al., 2014). Through cultural policy and the funding of local arts programs, local governments support spaces where artistic and cultural programs can flourish, offering community members opportunities for social connection (Cotter & Pawelski, 2022; Johanson, Kershaw, et al., 2014). Attending art exhibitions allows visitors to stimulate cognition and creativity, fostering their mental well-being (Cotter & Pawelski, 2022; Finlay et al., 2021). This study focuses on visitors and their experiences of an art exhibition at the AECD. The following section operationalizes the construct of visitor experience for this study.

In art exhibitions, the term *visitor experience* describes an individual's response to an art exhibition (Mayer, 2005; Packer et al., 2018; Tröndle & Tschacher, 2016). The nature of this response is complex, and the possible dimensions that come into play are primarily related to aesthetics, cognition, introspection, and social connection (Packer et al., 2018; Pekarik et al., 2010; Tröndle & Tschacher, 2016). Pekarik et al. (2010) described aesthetic experiences as those related to appreciating beauty through the experience of the art on display. Cognitive experiences relate to knowledge and understanding (Pekarik et al., 2010). Introspective experiences

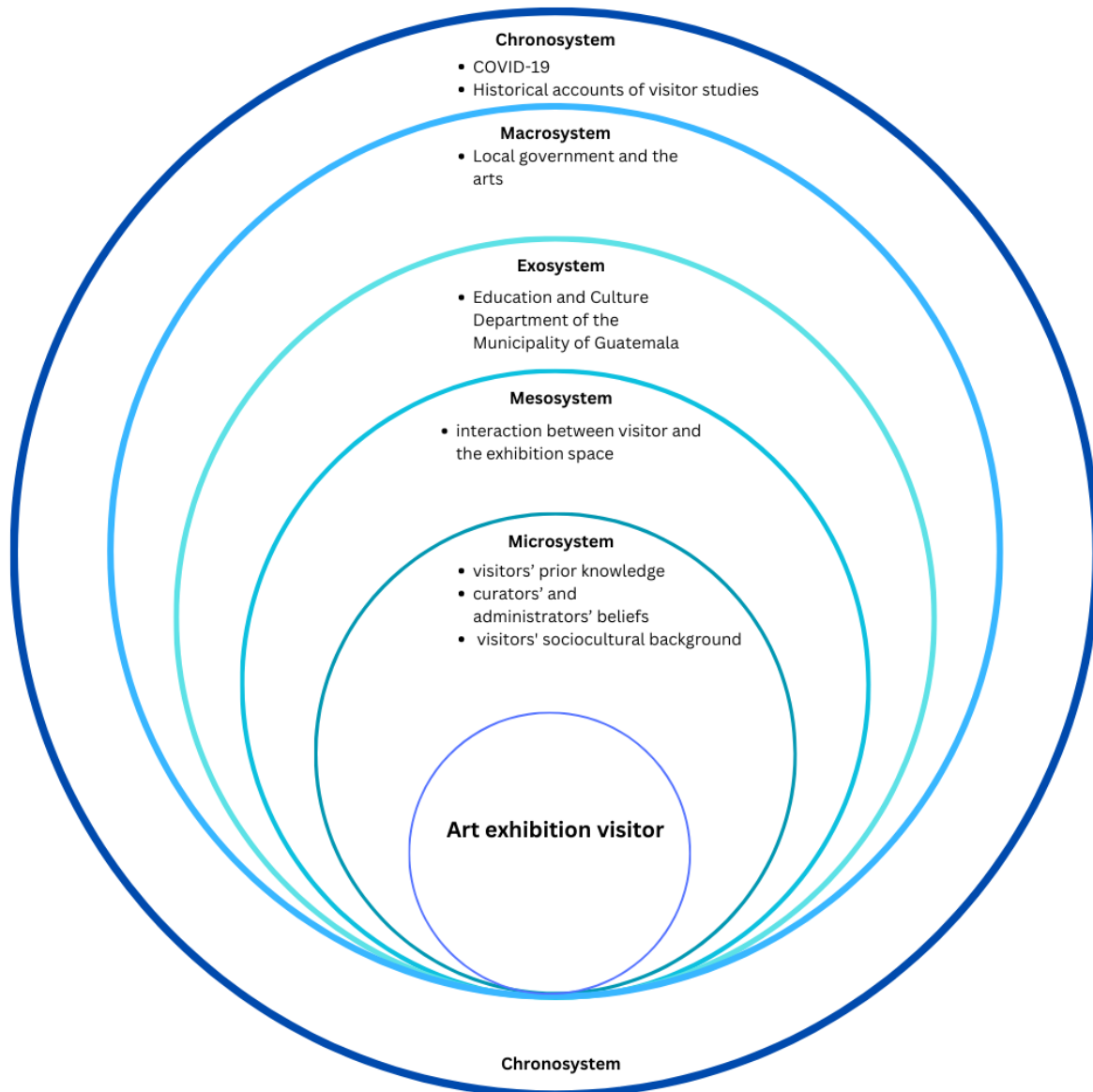
encompass reflection, imagination, memory, and connection (Pekarik et al., 2010). Social experiences are about an individual's interactions with others at an exhibition (Pekarik et al., 2010). Although the list is not exhaustive, it serves as a guide to the literature reviewed for the construct of visitor experience.

Theoretical Framework

This study uses Bronfenbrenner's (1994) ecological systems theory to organize the literature associated with visitor experience at an art exhibition. The literature review will focus on factors associated with the institutions of the art world connected to the visitor and the practices that play a role in the visitor's art-viewing experience. This section will also address the historical trends that have shaped those institutions and highlight changes over time. Figure 1.1 represents Bronfenbrenner's (1994) model with the visitor to an art exhibition as the focal individual.

Figure 1.1

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Model



Bronfenbrenner (1994) proposed an ecological model for understanding human development. The model explains how different environments interact and impact the development of the focal individual. The theory rests on two propositions (Bronfenbrenner,

1994). The first proposition states that the processes that impact human development interact reciprocally between the individual and the environment in increasingly complex ways.

Bronfenbrenner (1994) defined these as “proximal processes” (p. 1644), entailing regular forms of interaction that occur over a long period. The second proposition is that the way these proximal processes impact the individual’s development depends on the person’s features, the environment, and developmental outcomes (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). In this study, the focal individual is the visitor to an art exhibition, the immediate environment is the exhibition space, and the developmental outcomes are the visitor’s experiences at the exhibition space.

Critical to Bronfenbrenner’s (1994) model is the environment. The ecological model considers environments as nested structures that move outward from the focal individual. The immediate environment around the focal individual is the microsystem. In this study, the microsystem is the art exhibition experienced by the visitor. This microsystem includes the visitors’ prior knowledge and curators’ and administrators’ beliefs about the connection between art exhibitions and visitors’ experiences and the affordances at the exhibition space (Gee, 2008). Other microsystems—like an individual’s family, workplace, or school—might influence their experience within an art exhibition, but they are outside this research’s scope.

Within Bronfenbrenner’s (1994) model, a mesosystem describes the relationship between two microsystems. In this study, the mesosystem describes the interaction between visitors and the exhibition space created by curators and developers. The mesosystem is included in the diagram; however, because this system highlights the interaction between the microsystems, it does not have a section in the literature review of this chapter.

The next system in the model is the exosystem. The exosystem describes the activities and interactions between two settings, one of which does not include the focal individual. The

AECD of the Municipality of Guatemala is a setting that does not include the focal but indirectly affects the visitor experience of the art exhibitions it organizes.

The macrosystem encompasses the other systems described above. It includes ideologies and permeates the interactions of all that is beneath it. This system explores the role of local government or municipality concerning the arts, cultural policies, and arts management.

The chronosystem illustrates the impact of time on the different environments and the individual. The chronosystemic factors considered in this study are related to the historical account of visitor studies (Schiele, 2016), highlighting the changes in perspective about the role of the visitor at art exhibitions (Mayer, 2005). This system includes the recent attention to the link between the arts and well-being and the impact of the COVID-19 global pandemic on the museum viewing experience.

Chronosystem Factors

A Historical Account of the Visitor Experience

Gilman (1916) provided one of the first accounts of the visitor experience in a museum setting (Schiele, 2016). Gilman (1916) studied the physical display of objects and how the standard display modes impacted the visitor's experience. Gilman (1916) identified that the usual modes of display demand the visitor great physical exertion, causing what they termed museum fatigue through photographs and a series of questions asked to one observer "with good eye-sight, and well accustomed to museums and their contexts" (p. 62). The purpose of Gilman's (1916) empirical examination aimed to offer a critical analysis to rethink the display of objects so that museums could make the visit more comfortable. Even if Gilman's efforts were directed toward the visitor's physical experience, it is one of the first accounts where the visitor became

the subject of inquiry in the museum setting. According to Schiele (2016), Gilman's (1916) work is the starting point of visitor studies as a field of inquiry.

Museums as Spaces for Learning

In the context of the United States, the idea that museums are spaces for learning emerged around the mid-19th century (Schiele, 2016). The link between museums and education for the local population came about due to the large immigration waves that needed more spaces for learning (Schiele, 2016). As informal learning environments, museums started offering different programs to schools and the public (Schiele, 2016). Despite efforts to open their doors to a broader population, museums were still linked to the elites with little connection to the wider public (Schiele, 2016). It was not until the 1960s that museums were strongly defined as educational spaces and crucial players in the local community (Schiele, 2016).

The Changing Role of Museum Educators

In *A Postmodern Puzzle: Rewriting the Place of the Visitor in Art Museum Education*, Mayer (2005) offered a historical analysis of how the perceptions of museum educators have changed regarding the role of the visitor in interpreting artworks. Mayer described how, until the 1980s, positions of art museum educators had been held mostly by art historians. Therefore, what was being taught came directly from their discipline. In modernist art, historical interpretation, the artist's intention, and formal analysis of the work are the focus of meaning-making. Thus, visual literacy was at the forefront of the museums' educational efforts. Within art history, visual communication or visual literacy refers to the skills related to formally reading a work of art. It requires the viewer to formally describe, analyze, interpret, and evaluate the work of art through a disciplinary lens (Rice, 1988). This definition of visual literacy requires art historical disciplinary skills and knowledge of experienced viewers (Lachapelle, 2007).

From the 1970s to the 1990s, the discipline of art history shifted from the idea of one art history to new art history by expanding its methods to include Marxism, feminism, psychoanalysis, and critical theory (Mayer, 2005, p. 356). These changes impacted the notion of interpretation, which meant that meaning came more from the observer than the work of art. These changes in theory slowly entered practice.

Until the 1960s, museum education aimed to transmit knowledge about the works on display. From the early 1970s onwards, museums remained influenced by social movements and started incorporating the ideas of psychology and pedagogy (Mayer, 2005). Still, the focus of educational programs used a narrow definition of visual literacy or learning to look and appreciate a work of art. By the 1980s, there were changes in the definition of visual literacy; now, meaning is at the intersection between the viewer, the work of art, and their contexts. In the 1990s, there was a shift from visual literacy to museum literacy (which was not a new concept), where the museum visitor became aware of the museum as an institution.

COVID-19 and the Museum Experience

The COVID-19 pandemic that had most cities worldwide under lockdown strongly impacted museums. To evaluate the impact of the measures to mitigate the spread of the virus, the International Council of Museums (ICOM, 2020a, 2020b, 2021) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2020) launched global surveys, parallel and independent of each other, and published their findings in four reports. UNESCO's (2020) report is a general overview of museum data and addresses different areas related to museum closures during the pandemic. The report estimates 95,000 museums worldwide, 60% more than in 2012. Interestingly, Latin America and the Caribbean, the geographical area of this study, represent 8.5% of the total museums in the world. According to the report, Guatemala has

between 11 to 25 museums. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Guatemala took measures for all the museums that remained closed for most of the pandemic.

According to UNESCO's (2020) report, museums across countries' main response to the pandemic was to create online activities using previously digitalized content, digitalized planned activities, and increased social media presence, among others. The AECD responded by digitalizing planned activities, specifically a cultural festival in the city center of Guatemala City, and increasing its online presence.

The ICOM (2020a, 2020b, 2021) created three global surveys to evaluate the impact of the pandemic over time. All surveys investigated museums at different points in time during the pandemic and covered five main areas. The first was about the current state of museums. The second was about the economic impact of the pandemic on museums. The third was an examination of the digital response of museums during the pandemic. The fourth was about issues related to conservation, the security of the works of art, and the pandemic's impact on freelance museum professionals (ICOM, 2020a, 2020b, 2021).

The first survey collected almost 1,600 responses across the world. Data collection occurred between April 7 and May 7, 2020, at the start of the pandemic. The main findings revealed that by April 2020, most museums were closed, they had increased their digital content and social media presence, and most staff worked from home. According to the survey, freelance museum professionals suffered the economic impact of the pandemic as they were temporarily out of work. Additionally, museums had to downsize, and many closed permanently (ICOM, 2020a). The conservatory efforts of museums continued during the pandemic; however, in regions such as Latin America and Africa, respondents evaluated the measures as insufficient.

The second survey was a follow-up to the first, and it investigated the ongoing impact of the pandemic on museums across the world. It was released in the fall of 2020 on September 7, and responses were collected between September 7 and October 18, 2020. The survey gathered almost 900 responses from museums across the world. However, responses were not evenly distributed across continents. The main findings revealed that museums continued to work on their digital content and social media presence 4 months after the first survey, with an increase of almost 50% from pre-pandemic times. Most museum professionals were back at work, some on-site and some remotely. According to the report, remote work was encouraged in Latin America, the Caribbean, and North America (ICOM, 2020b). Additionally, data revealed that many museums have permanently downsized. The conservation and security measures continued and even increased during this time (ICOM, 2020b).

The third survey occurred 1 year after the first, between April and May 2021, with 840 responses gathered from museums worldwide. ICOM's (2021) third report presented trends over time. Data revealed that the circumstances for museums had worsened by April and May 2021 in some regions of the world. While most museums in the African regions had opened by then, Europe and North America were starting to reopen. The local situation in Latin America was irregular.

In 2021, museums continued to enhance their digital content and online presence; however, because of the ongoing COVID-19 concerns and lockdowns in some regions of the world, there was a reduction in museum staff presence (ICOM, 2021). Moreover, the situation for freelance professionals had yet to recover from the initial impact of the pandemic on their work. Despite the restrictions, fewer museums faced permanent closure than the previous year. Security and conservation efforts continued during this time.

UNESCO's (2020) and ICOM's (2020a, 2020b, 2021) reports highlight the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on museums and museum professionals. UNESCO (2020) and ICOM (2020a, 2020b, 2021) showed how museums had to rethink their strategies to reach out to their visitors while navigating the uncertainties of the pandemic. It may be interesting to see if some measures adopted during pandemic times, such as increased digital content, have become a part of their operating model.

Macrosystem Factors

Local Government and the Arts

This study addresses how the AECD, a branch of local government, aims to offer community members meaningful experiences through the arts. One key component in this system is the field of cultural management and the arts administrators or cultural managers who make decisions about arts-related projects, budget allocation, and the institution's resources in general (De Vereaux, 2009). Studies regarding cultural management focus on different aspects of the field, from educational offerings in arts management (Smith, 2017), the discourse on practice (De Vereaux, 2009), and the complexities of measuring cultural outcomes in municipal government (Johanson, Glow, et al., 2014; Johanson, Kershaw, et al., 2014).

As a relatively new field of inquiry with less than a century of existence (De Vereaux, 2009), cultural management or arts administration is interdisciplinary. Cultural management borrows from many disciplines, including the social sciences, humanities, and the arts (De Vereaux, 2009). In addition, De Vereaux (2009) argued about the opportunity in the field to develop what the researcher calls "a discourse of practice" (p. 66), where practitioners could critically reflect on their current practice and adopt an inquiry stance to their work. De Vereaux (2009) explained that this critical examination of practice differs from a skills perspective, where

the discussion focuses on practical issues regarding grant writing, effective marketing, and other components of the work of a cultural manager. Instead, De Vereaux requested an ongoing reflective cycle (Wink, 2011) to examine the intersecting theory and practice critically.

Cultural Management Education

Regarding cultural management education, in a study about art administrators in municipal government, Smith (2017) found that many arts administrators with graduate-level studies in public administration did not have formal training in arts or cultural administration. The researcher further investigated the extent to which human resources managers in local government would be interested in hiring employees with arts and cultural management backgrounds and a deep understanding of the role of public art in a city (Smith, 2017). Smith (2017) also explored if human resources managers had basic knowledge about public art and its importance for the city. The researcher collected contact information for 587 cities in the United States with populations over 50,000 throughout the fall of 2014 and the spring of 2015. The questionnaire was administered using Google's survey tool. The link between this study and the city was the human resource director.

Although participants were personally recruited through convenient sampling (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017), responses were deidentified. Smith (2017) reported data from 190 responses, a 32% response rate. Findings from this study revealed that arts management is not widely offered in Master of Public Administration degree programs. Additionally, only 13% of human resources managers preferred an arts management specialization, in contrast to 34% who indicated that their preferred area of specialization is social policy, making it the most desired specialization in the survey.

Importantly, Smith (2017) noted that municipal administrators lack a thorough understating of the importance of public art in a city. In the Municipality of Guatemala's AECD context, cultural managers and arts administrators tend to be architects, art historians, or artists. Although the AECD is a branch of local government, professionals who pursue a degree or certification in public administration do so if they aim to work for the central government.

In terms of cultural policy, Johanson, Kershaw, et al. (2014) offered a comparative case study of four Australian local governments' cultural policies. Specifically, the researchers examined the differences in the definition of community participation in the arts and how each council measured this participation. To guide the study, Johanson, Kershaw, et al. (2014) referred to the critical literature on standardized public service performance measures connected to public participation in the arts. Johanson, Kershaw, et al. (2014) analyzed current arts and cultural policy and documents that outlined plans for the cultural sector. Additionally, the researchers conducted narrative interviews in 2011 and 2012 with the teams implementing cultural policy and plans. Johanson, Kershaw, et al. (2014) analyzed data using "Yin's (2009) explanation building iterative process" (p. 49). Each case was analyzed through the following themes: "approaches to arts participation within local government, the use of performance indicators to measure arts participation, and the benefits and limitations of these measurement systems" (Johanson, Kershaw, et al., 2014, p. 49).

Johanson, Kershaw, et al. (2014) found that of the four councils of the study, only one had a precise definition of participation. Still, the lack of definition in the other councils did not mean participation was not at the forefront of the cultural agenda. The authors found instead that the complexities of the community made it hard to clearly distinguish between practitioners, audience, and participants in the arts, preventing a clear definition of the concept of participation.

Additionally, measurement indicators had not been fully developed, and those that existed presented limitations in terms of use and validity. The authors primarily argued that local governments would benefit from a definition of arts participation. Johanson, Kershaw, et al. (2014) suggested councils should strive for a context-dependent definition to respond to the specific needs of the community it served.

Exosystem Factors

As the entity that organizes art exhibitions and other cultural activities in Guatemala City, the AECD of the Municipality of Guatemala influences the relationship between curators and the exhibition space. Although it is not directly in contact with the visitor, it influences the interactions between other systems and settings related to the focal individual of this study. Bronfenbrenner's (1994) model defines the AECD as the exosystem.

The Arts Education and Culture Department of the Municipality of Guatemala

This branch of local government aims to provide community members with educational and cultural activities that enrich their lives (Municipalidad de Guatemala, 2021). One way in which the AECD carries out its mission is through the organization of public art exhibitions that aim to provide a broad population with "rich experiences" (Wang & Yoon, 2013, p. 320). These art exhibitions draw a large and diverse audience. However, it is unclear how visitors perceive their experience and if learning is taking place.

A typical art exhibition shows works of art accompanied by a curatorial text and museum labels that contain the work's title, the artist's name, the dimensions of the work, and the date it was completed. These exhibitions are always temporary, with a typical duration of 4 weeks. When an art exhibition is part of a cultural festival, there may be a docent who guides a small group of visitors with children and shares general information about the works on display. In

short, the Municipality of Guatemala, through the AECD, allocates resources for programs directed at community enrichment through the arts. The AECD faces the challenges of creating (a) robust and effective programs that accomplish the mission of the AECD and (b) accountability measures.

Microsystem Factors

The microsystem first addresses curators' and administrators' beliefs about the connection between art exhibitions and the experience of visitors (Ginsburgh & Weyers, 2010; Lachapelle, 2007; Prottas, 2017). This section then examines the visitors' prior knowledge and its relationship to the experience of art (Bao et al., 2016; Bennett, 2019; Lachapelle, 2007; Suarez-Fernandez et al., 2020; Tröndle & Tschacher, 2016). The final section concerns the socioeconomic background of visitors and their experience at an art exhibition (Bourdieu et al., 1991; M. Falk & Katz-Gerro, 2016; Suarez-Fernandez et al., 2020).

Curators' and Administrators' Beliefs About the Connection Between Art Exhibitions and the Experience of Visitors

Many museum educators receive training as art historians (Prottas, 2017). Many art historians also become curators and administrators at art galleries and museums throughout their careers. Professional identity in any domain is informed by frames of reference (Mezirow, 1997) or mental models (Cabrera & Cabrera, 2015), which are structures shaped by past experiences that hold assumptions, inform meaning-making, and inform professional practice (Cabrera & Cabrera, 2015; Mezirow, 1997). In art history, the historical canon is a significant component that guides the works of art deemed essential to consider and make their way into educational programming (Prottas, 2017). Scholars and experts in the field usually decide which artists and artworks are granted canonical status (Ginsburgh & Weyers, 2010). The uncritical acceptance of

the canon as a given in the discipline has led curators, administrators, and educators to favor particular works over others for their programming without considering the potential benefits or challenges of that piece for programming goals (Prottas, 2017).

The view of museum professionals also informs how they perceive the experiences of adult visitors at an art museum (Lachapelle, 2007). This professional community tends to hold specific standards for museum visitors and describes their work as simplifying explanations for the non-expert viewer (Lachapelle, 2007). Curators and administrators may hold biases informed by their discipline that there is one specific way to look at art and must be informed by art history or philosophy for it to be right (Lachapelle, 2007).

Prior Knowledge and Visitor Experience

Prior knowledge is one factor that can potentially impact the type of experience a visitor has at an exhibition. Some empirical studies seeking to capture the elusive nature of an individual's experience in an art exhibition embrace the notion that the ability to appreciate a work of art adequately requires "artistic culture" (Bourdieu et al., 1991, p. 35). According to Bourdieu et al. (1991), artistic culture can be equated to prior knowledge determined by socioeconomic factors (Bourdieu et al., 1991; Eisner & Dobbs, 1988; M. Falk & Katz-Gerro, 2016; Jensen, 2013).

The widely cited work by Bourdieu et al. (1991), *The Love of Art: European Museums and Their Public*, originally published in French in 1969, entailed a large quantitative study about museum visitors throughout Europe. Bourdieu et al.'s (1991) findings led them to empirically establish the link between socioeconomic variables and art appreciation (M. Falk & Katz-Gerro, 2016; Jensen, 2013). Specifically, the argument is that prior knowledge and education, which are class-dependent, determine how a visitor to an art exhibition can decipher

and understand a work of art and, therefore, impact the aesthetic experience (Bourdieu et al., 1991).

Aesthetic experience is one dimension that has been widely researched concerning visiting an art exhibition (Augustin et al., 2012; Bao et al., 2016; Leder et al., 2004; Miller & Hübner, 2020; Tröndle & Tschacher, 2016). In a study about art affinity and its impact on reception, Tröndle and Tschacher (2016) empirically examined the assumption that “one does only experience and appreciate what one knows” (p. 74). The researchers explored how art affinity, a concept they associated with prior knowledge of the arts, influenced reception. Tröndle and Tschacher (2016) developed the “Art Affinity Index” (p. 74) to achieve this goal. Tröndle and Tschacher (2016) collected data from surveys and measuring devices to record how visitors approached the exhibition and their time looking at a painting. Tröndle and Tschacher found that art affinity only moderately influenced aesthetic appreciation and used five different aesthetic-emotional factors for the assessment. The researchers found that art affinity had a small influence on aesthetic appreciation as measured in the study and argued that aesthetic experiences are more dependent on sensitivity than knowledge (Tröndle & Tschacher, 2016).

To add complexity to Tröndle and Tschacher’s (2016) findings, Bao et al. (2016) investigated the dimension of culture in the art experience. To guide the quantitative study, Bao et al. (2016) asked, “Are different representations as expressed in typical traditional Chinese and Western paintings appreciated differently by people from different cultural groups?” (p. 3). Forty-six university students, ages 19 to 30, participated. Half were Chinese university students (nine males and 14 females); the other half were international students from Western countries (United States, Canada, and Europe, with 15 males and eight females). Participants were shown 60 traditional Chinese paintings and 60 Western classicist paintings, either landscapes or scenes

with people. Pictures were shown only once in random order, and participants rated the beauty of each on an 8-point Scale, with 8 representing *very beautiful*. Data analysis was carried out using a three-factor analysis of variance (ANOVA). The two within-subject variables were cultural style (Chinese vs. Western Painting) and pictorial subject. The one between-subjects variable was the participant group (Chinese vs. Westerner). Findings showed that participants preferred images belonging to their culture. Bao et al. (2016) suggested that this finding related to identity and how the pictures from different cultures elicited states of belonging or involvement in participants of those cultures. However, the other important finding was that participants from both cultures preferred landscapes to scenes with people, indicating a universal preference regarding what visitors perceived as beautiful.

In addressing prior knowledge, Bennett (2019) explained that the literature on how it might impact the visitor experience was unclear. Visitors with prior knowledge seemed to agree that explanatory texts and labels were less relevant to the experience (Bennett, 2019). However, visitors with less experience in the art world actively look for cues to understand the art on display (Bennett, 2019). The cues to increase understanding at an art exhibition are what Eisner and Dobbs (1988) called “silent pedagogy” (p. 7) and defined as the strategies that an art exhibition would offer to mediate visitor experience.

One common strategy is exhibition signage, that is, exhibition texts and labels that help explain the art on display. Eisner and Dobbs (1998) argued that visitors need a framework to experience the art meaningfully. Eisner and Dobbs (1998) suggested that when visitors go to an art exhibition without “the appropriate frame of reference and developed sensibilities” (p. 8), the museum can provide cues that afford the visitor “a special form of I” (p. 8). Eisner and Dobbs

(1998) argued that there was one way of experiencing art and that visitors needed to attend the art exhibition with the appropriate framework to do so.

This view resonates with more traditional notions of experiencing art. One such view comes from the discipline of art history, where an adequate interaction with a work of art means having the tools to formally read, describe, analyze, and interpret its elements and content using the technical vocabulary of the discipline (Rice, 1988). Through this lens, the meaning of a work of art and the viewer's ability to engage in dialogue requires disciplinary skills exclusive to experienced viewers (Lachapelle, 2007). Moving away from this academic model, Lachapelle et al. (2003) proposed a model to complement aesthetic experiences and adult learning models. In this model, visual responses of any individual, regardless of experience with the academic study of art, are considered aesthetic experiences. According to Lachapelle et al. (2003), aesthetic experiences are a form of learning where the viewer creates meaning from experience.

Examining prior knowledge and visitor experience gains relevance when the population the study addresses consists of individuals primarily without prior knowledge of the arts and “artistic culture” (Bourdieu et al., 1991, p. 35). The question is the following: Can an art exhibition provide visitors with a framework for experiencing art? By asking these questions and moving into the next section, the basic assumption is that museums, particularly in general and public art exhibitions, are spaces where education is at the forefront of the agenda.

Socioeconomic Background and Visitor Experience

In a study about the role of demographic and socioeconomic variables in the decision to visit museums, art galleries, and other historical and archeological sites, M. Falk and Katz-Gerro (2016) reported their main conclusion that education level and income are some of the most important variables in predicting visits to museums and other cultural sites and the frequency of

those visits. The study also found that education is a better predictor than household income for individuals to visit a museum and for the frequency of visits. The researchers used data from 353,000 adults in 24 EU countries. Specifically, the data were obtained from the cultural and social participation module of the European Union Survey of Income and Living Conditions. The survey contained information from 27 EU countries, Iceland and Norway, 2006 and is a “nationally representative sample of households and individual” (M. Falk & Katz-Gerro, 2016, p. 131). By examining the characteristics of museum-goers, M. Falk and Katz-Gerro (2016) found that human capital is a better predictor of museum and historical sites’ attendance than income. One of the aims of the AECD of the Municipality of Guatemala is, as M. Falk and Katz-Gerro (2016) stated, “to encourage disadvantaged groups to participate in the art” (p. 146).

Findings from a study by Suarez-Fernandez et al. (2020) are consistent with those of M. Falk and Katz-Gerro (2016). In a quantitative study, Suarez-Fernandez et al. (2020) conducted a statistical analysis to understand the effect of education on three cultural activities: cinema attendance, live performances, and visits to cultural sites of interest. Understanding education as the variable that most impacts participation in cultural activities, Suarez-Fernandez et al. (2020) investigated how its effect differs among the activities studied, controlling for the impact of income. To do this, the researchers analyzed data from the European Union Survey of Income and Living Conditions for Spain.

Data from the survey represented the Spanish population and included the following variables: “gender, age, education level, labor status, income or health conditions” (Suarez-Fernandez et al., 2020, p. 193). Additionally, the European Union Survey of Income and Living Conditions incorporates a module on a specific topic with related variables each year. The 2006 and 2015 modules included data on cultural participation during the previous year, specifically in

“cinema, performing arts (theater, concerts, the opera, ballet or dance) and cultural sites (historical monuments, museums, art galleries or archaeological sites)” (Suarez-Fernandez et al., 2020, p. 193). Suarez-Fernandez et al. (2020) used a “Zero Inflated Ordered Probit (ZIOP) model” (p. 195) that accommodated zero observations. The participant classification differentiated between participants and non-participants. Non-participants could be individuals with no intentions of attending or potential participants, which was accounted for in the model. Suarez-Fernandez et al. (2020) found differing participation patterns among the study activities. Cinema was the most popular activity, and low education attainment showed high demand compared to performing arts and cultural sites. Regarding performing arts, potential visitors showed the highest numbers.

Cultural sites such as museums showed that as education attainment increased, the demand increased from none to high. Concerning the income variable, the authors noted that it affects cinema and performing arts attendance as it has a stronger effect on the intensity of participation. For the decision to visit cultural sites, income was shown as related to taste and class. Suarez-Fernandez et al. (2020) noted that these results could be useful for policymakers in that they provide useful information by showing how economic restriction connects to cultural consumption.

Summary

Several factors require further examination after examining the different systems related to visitors’ experiences at an art exhibition using Bronfenbrenner’s (1994) ecological systems theory as the guiding theoretical framework. First, although researchers have empirically examined the aesthetic experience of visitors in various ways (Bao et al., 2016; Kirchberg & Tröndle, 2015; Tröndle & Tschacher, 2016), others have argued for a multifaceted nature of

visitor experience (J. H. Falk, 2005; Packer et al., 2018; Packer & Ballantyne, 2016; Pekarik et al., 1999) that, in the context of this study, should be examined through a needs assessment.

Second, as art exhibitions have historically been regarded as spaces for social and cultural exclusion (Bourdieu et al., 1991; Jensen, 2013; Suarez-Fernandez et al., 2020), one should examine if and how it is the case in the specific context of the AECD. Investigating the demographic and contextual characteristics of visitors could shed light on constructs examined throughout this chapter, such as prior knowledge (Bennett, 2019; Lachapelle et al., 2003), frequency of visiting art exhibitions, and level of education (Jensen, 2013; Suarez-Fernandez et al., 2020). Understanding the background of visitors can offer a deeper understanding of the population that visits the art exhibitions to serve their needs better.

Third, art experts' backgrounds and disciplinary knowledge often guide how an art exhibition is organized and the strategies used to connect the art to the visitors (Eisner & Dobbs, 1988; Lachapelle, 2007). As the traditional way of reaching out to visitors and offering them ways to interact with the art is through exhibition texts and labels, one should investigate how visitors perceive labels in an art exhibition (Bennett, 2019).

Chapter 2

Understanding the Role of Museum Labels on the Visitor Experience of Art

An examination of the literature organized through Bronfenbrenner's (1994) ecological systems theory revealed some factors associated with a visitor's experience at an art exhibition. This chapter offers the findings from a needs assessment study investigating how visitors described their experience in an art exhibition and their perception of museum labels. In the first section, the study rationale explains why this study was conducted. The context defines the specific characteristics of the place and space in which the study took place. The statement of purpose outlines the inquiry in broad terms. The research design and methods sections explain how the study was planned and conducted and describe participants, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis. To conclude, the findings and discussion address the questions that guided the study.

Study Rationale

For the past 5 decades, the purpose of a museum has been to collect, conserve, interpret, and exhibit objects classified as heritage (Brulon Soares, 2020). Over the past decade, there has been an ongoing discussion about the social role of museums as spaces that promote inclusion and social justice (Brulon Soares, 2020; ICOM, 2023). On the 24th of August 2022, the ICOM (2023) held a meeting in Prague to redefine the role of a museum that went beyond its original purpose. The ICOM (2023) recognized the need for accessibility, inclusion, community participation, learning experiences, enjoyment, and reflection.

These recent changes in the role and purpose of museums are a call for museum professionals to reflect on their current practices and consider how best to align their professional practices to promote inclusion for all visitors. This process of reflection includes both the

planning and execution of an exhibition and the design of programs that include the community and offer meaningful learning experiences to visitors. Thus, researchers should attempt to understand how museums can best serve their communities and find ways to link research to practice.

Recent research, especially in positive psychology, is paving the way for an understanding of the role of visual art in the flourishing of humans (Beauchet et al., 2020; Cotter & Pawelski, 2022; Šveb & Jelinčić, 2022; Thomson et al., 2018). Flourishing means reducing factors associated with ill-being, such as anxiety and depression, and increasing well-being factors, such as belonging and social connection. Cotter and Pawelski (2022) asserted that communities and societies consider museums spaces to cultivate human flourishing for their citizens. Additionally, being specific about outcomes and targeting at-risk populations may increase the benefits of visiting an art exhibition (Cotter & Pawelski, 2022).

The recent redefinition of the role of museums and research about art exhibitions as spaces for human flourishing (Cotter & Pawelski, 2022) is a call to action for museum professionals to critically reflect on their current practice (Wink, 2011) and innovate for the greater good (Lee, 2018). In the context of this study, working toward the greater good means thoroughly understanding current professional practices and how those impact visitors' experiences. Specifically, I aimed to understand how visitors described their experience at an art exhibition and how their perceptions of museum texts and labels were connected to their experiences.

Context of the Study

The needs assessment study occurred in an art exhibition called Galería Abierta, organized by the local government in Guatemala City. Galería Abierta started in 2016 as an open

call for all residents of the City of Guatemala who wanted to pursue artistic interests. Every year, after the open call is published, participants have 1 month to submit their work digitally along with an artist's statement (Galería Abierta, 2021).

Three independent curators select the works of art that meet the criteria and award first, second, and third places to the participants. All selected works become a part of the exhibition. In the first three places, recipients are awarded coupons to exchange for art supplies. Galería Abierta offers participants a platform to exhibit their art and become a part of the city's artistic community (Galería Abierta, 2021). The exhibition has become an annual event showcasing local emerging artists' work. In 2021, the year of this study, the exhibition took place between June 23 and September 4 and was held at the galleries inside the Centro Cultural Municipal Álvaro Arzú Irigoyen in Guatemala.

Statement of Purpose

Art exhibitions are informal learning environments where learning can thrive (Carr, 1992; Ritchhart, 2007; Tishman, 2018). Engaging with visual art in a gallery or a museum supports well-being and connection (Cotter & Pawelski, 2022), curiosity (Tishman, 2018), and different ways of thinking (Ritchhart, 2007). At the same time, art exhibitions have historically been spaces of social and cultural exclusion (Jensen, 2013). Different studies suggest that visitors tend to have higher levels of formal education and social class (Bourdieu et al., 1991; M. Falk & Katz-Gerro, 2016). The broad aim of this study was to understand the factors that play a role in connecting visitors with art to inform practice that promotes inclusion, connection, and learning at an art exhibition. Specifically, the purpose of the study was (a) to explore the visitor experience at an art exhibition in a cultural institution in Guatemala City and (b) to examine if and how the perception of museum labels related to that experience.

Research Design

I used a multi-method research approach drawing on quantitative and qualitative approaches to bring together the strengths of both approaches (Anguera et al., 2018; Johnson et al., 2007). The research design included qualitative and quantitative strands of equal weight, concurrently collected and independently analyzed (Anguera et al., 2018; Johnson et al., 2007). Quantitative and qualitative data were collected using a survey containing both components. Additionally, qualitative non-participant observations were conducted to understand better visitor experience in the setting of an art exhibition.

The philosophical lens of pragmatism provided I way to inform professional practice in a specific context (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). It also drew on the transformative paradigm as the problem it examined related to practices at art exhibitions associated with social and cultural exclusion (M. Falk & Katz-Gerro, 2016; Jensen, 2013). I aimed to develop strategies that could promote equity and inclusion for all visitors.

Positionality

In the research process, I hold both an emic and an etic perspective (Banks, 2015; Lochmiller & Lester, 2017). I have an emic perspective as an insider by being a member of the team that designs educational programs for art exhibitions at the AECD and as a regular visitor to art exhibitions. As a researcher investigating visitors' perceptions of art exhibitions from the outside and describing the said experience, my perspective is also etic (Banks, 2015; Lochmiller & Lester, 2017). My identity as an art historian is also a part of the research process. As I began my professional practice in 2008, my work was not informed by research on education, teaching, and learning or learning through the arts. When conducting this study, I had to "learn, unlearn,

and relearn” (Wink, 2011, p. 36) how my disciplinary knowledge benefited from being informed by the field of education.

Methods

This needs assessment study aimed at understanding visitors’ experiences of an art exhibition and their perception of signage. The following research questions guided the study:

RQ1: How do visitors describe their experience in an art exhibition?

RQ2: What aspects of their experience do visitors perceive as important and not important? Why?

RQ3: How do art exhibition visitors perceive the art exhibition signage?

RQ4: What are the demographic and contextual characteristics of visitors to art exhibitions?

Participants

Three different groups of individuals participated. All participants were native Spanish speakers. The first was a group of 10 participants recruited via snowball sampling of adults who had visited the art exhibition. The second group consisted of 13 adult community members who chose to participate in the study after they visited the art exhibition. The third group was six community members who visited the art exhibition at a time when non-participant observations were taking place. The three groups yielded a total sample of 29 participants. From the two groups that completed the survey, 13 valid responses were considered, and the six visitors who participated in the observations yielded a total valid sample of 19 participants. All participants were adults over 18 who visited the art exhibition.

Measures and Instrumentation

I used a researcher-compiled survey containing two different instruments. I aimed to measure the constructs of visitor experience, art exhibition signage, and demographic and contextual characteristics of visitors. Table 2.1 details the operational definition of each construct, the literature used to operationalize it, and the instruments used.

Table 2.1

Operational Definition of Constructs and Instrumentation

Constructs	Operational definition	Instrument	Literature
Visitor experience	“An individual’s immediate and ongoing, subjective and personal response” (Packer & Ballantyne, 2016, p.133) to an art exhibition.	Survey: Dimensions of Visitor Experience (DoVE) checklist	Packer et al. (2018)
Art exhibition signage	Labels used to give information about works of art in an art exhibition	Open-ended question Participant observation Object Label Quality Scale, participant observation	Bennett (2019)
Demographic characteristics of participants	Age, level of education	Items related to the demographic characteristics of participants from the Object Label Quality and Label Readership Final Questionnaire Object Label Quality Scale, participant observation	Bennett (2019)
Contextual characteristics	Reason for visit, people in visiting party, prior knowledge of subject dealt with by the exhibition, enthusiasm of subject dealt with by the exhibition, regular visitor to art exhibitions	Items related to the specific context of the visitor from the Object Label Quality and Label Readership Final Questionnaire	Bennett (2019)

Dimensions of Visitor Experience (DoVE) Checklist

I used one researcher-compiled survey to measure the constructs of visitor experience, art exhibition signage, and demographic and contextual characteristics of visitors. The construct of visitor experience was measured using the DoVE Checklist developed by Packer et al. (2018)

and an open-ended question. Permission to use the DoVE Checklist was requested and granted with the acknowledgment that some meanings might change with the translation into Spanish (J. Packer, personal communication, August 17, 2021). The DoVE checklist (Packer et al., 2018) measures 15 dimensions of visitor experience (see Appendix B) and is informed by Packer and Ballantyne's (2016) multifaceted model. The open-ended question followed participants' selection of words from the checklist to describe their experience. The open-ended question read as the following: From the experiences you selected, which one is most important to you? Why?

The DoVE checklist measures 15 dimensions of visitor experience, including cognitive, social, aesthetic, introspective, and attentive experiences (see Appendix A). To measure these 15 dimensions, Packer et al. (2018) created a list of five items for each, making a total of 75 items that participants could choose to describe their experiences on the day of the exhibition.

The DoVE adjective checklist was tested and refined for content validity, construct validity, criterion validity, and reliability (Packer et al., 2018). Packer et al. (2018) performed a "principal axis factor analysis with Varimax rotation for each item to confirm whether all items loaded on a single factor" (p. 217) and Cronbach alpha scores between .80 and .88 for the 14 positive dimensions and .76 for the negative dimension. Packer et al. (2018) conducted test-retest reliability in five different venues to account for reliability. For criterion validity, Packer et al. (2018) aimed to show whether the instrument could differentiate subgroups in the sample, in this case, participants in different venues. Their findings indicated that participants in each site selected one dimension more frequently than at other sites, indicating that the instrument could capture the uniqueness of each site (Packer et al., 2018). An expert panel validated items to account for content validity. Packer et al. (2018) noted that participants might interpret words differently as a challenge to researchers.

Object Label Quality Scale

Art exhibition signage was measured using Bennett's (2019) Object Label Quality Scale from the Object Label Readership Final Questionnaire. Permission to use the instrument was requested and granted by Dr. R. Bennett (personal communication, ^August 16th, 2021). The instrument measures four factors related to physical quality, interest, instructive value, and respect through a 5-point *agree/disagree* measure. For example, one question read the following: After reading the labels, I felt more interested in the objects they described than before I had read them. A question related to the factor of interest used a 5-point *great interest/little interest* measure. Additional data about the visit and demographic characteristics of visitors were collected using specific items of the Object Label Quality and Label Readership Final Questionnaire.

Bennett (2019) noted that the face validity of the Object Label Quality Scale was corroborated by three curators of museums not taking part in the study. Bennett also stated that the curators of three museums participated in the study. Bennett further argued for the instrument's validity. Bennett reported that construct reliabilities and Cronbach's alpha exceeded .72 and .82.

Procedures

Sample and Data Collection

Before data collection, materials and procedures were submitted for approval to local authorities at the AECD. With local approval, the required documentation was submitted for Institutional Review Board approval at Johns Hopkins Homewood's Institutional Review Board. Approval was granted on August 16th, 2021.

Three different population samples participated in this study. Group 1 ($n = 10$) was recruited via snowball sampling by one AECD member who shared an invitation to participate with colleagues. Group 2 consisted of ($n = 13$) adult members of the community who voluntarily agreed to participate in the study. Finally, Group 3 ($n = 6$) were visitors who were at the exhibit and took part in non-participant observations.

Group 1 ($n = 10$) completed the online survey from August 17 to August 20, 2021. Participants from Group 1 were recruited via snowball sampling and completed the survey after visiting the art exhibition. This group of participants accessed the survey via a link shared by an Arts Education and Culture Department member. Participants in Group 2 completed the online survey between August 19 and September 4, 2021. Members of the community accessed the survey via a QR code strategically positioned at various parts of the art exhibition, inviting visitors to the art exhibition to participate. Non-participant observations were conducted on September 3, 2021, for a total duration of 2 hours. According to Lochmiller and Lester (2017), a researcher observes participants with minimal interactions in a non-participant observation. Signs were posted at the entrance of the art exhibition to indicate the date and time that observations were occurring. During the time of the observations, six participants visited the art exhibition.

Data Analysis

Surveys

The study used descriptive statistics to analyze the quantitative component of the study. From the 23 survey responses, 10 were missing large portions of data and were not included in the analysis; 13 were considered valid. This section will analyze the different survey sections separately before discussing the findings. It will first consider the DoVE Checklist (Packer et al.,

2018) that measures the construct of the visitor experience. Then, it will analyze Bennett's (2019) Object Label Quality Scale to investigate exhibition signage. The third section included questions about the demographic and contextual characteristics of visitors. The final section addressed the qualitative component of the survey, consisting of one question.

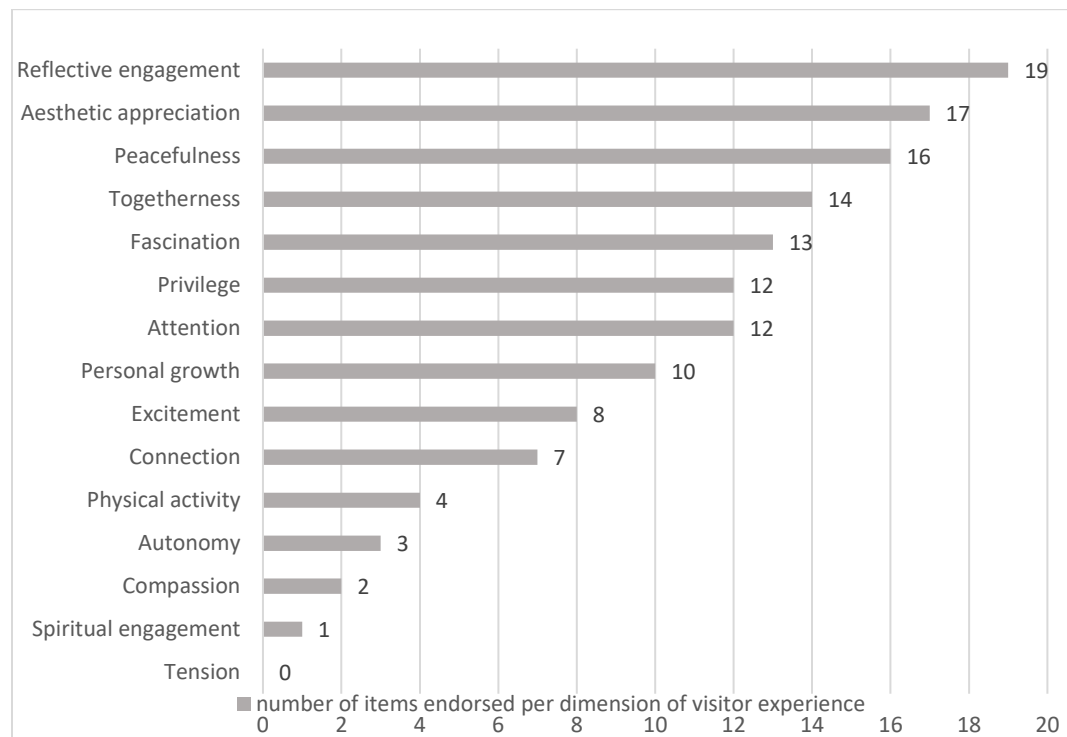
The first part of the survey contained items from the DoVE Checklist (Packer et al., 2018). According to Packer et al. (2018), visitor experience is about how visitors experience a specific exhibition's environment. In this sense, the researchers argued that it would be helpful to use the DoVE Checklist (Packer et al., 2018) to compare group responses to the same exhibition or individual responses to different exhibitions. I contemplated only one phase of data collection in one exhibition; therefore, the unit of analysis is the individual visitor.

For this section, data analysis used measures of central tendency and frequencies to understand the experiences of the visitors to Galería Abierta 2021 who participated in the study. This part of the survey contained adjectives for participants to describe their experiences. Each adjective belongs to a dimension or category of visitor experience (see Appendix B). The survey asked participants to indicate which adjectives on the list best described their experience on the day of the exhibition and to select all the words they experienced more than they would in everyday life.

Figure 2.1 represents, in broad terms, the visitor experience at the art exhibition regarding the dimensions of the DoVE Checklist (see Appendix B). Dimensions of visitor experience measured by the survey appear on the right. The bars represent the frequency with which visitors selected words that belonged to those dimensions or categories. The number at the end of each bar represents the words that the 13 participants in this study selected from that dimension of visitor experience.

Figure 2.1

Frequency of Endorsement for Each Dimension of Visitor Experience



To gain a deep understanding of Research Question 1, it was important to represent visually which adjectives from the list participants selected the most to describe their experience and to which dimension of visitor experiences they were associated. Table 2.2 is a detailed representation of how visitors reported their experience. It shows the specific words associated with each dimension and the number of times a word was selected by participants during the study (for the full list of responses, see Appendix D). Column 1 shows the dimensions of the visitor experience. Column 2 shows the specific adjectives that were selected within that dimension. Column 3 offers the percentages for each of the dimensions selected by participants.

Table 2.2*Frequency of Endorsement of Each Item From the Dimensions of Visitor Experience Checklist*

Dimensions of visitor experience	Individual items of visitor experience	%	Number of items selected for each dimension
Reflective engagement	Reflective, introspective, deep in thought, a sense of pondering	14%	19
Aesthetic appreciation	Aesthetic appreciation, appreciation of objects, a sense of beauty	12%	17
Peacefulness	Peaceful, serene, relaxed, refreshed, restored	12%	16
Togetherness	Sociable, togetherness, fellowship, companionship	10%	14
Fascination	Fascinated, amazed, intrigued, a sense of wonder	9%	13
Privilege	Privileged, honored, grateful, a sense of respect	9%	12
Attention	Attentive, alert, observant, concentrated	9%	12
Personal growth	Accomplishment, fulfillment, a sense of self-discovery	7%	10
Excitement	Excited, enthusiastic, a sense of enjoyment, a sense of elation	6%	8
Connection	Connection to the past, connection with objects, nostalgia	5%	7
Physical activity	Active, vigorous	3%	4
Autonomy	Confident	2%	2
Compassion	Concerned for others, a sense of compassion	1%	1
Spiritual engagement	Spiritual connection	1%	0

The second part of the survey addressed visitors' perceptions of labels and used the Object Label Quality Scale (Bennett, 2019) and additional questions regarding label readership. The questions used a 5-point Likert scale; responses are reported in Tables 2.3 and 2.4. This part of the survey addresses RQ3 about how visitors perceive labels at an art exhibition.

The first set of questions asked participants to describe their readership behaviors at Galería Abierta 2021. The questions included how many labels participants read, the level of interest with which they read the labels, and the amount of content they read.

The responses to these three questions regarding readership are reported in Table 2.3. The right column describes each item in the 5-point Likert scale. The right column shows participant responses using percentages.

Table 2.3*Participants' (N = 13) Responses on Label Readership*

Category	%
From the objects that accompanied the objects that interested me, I read:	
-all or nearly all of the labels accompanying objects the person was interested in	54
-three-quarters of the labels	23
-half	23
-a quarter or less	0
-none	0
When I read the labels, I usually did so with:	
-very great interest	8
-great interest	46
-moderate interest	38
-just a little interest	8
-hardly any interest	0
When I did read the labels, I usually read:	
-all the content	38
-most of the content	54
-about half	8
-a quarter	0
-just a sentence or two	0

Sixteen questions related to participants' perceptions of labels used a 5-point *agree-disagree* Likert scale. Table 2.3 shows the questions and participant responses to those questions. The questions belong to the Object Label Quality Scale (Bennett, 2019) and aimed to capture specific aspects of visitor perception of labels, including physical comfort when reading the labels, use of language, amount of information, and other items related to helping visitors understand the art exhibition.

Table 2.4*Participants' (N = 13) Responses to Questions About the Perception of Labels at an Art**Exhibition From the Object Label Quality Scale*

Question	5-point Likert scale (<i>agree/disagree</i>)				
	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
Physical quality					
I did not have to get into an uncomfortable physical position (e.g., having to bend down) in order to read the labels.	46%	39%	15%	0%	0%

Question	5-point Likert scale (<i>agree/disagree</i>)				
	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
The lettering on the labels was big enough for me to be able to read the contents of the labels without me getting too close.	61%	31%	8%	0%	0%
The labels were written using words I could easily understand.	77%	23%	0%	0%	0%
The labels contained just the right amount of information: not too much and not too little.	61%	31%	8%	0%	0%
Interest					
After reading the labels I felt more interested in the objects they described than before I had read the labels.	54%	46%	0%	0%	0%
The labels made the objects they described “come to life.”	23%	46%	31%	0%	0%
The labels caused me to think hard about the objects they described.	54%	31%	15%	0%	0%
The labels made me curious about the objects they described.	54%	31%	15%	0%	0%
Instructive value					
After reading the labels I felt I knew a lot more about the objects they described than before I had read the labels.	54%	46%	0%	0%	0%
The labels helped me understand the meanings of the objects they described.	62%	38%	0%	0%	0%
I learned a lot about the objects from reading the labels that described the objects.	46%	54%	0%	0%	0%
The contents of the labels were very educational.	46%	46%	8%	0%	0%
Respect					
I felt that the labels had been deliberately written in ways designed to be ‘above the heads’ of most of the museum’s visitors.	46%	39%	15%	0%	0%
I felt that the labels were written in a way that “talked down” to visitors.	39%	46%	15%	0%	0%
The labels were too bookish and too intellectual for my liking.	31%	54%	15%	0%	0%
As I read the labels I felt I was being treated more as a pupil at school than as a visitor to a museum.	39%	31%	30%	0%	0%

Demographic and contextual characteristics of visitors were recorded using Bennett’s (2019) Object Label Quality and Label Readership Final Questionnaire. Tables 2.5 and 2.6 show responses to questions related to demographics and context. Questions about demographic and contextual characteristics of visitors used five Likert scales and multiple-choice questions to

collect data regarding age, reasons for visiting the art exhibition, the frequency with which they visit art exhibitions, and if they visited alone or with others.

Table 2.5

Participants' (N = 13) Responses About Demographic and Contextual Characteristics of Visitors

Demographic/contextual characteristics of visitors	%
Age (years)	
18-30	15
31-43	31
44-56	31
57-69	15
70-82	8
Reason for visiting the art exhibition	
spend time/ leisure	8
interest in the theme of the exhibition	84
other	8
Frequency of visiting art exhibition	
one or two times a year	15
three or four times a year	31
more than five times a year	54
Visiting party	
individual visit	54
two people	23
three or more	23

Data for two components of contextual characteristics of visitors used a 5-point *agree/disagree* Likert scale. The first component is about prior knowledge, where participants responded to whether they had prior knowledge about the art exhibition on the day of their visit. The second component asked about their enthusiasm about the art on display.

Table 2.6

Participants' (N = 13) Responses About Prior Knowledge and Enthusiasm

Question	5-point Likert Scale (<i>agree/disagree</i>)				
	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
I had prior knowledge of the subject dealt with by the museum	54%	38%	8%	0%	0%
I a.m. enthusiastic about the subject dealt with by the museum	46%	23%	31%	0%	0%

Level of Education

Regarding visitors' level of education, a part of the data was corrupted in the survey platform and was not considered in this data analysis section. From the 13 responses, eight responses were corrupted, and five were recorded with no errors. In the five uncorrupted responses, four participants reported holding a bachelor's degree, and one reported having a master's degree.

Open-Ended Question

The open-ended question read as follows: "From the experiences you selected, which one is most important to you? Why?" The question refers to the adjectives from the DoVE checklist that participants had just selected (see Appendix B) and prompted participants to express which experiences were most important to them and why. This question applies to the DoVE Adjective Checklist (Packer et al., 2018) and asks participants to think about their open-ended responses regarding their previous selection. Most participants responded to this question with one or two words. I approached the analysis of this question with the dimensions of the DoVE Checklist (Packer et al., 2018) as "a priori" codes (Miles et al., 2014). Table 2.7 shows responses to the open-ended question. While some responses corresponded to the codes, some participants elaborated on their responses and added other ideas. Participant responses were varied and included being curious about the artistic process, personal fulfillment, a sense of community, connection to the works of art, awe, respect, and feeling reflective.

Table 2.7*Participants' (N = 13) Responses to the Open-Ended Question*

Participant	From the experiences you selected, which one is most important to you? Why?
1	Curious about the artistic process
2	Personal fulfillment
3	Appreciation for the works of art, their content, and the artists who created them
4	A sense of community. These type of events makes us visitors feel as a part of a community with common interests and worries
5	Sociable
6	Connection to the works of art
8	Random letters
9	Awe and respect
10	Reflection
11	Reflection
12	Reflection
13	Fulfillment

Non-Participant Observations

Observations were conducted using a semi-structured protocol that focused on time spent viewing the works of art, social interaction, label readership, and engagement with works of art. At the exhibition entrance was a sign informing visitors that observations were being conducted as part of this study. Galería Abierta 2021 was held in the galleries of the AECD. The building that houses the galleries is the former main post office in the central area of Guatemala City. The exhibition had four rooms with works of art. I sat at one corner of the art exhibition, which allowed me to observe the different rooms. The observations occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic; therefore, I ensured I kept a safe distance from the participants. I observed participant behaviors and did not engage in conversation at any time with anyone.

The observations occurred on September 3, 2021, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. During the 2 hours of observations, six visitors to the art exhibition went to Galería Abierta at different times. No visitors went to the exhibition during the first hour and 45 minutes. At 12:45 p.m., two visitors went into the galleries. They spent about 15 seconds looking at each work of art. They stopped at almost all the works in the four rooms and always read the label of the work they

considered. It took them fewer than 10 seconds to read each label, as most contained limited information.

Shortly after, two female visitors went in together and spent about 1 minute looking at four paintings by the same artists. The four paintings were one work of art. The two female visitors observed each painting, discussed them, and looked again. Then, they looked at other works of art, consisting of an object that can be described as a small sculpture. A docent approached the visitors and started explaining the artists' process of making that work of art. I could hear the explanation as I sat at a close enough distance. The docent explained that the work of art had taken the artist 3 months to complete. They seemed interested in learning more of the process and thoroughly examined the details of that work of art. The visitors asked questions about the materials of the sculpture they observed and seemed interested in the physical qualities of the sculpture.

At 12:50 p.m., one other visitor went into the art exhibition alone and spent the most time looking at the bus sculpture. Finally, the sixth visitor went to the art exhibition, looked around, and exited. During the observations, the entrance of Galería Abierta had a sign for informed consent indicating that observations would occur for 2 hours from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. I exited the art exhibition at 1 p.m.

Limitations

The study had a small sample size of 19 participants. Therefore, generalizations should be approached carefully (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017). Additionally, the study occurred during COVID-19, where safety measures such as wearing masks limited some aspects of data collection, as detailed below. Because I translated the survey from English to Spanish, there might have been some slight differences in verbiage.

Threats to Validity in the Quantitative Strand

The Dimensions of Visitor Experience Adjective Checklist

The DoVE checklist (Packer et al., 2018) measures 15 dimensions of the visitor experience. Each dimension can be endorsed through five different items. The DoVE checklist (Packer et al., 2018) offers visitors 75 adjectives to reflect their experiences. The instrument was developed to be used in multiple settings, including art museums, zoos, aquariums, and other venues that benefit from understanding their visitors' experiences. For this study, I removed 10 items from the list as they were irrelevant to the context of an art exhibition.

An example is "I felt concerned for nature" (Packer et al., 2018, p. 231). Items that started with "it engaged my" were also left out because the survey was translated into Spanish. I could not find a translation that captured the meaning of the item. Because the study was conducted in Spanish and all the instruments had to be translated into Spanish, it could have posed other threats to validity. In the distributed final survey, the terms observant and attentive were translated as *atento*. At the same time, the translation was not a direct interpretation; the word appeared twice on the list. As a first-time instrument user, I acknowledged that leaving the instrument with all its original items might have been preferable to preserve construct validity.

The Object Label Quality Scale

As the study was conducted in Spanish, the scale was translated from English, which could threaten its validity (Bennett, 2019). Additionally, a part of the responses from the question in the survey asking about participants' levels of education were corrupted in the survey platform and were not considered in the data analysis section. From the 13 valid responses, eight were corrupted and unconsidered. The remaining five were reported under the level of education in the data analysis section.

Findings and Discussion

This section addresses the findings of this study. The organization is guided by the four research questions of this study. As a multi-method study, quantitative and qualitative data strands were concurrently collected and independently analyzed (Anguera et al., 2018; Johnson et al., 2007).

Research Question 1

RQ1 was the following: “What are the demographic and contextual characteristics of visitors to art exhibitions?” Data analysis of the demographic and contextual characteristics of visitors revealed the age range, reason for visiting an art exhibition, interest in the subject dealt with by the exhibition, visiting party, frequency of visiting art exhibitions, prior knowledge, and level of enthusiasm about the subject at the exhibition. The survey included a question regarding the level of education of participants. Data from eight of the 13 valid responses was corrupted and unable to be accessed. Therefore, responses from those eight participants are not included in this study. These questions are from Bennett’s (2019) Object Label Quality and Label Readership Final Questionnaire.

Age

Of 13 participants who completed the survey, four were between the ages of 31–43, and four were between the ages of 44–56. The larger age range of 31–56 accounted for 62% of participants. Two participants reported being between 18–30, and another two were between 57–69. Only one participant was between 70–82.

Reason for Visit

Bennett's (2019) Object Label Quality and Label Readership Final Questionnaire uses a multiple-choice question to select three options to report the reason for visiting the art exhibition.

The first option for the question asks if the reason for visiting is to spend time or leisure. Only one participant reported going to the exhibition for this reason. The second option, interest in the theme, was the most selected. Eleven of 13 participants selected this option. For this art exhibition, there was not a prescribed theme. However, many artists expressed an aspect of the pandemic in their art. Finally, only one participant selected “other” as their reason for visiting the art exhibition. The survey did not ask participants to elaborate on their responses when selecting this option.

Frequency of Visiting Art Exhibitions

This multiple-choice question asked participants to select three options to report the frequency with which they visit art exhibitions. The first option was for one or two visits per year. In this survey, 15% of participants reported visiting art exhibitions only once or twice yearly. The second option was for three to four visits a year, and 31% of participants selected this option. The final option was for more than five visits a year, which was the most selected among participants, with 54%.

Visiting Party

The survey aimed to understand visitor behavior at an art exhibition. One question in this survey aimed to understand if visitors tended to visit alone or with others. Most participants in this study visited the art exhibition alone. Fifty-four percent of participants reported visiting this art exhibition as individual visitors. The second choice for this question was about visiting with one other person. Regarding visiting in pairs, 23% of participants selected this option. Another 23% of participants reported being in a party of three or more visitors.

Having Prior Knowledge of the Art Exhibition Theme: “Emerging Artists in Guatemala City”

The question of prior knowledge when visiting an art exhibition is frequent in literature (Bennett, 2019; Lachapelle, 2007; Lachapelle et al., 2003). The survey used a 5-point scale from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 5 (*strongly disagree*) from Bennett’s (2019) Object Label Quality and Label Readership Final Questionnaire to evaluate if participants were aware of what the exhibition was about when visiting. Fifty-four percent of participants selected *strongly agree* to questions regarding having prior knowledge about the subject of the art exhibition. Thirty-eight percent of participants selected the second option of the 5-point Likert scale of *somewhat agree* to the question about prior knowledge. Only 8% of participants selected the third option, *neither agree nor disagree*, and no participants selected the final two options of *somewhat agree* and *strongly disagree*.

Level of Enthusiasm

As with the prior knowledge question, this 5-point scale from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 5 (*strongly disagree*) from Bennett’s (2019) Object Label Quality and Label Readership Final Questionnaire asked participants to report on their level of enthusiasm about the subject dealt with by the exhibition. As with the previous question, participants only selected the first three options. Forty-six percent of participants reported strong enthusiasm for the subject dealt with by the exhibition. Twenty-three percent of participants selected the second option on the scale to *somewhat agree*. Thirty-one percent of participants neither agreed nor disagreed with being enthusiastic. No participants selected the *somewhat disagree* and *strongly disagree* options.

Level of Education

From the five responses that could be retrieved from the platform, four participants reported holding a bachelor’s degree, and one participant reported holding a master’s degree.

These responses remain consistent with research that links visiting art exhibitions with higher levels of education (Bourdieu et al., 1991; Jensen, 2013; Suarez-Fernandez et al., 2020).

Research Question 2

RQ2 was the following: “How do visitors describe their experience in an art exhibition?” The construct of visitor experience was measured using Packer et al.’s (2018) DoVE Checklist. The instrument was designed to capture different facets of a visitor’s experience. The instrument consists of adjectives and small phrases (see Appendix B) where participants select all the words that they believe describe their experience on the day they visited the art exhibition (see Appendix A).

From the 15 dimensions the survey measured (see Appendix B), the items participants selected the most belonged to reflective engagement, aesthetic appreciation, and peacefulness (see Figure 2.1 and Table 2.2 in the data analysis section of this chapter). Reflective engagement is about introspective experiences associated with contemplation, imagination, reflection, and thoughtfulness. Aesthetic appreciation is about beauty and engaging the senses; it is about appreciating the objects on display. Peacefulness refers to restorative experiences; it is about feeling restored, serene, and refreshed (Packer et al., 2018).

From the total sample, participants selected the dimension of reflective engagement most. The survey offered participants a list of adjectives to describe their experiences (see Appendix B). From the total number of adjectives selected by all participants, words and phrases associated with the dimension of reflective engagement were selected the most, with 19 counts, representing 14% of the total selection of words.

From this dimension, the items “deep in thought” and “reflective” were the most popular as they were selected six times each, “introspective” was selected two times, and “pondering”

five times. These findings are consistent with those from Packer et al. (2018) when discussing applications of the DoVE Checklist. The researchers tested a survey prototype at five different sites in London, including museums, zoos, aquariums, and other historical sites and venues. In that initial survey, participants who reported visiting once or twice a year described their experience as belonging to the dimension of reflective engagement. Frequent visitors who visit art exhibitions more than twice a year tend to experience peacefulness.

In this study, the second most endorsed dimension of visitor experience was aesthetic experience. The items for this dimension include experiencing a sense of aesthetic appreciation, appreciation of objects, experiencing a sense of beauty, experiencing a sense of grandeur, and engaging the senses. This dimension is the most associated with art exhibitions. Extensive research aims to understand the aesthetic experience of visitors to an art exhibition (Bao et al., 2016; Lachapelle et al., 2003; Lankford, 2002).

Peacefulness was the third dimension that visitors selected the most. In this survey, the experience of peacefulness encompasses feeling peaceful, serene, relaxed, and restored. Packer et al. (2018) proposed that visitors who frequently visit a site and feel comfortable in the surroundings tend to visit to experience relaxation and restoration.

Unsurprisingly, spiritual engagement and tension were the dimensions that visitors least selected to describe their experience. Art exhibitions can be spaces for human flourishing (Cotter & Pawelski, 2022), potentially reducing stress and offering visitors experiences that contribute to their well-being. I expected that participants would not select tension in this study.

Another relevant finding from the survey was that five visitors reported feeling intrigued, and six reported experiencing a sense of wonder. The instrument associated these items with the dimension of fascination. However, perhaps they could also signal curiosity (Kashdan et al.,

2004), which would be a desired outcome for the Arts Education and Culture Department. Non-participant observations are consistent with the idea that curiosity might be worth exploring. One salient finding from the observations was when a docent explained the process of making a sculpture that was on display to the visitors. The sculpture of a bus (see Appendix D) had lights inside. The visitors appeared interested in learning more about the sculpture.

Packer et al. (2018) described how the instrument could verify if the exhibition designer's intentions match the visitors' experiences. In the context of the AECD, it would be interesting to see if visitors reported their experiences as related to learning. In this instrument, however, even if dimensions could have been related to learning, such as attention, there was no explicit measure for that construct or type of experience.

Research Question 3

RQ3 was the following: "What aspects of their experience do visitors perceive as important and not important? Why?" The open-ended question in the survey asked participants to reflect on their experiences and express which of the experiences was most important to them and why. For this question, participants typed their responses into the survey platform. This question was the qualitative component of the survey, and data analysis was approached using the dimensions of visitor experience as a priori codes (Miles et al., 2014). Consistent with the findings of RQ1 about how participants described their experiences, responses to the question "From the experiences you selected, which one is most important to you? Why?" revealed that "reflection" was the most frequently typed. Three (23%) participants chose this response. These responses correspond to the dimension of reflective engagement, which is about being reflective, introspective, and deep in one's thoughts (Packer et al., 2018).

Two participants responded that experiencing a sense of fulfillment had been important to them during their visits. Fulfillment belongs to the dimension of personal growth (Packer et al., 2018), and it is associated with a sense of accomplishment and self-discovery. This finding is important for the AECD. The finding is aligned with the institution's mission of offering visitors experiences that enrich their lives (Municipalidad de Guatemala, 2021).

Among the other responses, one belongs to aesthetic appreciation (Packer et al., 2018), which is about appreciating objects and beauty. One visitor typed, "appreciation for the works of art, the content, and the artists who created them," as an important aspect of their experience. In this response, the visitor focused on the role of the senses in the experience of works of art.

Other responses included "a sense of community," mentioning how "these types of experiences make visitors feel part of a community with common interests and worries" and "sociable." According to Packer et al. (2018), a sense of community is about togetherness, and the experience's focus is on the visit's social aspect. Data collection occurred in September 2021, 2 years into a global pandemic that limited the traditional ways of interaction between individuals. At the time of data collection, physical interaction in public spaces remained limited, and masks remained mandatory. This finding highlights how art exhibitions are spaces with the potential for community-building and social connection (Latham & Layton, 2019).

Quantitative and qualitative data are integrated in a joint display table to understand better the visitor experience at Galería Abierta 2021 (see Table 2.8). Table 2.8 summarizes relevant findings from quantitative and qualitative components to compare the results of both data strands (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The display illustrates how the quantitative findings are consistent with qualitative findings.

Table 2.8*Joint Display of Qualitative and Quantitative Data About Visitor Experience at an Art Exhibition*

Quantitative data	Qualitative data
Total selection of adjectives to describe visitor experience (RQ1)	Visitors' perceptions about important aspects of experience (RQ2)
Reflective engagement (14%)	"Reflection"
Aesthetic appreciation (12%)	"Appreciation for the works of art, their content, and the artists who created them," "Curious about the artistic process," "Connection to the works of art"
Peacefulness (12%)	Two female visitors went in together and focused on a group of four paintings by the same artist. They observed each painting, held a brief discussion, and looked again. They observed a small sculpture and a docent approached the visitors and explained the artistic process. The visitors seemed interested in learning more as they asked questions and examined the work of art.
Togetherness (10%)	"A sense of community. These type of events makes us visitors feel a part of a community with common interests and worries," "Sociable."

Research Question 4

RQ4 was the following: "How do art exhibition visitors perceive the art exhibition signage?" Participants' responses regarding their perception of labels revealed their interaction with the labels of the art exhibition they visited. The survey focused on two broad areas. First, it asked about label readership to understand if and how participants read labels and the extent to which they read the content. The second was about the design and content of those labels regarding physical quality, interest, instructive value, and respect (Bennett, 2019).

Label Readership

The first question regarding label readership asked participants to rate on a 5-point scale how many labels they read from those that interested them (From the labels that accompanied the objects that interested me, I read, "All or nearly all of the labels," "three-quarters of the labels" "half," "a quarter or less," or "none"). Of 13 participants, more than half (54%) read all or most of the labels of the objects that interested them, and the rest read between half and three-quarters of the labels.

Participants were also asked to report the extent to which they had read the content of the labels that interested them. In this study, 54% of participants reported reading most of the content, and 38% reported reading all the content. Eight percent of participants reported reading half, and no participants read a quarter or less. From the total sample, all participants reported reading at least half of the content of the labels they chose to read.

Design and Content

The survey asked participants a series of questions to understand how they perceived specific characteristics of labels regarding physical quality, interest, instructive value, and respect. Physical quality refers to the physical interaction with the labels, such as having to get into an uncomfortable position when reading them and the physical characteristics of that label. Almost all participants (85%) reported not having to get into an uncomfortable position to read the labels. The remaining 15% responded as *neither agree nor disagree* to getting into an uncomfortable position to read them. Regarding font size in museum labels, over half of the participants in this study perceived the lettering as big enough for them to read without getting too close. More than three-quarters of participants perceived the text used words that were easy to understand, and over half reported labels had just the right amount of information.

These questions align with early research conducted by Gilman in 1916 when discussing museum fatigue. At the time, Gilman (1916) attempted to understand visitor experience and how the placement of objects impacted visitor experience by photographing a visitor in all the positions they adopted to see the objects presented in a museum and read the labels. Understanding how visitors perceive their physical interactions with museum objects and labels continues to be a critical factor in understanding the experience of visitors to art exhibitions.

Regarding interest, all participants reported being more interested in the objects they saw after reading the labels. The survey also asked participants about their levels of curiosity concerning the labels, and 54% marked *strongly agree* when asked if the labels made them more curious about the objects they described. In comparison, 31% marked *somewhat agree*, and the remaining 15% marked *neither agree nor disagree*. More than half of the participants also reported thinking harder about the objects they saw after reading the labels, and all participants felt they knew more about the objects and understood the meaning as a result of reading those labels. Interestingly, in the questions that aimed to understand how respected visitors felt while reading the labels, most participants reported perceiving the labels as “too intellectual” (5%) and “above their head” (85%); the participants believed that they were being treated as students at a school (70%).

Paradoxically, 85% of participants marked *strongly agree* and *somewhat agree* with the statement that labels were written in a way that “talked down” to visitors. The appearance of these findings seems to be contradictory. On the one hand, participants reported labels as too intellectual, and on the other, they also reported perceiving them as oversimplified. Perhaps one explanation might be that there were two different types of labels at the art exhibition where data collection took place. One type contained a detailed curatorial text about the work of art. These comprehensive labels accompanied the works of art selected to win a prize at that exhibition. The rest of the works of art had a shorter label, including the artist’s name, the work’s title, and the date and medium. This aspect offers a tentative explanation for the contradictory findings. However, the content of each label was not a part of this study and would be an interesting lead for future research.

Conclusion

Most visitors to the art exhibition were between the ages of 30 and 61, tended to visit alone, were interested in the exhibition's subject, read most labels, and described their experiences as related to reflection and introspection. This finding aligns with observations in the context of the study, where participants usually visit the art exhibitions alone, read labels, and engage with the art when the exhibition space has offered opportunities for engagement in the form of booklets with activities that visitors can take with them to help them interact with the works of art.

Regarding how visitors described their experience as related to reflective engagement, Packer et al. (2018) explained the dimension of engagement as belonging to introspective experiences. The researchers identified this experience as separate or different from cognitive experiences. Packer et al. (2018) defined the cognitive facet of experiences as related to “intellectual experiences, learning, novelty, discovery, exploration, understanding, concentration, involvement, and choice” (p. 215). However, reflection can be a form of metacognition (Flavell, 1979), as it entails thinking about internal states.

Connections between visitor experience and cognitive theory can be found when considering reflective engagement in this way that may inform the design of art exhibitions that target specific outcomes. Cognitivism is about the mind and its processes (Bruning et al., 2011) and strives to understand what people know, how people acquire knowledge, and how people process information (Ertmer & Newby, 2013). This model seeks an understanding of the mental frameworks or structures connected to the organization of knowledge, memory, and thought (Bruning et al., 2011; Ertmer & Newby, 2013). Under cognitivism and in this context, the environment, the exhibition space, could be prepared to offer strategies for reflective engagement

that foster metacognition (Flavell, 1979; Gee, 2008). Therefore, the visitor can have the opportunity (Gee, 2008) to become more aware of their mental strategies when observing the art. In other words, when visitors think about their thinking and can choose effective seeing and thinking strategies, they use more metacognitive strategies (Ertmer & Newby, 2013; Flavell, 1979). In this way, art exhibition designers can honor visitor voices and offer opportunities for free-choice learning (J. H. Falk, 2005).

Participants' responses to labels at Galería Abierta 2021 indicate that exhibit visitors read labels. More than half of the sample for this study reported reading all or nearly all of the labels that accompanied the objects that interested them. Further, when participants did read the labels, 62% reported reading all or nearly all the content. Importantly, nearly 54% of participants reported that the labels helped them experience an increase in curiosity, interest, and knowledge about the objects on display and afforded them the possibility for deep thinking.

Implications for Research and Practice

Future research examining visitor experience at art exhibitions could focus on deeply understanding reflective or introspective experiences and the extent to which visitors are aware of their thinking when looking at the art on display. Future researchers may also benefit from exploring the link between content labels and visitor perception of that content and using labels to scaffold visitor learning and engagement at an art exhibition. Replicating this study in a different setting and a larger sample size would enhance the generalizability of the findings. Finally, an important part of this research would be to consider the other side of the exhibition and explore the curator's and administrator's perceptions of art exhibitions and their role in the visitor experience. Furthermore, visiting art exhibitions has been associated with human

flourishing because it increases well-being factors like social connection and having positive experiences (Cotter & Pawelski, 2022).

Implications for practice include art exhibition designers learning from research on flourishing outcomes at art exhibitions to inform their practice and design spaces that offer visitors meaningful experiences through the arts. Regarding institutional practice, through the content of their exhibitions, art exhibition designers have opportunities to offer audiences alternatives to traditional discourse to consider different perspectives and points of view (Groen & Kawalilak, 2019). Finally, engaging in critical reflection (Béres & Fook, 2020; Milner, 2007; Wink, 2011) when designing art exhibitions and educational programs and being intentional about outcomes can add a transformative dimension to current practice (Mezirow, 1997).

Summary

Findings from this need assessment indicated that participants visited the art exhibition because they were interested in the art; they tended to read all or most of the content of the texts and labels on display. Regarding the visitor experience, most visitors reported experiencing reflective engagement and aesthetic appreciation for the works of art. Galería Abierta, the art exhibition where this study took place, sought to present the works of emerging local artists in Guatemala City (Galería Abierta, 2021). However, it was not designed to target specific outcomes.

Regarding the AECD, there is an opportunity to develop programs at art exhibitions that target specific outcomes aligned with the institution's mission. Since its creation in 2007, part of the mission of this branch of local government has been the design and promotion of cultural and educational activities to improve the quality of life of its visitors (Municipalidad de Guatemala,

2007). Chapter 3 will review and discuss literature that targets specific outcomes at art exhibitions.

Chapter 3

Review of the Literature

As cultural institutions (Carr, 1992) that offer individuals different opportunities for experiencing the arts, art exhibition designers have the potential to design programs with specific outcomes in mind. Through evidence-based practice, museum professionals design exhibitions that promote human flourishing (Cotter & Pawelski, 2022) in different ways. From learning and thinking (Ishiguro et al., 2020; Ritchhart, 2007; Tishman, 2018; Wang & Yoon, 2013) to reflection, participation, and connection (Noy, 2015; Sherman & Morrissey, 2017; Shields et al., 2020), researchers have explored different avenues to give the visitor a central role in the experience of art (Mayer, 2005).

This chapter examines literature that supports visitor experience through evidence-based practices to foster inclusion for all visitors. Historically, art exhibitions have been spaces identified with exclusionary practices (Bourdieu et al., 1991; M. Falk & Katz-Gerro, 2016; Suarez-Fernandez et al., 2020) that create barriers to visitors unfamiliar with the art world. Therefore, this chapter highlights interventions that welcome the visitor into the exhibition space by offering the necessary tools for meaningful interaction with art (Gee, 2008).

A needs assessment was conducted during Galería Abierta in 2021, a public art exhibition in Guatemala City featuring the works of art of community members that takes place every year at the Education and Culture Department of the Municipality of Guatemala. The needs assessment study aimed to investigate visitors' experience at an art exhibition and explore if and how the perception of museum labels impacts experience. Findings from the needs assessment revealed that participants went to art exhibitions because they were interested in the art on display and read most of the text offered at the art exhibition. Regarding their experiences, data

revealed that most visitors associated their experiences with reflection and aesthetic appreciation. However, Galería Abierta 2021 was an art exhibition undesigned with evidence-based practices or specific outcomes in mind. Therefore, this chapter offers a literature review highlighting specific outcomes for art exhibitions. The sociocultural theory is a theoretical lens used to help organize the literature following specific framework components.

Sociocultural Theory

Stemming from Vygotsky's (1978) ideas about learning and development, the sociocultural perspective posits that individuals interact with their environment in evolving ways and participate in different social practices (Lim & Renshaw, 2001). Under this perspective, learning is about an action that takes place with others in a specific setting (Lim & Renshaw, 2001), and it is also about the resulting relationship between the individual and the environment (Gee, 2008). The environment in which learning takes place provides "affordances" (Gee, 2008, p. 81; Gibson, 2014, p. 119). Affordances are the possibilities for action within the environment. They can be the objects or specific characteristics of that environment that an individual perceives as such (Gee, 2008; Gibson, 2014). However, perceiving an affordance is insufficient; the individual needs to be able to turn that affordance into "actual and effective action" (Gee, 2008, p. 81). The individual's capabilities for transforming affordances into action are effectivities (Gee, 2008).

Within Gee's (2008) sociocultural perspective on the opportunity to learn, affordances and effectiveness are critical in highlighting an individual's interactive nature within the environment. The notion of "tools" (Gee, 2008, p. 88) is closely connected to affordances and effectiveness. Tools are mediating devices that increase performance and are a part of the environment (Gee, 2008). Resnick (1987) discussed using tools in formal and informal learning,

elaborating on the distinction between the two settings. Formal learning environments such as schools value cognitive performance that is not aided by any tools (Resnick, 1987). Conversely, informal learning environments encourage the use of tools, and “the resultant cognitive activity is shaped by and dependent upon the kinds of tools available” (Resnick, 1987, p. 13).

Affordances and Effectivities and Tools at an Art Exhibition

From the sociocultural perspective, works of art at an art exhibition become affordances that offer visitors possibilities for action. According to this theoretical framework, visitors need effectivities to transform these affordances into “actual and effective action” (Gee, 2008, p. 81). One may question what type of action is needed. Planning and organizing an art exhibition offer visitors the curatorial team’s perspective on the exhibition’s theme. The works of art afford the visitors many possibilities of interpretation and action. However, the traditional belief is that there is one right way of doing so (Eisner & Dobbs, 1988; Lachapelle, 2007). The accompanying texts and labels are the tools visitors can use to read the works of art; nevertheless, the curator’s assumptions inform those about what is important to perceive in that context.

The goal is to investigate other types of action that can turn affordances into effectivities using tools; therefore, this chapter will discuss two main avenues for label design at an art exhibition. The first section examines labels as support for learning and thinking. It examines how information and questions can foster curiosity and promote specific types of thinking when intentionally designed to that end (Hohenstein & Tran, 2007; Ritchhart, 2007). The second section explores museum texts and labels as tools for reflection, participation, and connection (Mcmanus, 1989; Temme, 1992). Central to this framework is the idea that learning is situated (Brown et al., 1989); that is, thinking and learning take place in a specific environment and are directly connected to the interactions between the individuals in that environment. The third and

final section highlights the influence of the environment at an art exhibition and its impact on the experience of visitors (Ishiguro et al., 2020; Loureiro et al., 2019; Szubielska et al., 2021).

Labels for Learning and Thinking

Museum labels support thinking and learning (Atkins et al., 2009; Bitgood, 2009; Hohenstein & Tran, 2007; Mcmanus, 1989; Wang & Yoon, 2013). In their study about how museum labels support the learning experiences of visitors, Wang and Yoon (2013) examined three different types of labels: (a) digital augmentation labels, (b) question labels, and (c) instructional labels to promote collaboration. Their study was anchored in a National Science Foundation informal science education project (2009 to 2013), and it sought to investigate the impact of different types of labels to scaffold understanding. Participants included ($N = 164$) sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade students from nine schools. The varied schools included public, charter, urban, and suburban schools. Participants participated in the study during field trips and were divided into four random groups. The researchers used pre- and post-surveys to assess changes in student learning during the visit.

Wang and Yoon (2013) collected quantitative data through multiple-choice questions and included an open-ended question. Researchers created a coding manual for the open-ended question and scored the responses on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 represented *no understanding*, and 5 represented *complete understanding*. Wang and Yoon analyzed results through an ANOVA to determine if labels at the museum impacted students' learning. The researchers further collected data through observation notes on thinking skills from the Critical Thinking Skills Checklist (Luke et al., 2007; Wang & Yoon, 2013). The findings showed that the three types of labels supported 'students' learning. Three of the four groups of participants showed significant gains in conceptual understanding.

Interestingly, there were no statistically significant differences between the three types of labels in their support for learning. Wang and Yoon (2013) further found that students' thinking was supported and observed higher-level thinking and reasoning increased with scaffolding. Wang and Yoon's study was aligned with Bennett's (2019) recommendations for future research. Bennett suggested that if people assumed labels would create knowledge, researchers should investigate the underlying processes in place and how specific elements of the scale Bennett developed to measure label quality and interact with learning.

Although Wang and Yoon (2013) examined the overall impact of learning about three different types of labels, Hohenstein and Tran (2007) researched the particularities of question labels for learning. Hohenstein and Tran conducted their study in three museums. They tested labels under three conditions: (a) current label, (b) current label plus a question, and (c) simplified text with a question. The study used the same guiding question across the three exhibits. The researchers filmed visitors' conversations for each condition over 2 days. Conversations were transcribed and coded with a predetermined coding scheme. Hohenstein and Tran analyzed the data through an ANOVA and used time in seconds as the dependent variable. Their findings suggest that labels under the condition of the current label plus a question condition prompted more questions, explanations, and conversations about the exhibit. The researchers suggested that questions in labels required more research, as they could promote curiosity and reflection (Hohenstein & Tran, 2007).

One approach in museum education related to question labels is using visual thinking strategies (VTS), similar to thinking routines. Thinking routines are structures that promote thinking and help students engage with ideas meaningfully (Ritchhart et al., 2011) as museum labels. Thinking routines have been used in museum settings as part of a guided tour with a

docent or teacher (Ritchhart, 2007). Thinking routines and VTS (Ishiguro et al., 2020) provide a framework for thinking about a work of art and engaging meaningfully with it without the prerequisite of prior knowledge, as the emphasis is on the thinking strategies (Ritchhart, 2007) instead of the art historical meaning of the work. The intended outcomes of implementing strategies such as those outlined by Ritchhart (2007) would entail building thinking skills and an opportunity to do so through slow looking (Tishman, 2018). Ishiguro et al. (2020) empirically examined the use of VTS in a classroom and museum setting to support the use of thinking routines or VTS in a museum setting further. Ishiguro et al. found that VTS positively affected the art viewing experience in both settings.

The idea that questions in labels promote curiosity is aligned with Cotter et al.'s (2021) study about visitor motivations and outcomes. Using J. H. Falk's (2005) identity model, Cotter et al. (2021) shared two important findings relevant to this literature review. First, participants identified themselves as explorers more than other categories. The explorer category is related to curiosity and interest in the exhibit (Cotter et al., 2021; J. H. Falk, 2005; Hon-keung et al., 2012).

In this study, data revealed that what visitors took away from a museum visit was more relevant than the expectations with which they entered the exhibit (Cotter et al., 2021). Connecting the research from this section, one main idea worth exploring is the design of labels with questions to support learning and thinking. Such an intervention could impact visitors in my context in two ways. First, it may move away from the idea that there is one right way of looking at art which may contribute to mitigating ideas of cultural exclusion traditionally associated with art exhibitions. Additionally, it would provide visitors with an opportunity to learn a different way of looking at and engaging with art. When designing research-informed labels is critical to support visitor learning at art exhibitions, it is also critical to honor the informal learning that

takes place in the exhibition space so that it preserves its uniqueness and the very qualities that make it different from informal learning (Atkins et al., 2009).

This section highlighted how museum labels can foster specific outcomes at an art exhibition, such as learning and thinking. As affordances at an art exhibition, works of art offer many possibilities for action. Tools mediate experience and enhance performance (Gee, 2008; Resnick, 1987). In the case of art exhibitions, one function of museum texts and labels would be to offer museum visitors opportunities to engage in specific, meaningful action with the works of art on display.

Tools for Reflection, Participation, and Connection

In recent years, museum educators have challenged traditional disciplinary notions about art education and examined how visitors create meaning from experience (Mayer, 2005). Although educators at art exhibitions have embraced the theoretical notions of offering visitors a more active role in interpreting art and their overall experience, it is challenging to close the gap between theory and practice (Mayer, 2005). One challenge faced by the Education and Culture Department of the Municipality of Guatemala is that there are no strategies for listening to and understanding visitors' voices.

Engagement with art is a way visitors can explore different perspectives and points of view (Sherman & Morrissey, 2017). An art exhibition offers ways for curators to communicate with their audiences through the art they choose to display and the text that explains the rationale behind the art exhibition. However, these traditional ways of communication at an art exhibition tend to be unidirectional and do not actively promote the inclusion of visitors' voices.

The multicultural lens asks us to be “broadly inclusive” (Pedersen, 2000, p. 41). In the context of the AECD, one way to be more inclusive is to implement strategies to listen to

visitors' voices and understand their experiences and needs. The environment of the art exhibition presents an opportunity to offer affordances for visitors to be heard. This section examines the environment of art exhibitions, including how they can offer visitors tools for self-reflection and be spaces that offer opportunities for dialogue between the visitors and the art exhibition (Noy, 2015). It also examines the context of the art exhibition as a space that can foster transformative experiences (Soren, 2009).

Another way to listen to visitors' voices is through writing. In an ethnographic study, Noy (2015) examined the display of texts and the practice of writing in museums as a mode of cultural consumption. Specifically, two questions guided this inquiry. The first was related to institutions and the use of space in displaying "on-site participatory writing interfaces" (Noy, 2015, p. 214), and the second looked at texts produced by visitors. This comparative study occurred in two Jewish heritage museums in Florida, United States: The Florida Holocaust Museum and the National Museum of American Jewish History. Noy (2015) observed how visitors engaged with writing on the platforms offered by both museums and analyzed the texts produced "in terms of their addressivity structures" (p. 195).

Noy (2015) used ethnography through a situated and material lens to examine texts and writing. Through this lens, the researcher examined visitor books as spaces for public writing as a way of cultural participation. Noy (2015) looked at visitor books with no assumptions about their purpose or function and approached them through basic questions about their use. Data analysis revealed that visitor writing practices were encouraged in different ways in the two museums of this study. Visitors to the National Museum of American Jewish History were encouraged to "imaginatively participate in historic retellings" (Noy, 2015, p. 215). The message at the Florida Holocaust Museum was for visitors to reflect on their visit and their experience in

the museum. It is important to note that in both museums, visitors' writing practices are public and collaborative.

Offering visitors opportunities for engagement through writing practices can be a way to connect the visitor with the museum display and elicit reflection (Noy, 2015). Preparing the environment to afford these possibilities for action with the specific aim of listening to visitors' voices and offering a space for reflection can not only promote a dialogue between the museum and its visitors but also between visitors. Noy (2015) also highlighted the notion of the visitor as an active participant in an exhibition. This notion aligns with one of the central tenets of the sociocultural perspective that highlights the relationship between the individual and the environment and how that environment can foster specific social practices.

A different way to promote participation and engagement at an art exhibition is to focus on the connection between art and society. In a study about art education and civic engagement, Shields et al. (2020) explored how arts education could foster civic engagement in students from Grades 8 through 12 in Tallahassee, Florida. Through an asset-based pedagogy, Shields et al. (2020) explored the following question: "How might positioning teens as arts-based researchers create an opening for young people to be civically minded critical thinkers?" (p. 123). Shields et al. (2020) examined two different avenues for research—the first positioned students as arts-based researchers, and the second identified learnings from the research process and connections to the curriculum through the lens of civic engagement. The study focused on the Tallahassee Foot Soldiers as active participants in the 1950s and 1960s civil rights movements.

Because the study occurred in a summer camp, it allowed participants to examine primary sources, such as state archives, conduct interviews with community members, and walk the city as a form of research. The students who participated in this study created art inspired by

the history they had examined and how it connected to contemporary events. Drawing on the student-as-researchers approach, Shields et al. (2020) encouraged participants to see themselves as arts-based researchers from the beginning. For this study, Shields et al. created field guides that had note-taking pages, research prompts, space for reflection, and a space for art making. The researchers aimed to learn how engaging in specific practices at a summer workshop can inform an integration between civic engagement and arts education. Shields et al. (2020) found that “material reflection, embodied practice, and historical relevance” (p. 129) were key aspects of fostering civic engagement through the arts.

Although this study does not occur at an art exhibition, the idea of thinking about the visitors as researchers would be interesting to further examine in the context of the AECD. Shields et al. (2020) discussed a “sense of ownership” (p. 128), which seemed critical to strengthening the connection between the visitor and the art exhibition. This study shows what it looks like to design and organize an educational program that connects the arts to civic engagement.

The final study examined in this section focuses on transformational experience in a museum setting (Soren, 2009). One important part of this chapter is finding ways to be “broadly inclusive” (Pedersen, 2000, p. 41) and offering visitors at an art exhibition opportunities for reflection and self-reflection. Soren (2009) highlighted how to implement the transformative lens in the context of art and links it to the context of formal education.

Through two case studies, Soren (2009) investigated “the nature of transformational museum experiences and potential ‘triggers for transformation’” (p. 233). First, Soren (2009) explored literature for the meaning of “transformational experiences” and found associations with “inventing knowledge” (p. 234), abandoning old ways of thinking and exploring new

perspectives. To identify transformational experiences and their triggers, Soren documented the perceptions of 16 students of a museum studies course imparted in 2009 at the University of Toronto. Soren identified 10 transformational experiences and their triggers, documented on a table detailing the exhibitions they corresponded to and why they were deemed transformational. The first case study occurred at the Royal Ontario Museum and focused on transformative experiences for teachers and artists. The study consisted of a 2-week workshop where elementary teachers explored how to integrate arts experiences into the classroom meaningfully. This program was a summer institute that took place over 3 years. Soren (2009) examined “personal growth and transformation” (p. 239). The methods included participant observation, photo and video documentation, interviews, questionnaires, participants’ process folios, action research project reflective journals, and observation and documentation activities and events.

For this case study, Soren (2009) collaborated with Upitis and Smithrim from Queen’s University in Kingston, Ontario, to develop a matrix that shed light on the interaction between arts experiences and teacher transformation. Findings from this study revealed that participants demonstrated having transformative experiences, specifically in terms of “taking personal risks, making connections to prior experience” (Soren, 2009, p. 240), having “a greater understanding of themselves and belonging to a community” (Soren, 2009, p. 240). Teachers who returned to this program showed “profound changes and longer-term transformation” (Soren, 2009, p. 240). The second case study focused on the role of Canada in international development. The context of the study was a traveling exhibition that highlighted Canada’s role in international development. Through a partnership with the Aga Khan Foundation Canada, the exhibition aimed to “inspire” (Soren, 2009, p. 241) visitors by seeing Canada’s contribution to solving

critical issues worldwide. Volunteer guides experienced in the work of the Aga Khan Foundation Canada guided visitors.

The study occurred in 2008 and used multiple methods to show the transformative effect of visitors. Data were collected through visitor observation, surveys, comment cards, and guide feedback forms. Data were analyzed for three different cities. The exhibition traveled to 185 comment card questions from Victoria, 96 from Calgary, and 93 from Vancouver. Soren (2009) reported that the comment cards evidenced “personal change as a result of visiting the exhibition” (p. 244). Both case studies highlighted the importance of authentic objects, novelty in emotional experiences, and a new cultural understanding were key triggers for transformational experiences. According to Soren (2009), both case studies point to the idea that embracing new ways of thinking and moving away from “old ways of thinking” (p. 248) were key components of transformational experiences that afford space for new ideas and knowledge.

Strategies such as those described by the literature examined in this section (Noy, 2015; Shields et al., 2020; Soren, 2009) can be implemented to support and enhance the experiences visitors reported as already experiencing. Findings from the needs assessment in Chapter 2 revealed that visitors describe their experience as about the dimensions of reflection and aesthetic experience. Strategies such as those described in this section can provide additional support for self-reflection by offering visitors scaffolding that supports other ways of seeing (Berger, 1990). Strategies can also further be informed by the different types of transformational learning for visitors to consider other ways of thinking (E. Taylor, 2017).

The Environment at an Art Exhibition and its Connection to the Visitor Experience

A central tenant of sociocultural theory is that learning occurs with others in a specific setting (Gee, 2008; Lim & Renshaw, 2001; Vygotsky, 1978). This section will examine specific

aspects of the environment at an art exhibition that impact the visitor experience. This section will not focus on exhibition texts and labels as ways to achieve specific outcomes, as did the two previous sections; rather, it will examine how different aspects of the environment are related to experience.

In their quantitative study, Szubielska et al. (2021) investigated how artworks' physical context and knowledge can influence viewers' aesthetic experience and judgment of interactive installations. Participants were 158 psychology master's students with no prior knowledge of the arts. The researchers divided participants into five experimental groups situated in either gallery or classroom contexts: (a) gallery exhibition context with artwork title knowledge ($n = 26$), (b) gallery exhibition context with artwork title and curatorial description knowledge ($n = 24$), (c) video documentation in a classroom context with no title or description knowledge ($n = 33$), (d) video documentation in a classroom context with title knowledge ($n = 36$), and (e) video documentation in a classroom context with title and description knowledge ($n = 39$). Eleven installation artworks with their titles and descriptions were used. To measure emotional reaction, the researchers used the Self-Assessment Manikin, which allowed participants to choose their emotional response (portrayed pictorially) to each artwork and then rate those responses on a 9-point Likert scale. Findings indicated that viewers under the gallery conditions showed a greater appreciation for the artworks than those in the classroom.

Additionally, titles and curatorial descriptions of each work of art positively impacted viewers, suggesting that knowledge about an artwork impacts aesthetic appreciation. Gallery condition participants also "rated their naturally originating aesthetic emotions" (Szubielska et al., 2021, p. 3709) higher than those in the classroom condition. The gallery condition also influenced the "subjective significance of aesthetic emotions" (Szubielska et al., 2021, p. 3709).

Interestingly, the emotional experience of the work was influenced by the curatorial text but not by the title. The authors concluded that this study was consistent with findings from other studies, suggesting that an exhibition's physical context positively influenced reception and that curatorial texts played a critical role in the viewer's experience of the art exhibition.

Consistent with Szubielska et al.'s (2021) findings, Ishiguro et al. (2020) found that the context of the art viewing experience plays a role in how that experience is shaped. Ishiguro et al. examined the differences between a museum and classroom settings regarding their educational effect when using VTS. VTS is an educational method in museum education that draws on constructivism to offer visitors a structure to analyze and interpret a work of art without teaching about it.

Two questions guided Ishiguro et al.'s (2020) research. The first question examined the extent to which the short-term effects of VTS differed between a classroom and a museum—the second explored the difference between a classroom and a museum regarding transfer effects. The study occurred in Japan, in a museum at Tamagawa University and a university classroom. Of the participants, 53 were undergraduates, 13 were males, and 40 were females. All participants were students majoring in art education. Through random selection, participants were assigned to one of the two conditions. The classroom condition had 29 participants, and the museum had 24 participants. The study used eye-tracking equipment, 7-point semantic differential scales, a 7-point Likert scale, the Art Experience Questionnaire adjusted for university students, and the Japanese version of the 10-Item Personality Inventory. Data collection occurred before and after three VTS classes under two conditions: museum and classroom conditions. Data for the dependent variable viewing time were collected through eye-tracking equipment. To evaluate works of art, Ishiguro et al. used the 7-point semantic

differential scales that measured feelings of interest, confusion, novelty, comprehension favorability, and beauty. A 7-point Likert scale was also used to evaluate the artworks regarding appreciation and beauty.

Findings from Ishiguro et al.'s (2020) study suggest that regarding the effect of an educational setting, viewing original artworks in a museum had a more positive response than viewing reproductions in the classroom. This effect, however, was reduced as the participants engaged in VTS classes. These findings suggest that offering visitors a structure, such as those in VTS, for analyzing and interpreting art promotes interest and engagement.

Szubielska et al. (2021) and Ishiguro et al. (2020) suggested that the context of viewing art, specifically the art gallery, plays a critical role in visitors' experiences. The emphasis of these two studies was on the setting. Other researchers have examined specific aspects of that setting and how that impacts the art-viewing experience. One such avenue for research is the role of background music in visitors' experience of art exhibitions (Loureiro et al., 2019).

In a quantitative research study, Loureiro et al. (2019) conducted two experiments to explore the extent to which background music had an impact on the experience of art exhibitions, specifically in terms of evaluation, memory, and behavioral intention, that is, intention to revisit and recommend an art gallery. The first experiment was conducted under laboratory conditions with virtual works of art shown with a projector. For this first experiment, Loureiro et al. worked with 234 participants between 18 and 85 years. Researchers divided participants into three groups. One group experienced the painting with no background music, and two groups experienced the pictures with background music, each with a different tempo. Participants evaluated the paintings in three categories: arousal, valence, and liking, all using scales. For the memory test, researchers showed participants 16 paintings: eight from the previous part of the

experiment and eight new paintings. Participants were asked to identify the paintings they had seen before.

The final part of the experiment asked participants to rate their overall experiences on a 6-point scale. Loureiro et al. (2019) found that background music was not favorable in the evaluation of art but that it helped remember the paintings. For the second experiment, Loureiro et al. tested the setting of the art gallery and explored if this experience influenced emotion and memory. Music was used again to see how much this stimulus influenced responses. Seven art galleries participated, and data was gathered from 218 participants through questionnaires for 5 months. Participants were not invited to participate in the experiment but were natural gallery visitors. Loureiro et al. (2019) found that the art gallery experience yielded a positive response in terms of behavioral intention through “pleasant arousal and memory” (p. 18). In this second experiment, Loureiro et al. (2019) found that music is helpful for recall but negatively impacted the appraisal of works of art.

This study shows how research can be conducted linking works of art with cognition and memory, which broaden and deepen the understanding of visitors’ experience at an art exhibition. A different study exploring recall and memory in a museum setting examined the effects of sensory experiences and interactivity. In it, Loureiro et al. (2019) examined a rare practice at art exhibitions, allowing visitors to handle works of art.

Sweetman et al. (2020) looked at evidence from the fields of museology, archaeology, and psychology “to understand how different types of exhibits and sensory experiences contribute to individual memory formation” (p. 18). Sweetman et al. (2020) conducted controlled experiments with 64 participants, using three ways of presenting archaeological material: glass case display, virtual manipulation of 3-D models, and handling original artifacts. Sweetman et al.

(2020) used the following standard tests to measure the “impact of Viewing Condition upon memory” (p. 26): Recognition, Recollective Experience, and Context Recall. Participants included 22 undergraduate students, 25 postgraduate students, and 17 non-student adults. The age of participants was diverse, ranging from 18 to 80 years. Before the experiment, all participants were asked if they had background knowledge in archeology, either through study, fieldwork, or personal interest; 30 said yes (24 females and six males). This finding indicated participant group allocation was either “expert” or “novice” for tests on previous experience and memory.

After consenting to the experiment, participants filled out their demographic data on a form. The experiment was composed of two phases (study and test), where one occurred immediately after the other. The rationale behind immediate testing was that “it represents the most accurate measure of encoding and retrieval without interference from other sources during the retention period” (Sweetman et al., 2020, p. 27). For the measure of object recognition, there was no significant difference between the three modes of display. Regarding recollective experience and recall, object manipulation yielded the greatest remembrance, and results showed no significant difference between glass cases and virtual presentations. Objects were classified based on specific characteristics to explore if those characteristics made objects easier to remember. The researchers found that depictions of animals and humans were more memorable than decorative motifs.

Sweetman et al. (2020) also found that descriptions in labels were more important for memory formation than names and dates. Archaeological knowledge made a “minimal difference” in recall. This study connects well with the idea that offering visitors descriptions and integrating the senses contributes to memory formation. Although indirectly related to the

context of art exhibitions, Fugate et al. (2019) studied the role of embodied cognition in learning, supporting the idea that memory formation increases with sensory interaction.

This section considered studies on how an art exhibition's environment could impact visitors' experience. These studies show different strategies for specific outcomes such as increasing memory (Sweetman et al., 2020), the role of background music (Loureiro et al., 2019), and how the setting of the art gallery offers a different experience than the setting of a classroom (Ishiguro et al., 2020; Szubielska et al., 2021).

Conclusion

Art exhibitions are spaces that can offer meaningful learning experiences (J. H. Falk & Dierking, 2016; Hohenstein & Tran, 2007; Mcmanus, 1989; Wang & Yoon, 2013). Designing exhibition texts and labels informed by research on the learning sciences can foster the development of thinking skills (Ritchhart, 2007; Ritchhart et al., 2011) in visitors and support their learning. Museum text and labels can also support reflection, self-reflection, and transformational learning experiences (Soren, 2009). Finally, the environment plays a critical role in the art experience at an art exhibition (Ishiguro et al., 2020; Szubielska et al., 2021).

Regarding fostering inclusivity in an art exhibition, Banks et al.'s (2001) second principle discusses equitable learning opportunities for all students. Even though the principles refer to formal education, the lessons they offer may apply to other contexts. In art exhibitions, it would mean that the exhibition offers visitors equitable opportunities for engaging with art, regardless of prior knowledge. Current practices at the AECD can create evidence-based programs to fulfill its mission of offering visitors cultural activities that promote flourishing (Cotter & Pawelski, 2022).

Chapter 4

A Guide for Practice for Museum Professionals

Previous chapters explored the experience of visitors at an art exhibition.

Bronfenbrenner's (1994) ecological systems theory guided a review of the literature to understand the factors related to the visitor experience, revealing that specific practices at art exhibitions, such as the use of language, can contribute to the exclusion of visitors (Coffee, 2008; Lachapelle, 2007; C. Taylor, 2017). An empirical study in the context of the Arts Education and Culture Department from the Municipality of Guatemala showed that visitors perceived labels as too intellectual. A further exploration of the literature using Gee's (2008) sociocultural theory and opportunity to learn as a guiding framework shed light on how art exhibition designers can develop programs that target specific outcomes for visitors (Ritchhart, 2007; Szubielska et al., 2021; Tishman, 2017).

This chapter offers a guide for practice with a set of recommendations for museum professionals in the context of the Arts Education and Culture Department of the Municipality of Guatemala (see Appendix E). The aim of the guide is to bridge research and practice by offering art exhibition designers a framework for critical reflection, research-informed practice, and collaborative inquiry. I hope that this guide will contribute to the efforts of thinking about the visitor as central to the process of designing an art exhibition and help reflect on practices that promote human flourishing (Cotter et al., 2022, 2023; Cotter & Pawelski, 2022).

Background

As part of a city's social and cultural infrastructure, art exhibitions are spaces that support social and cultural life (Latham & Layton, 2019). Visiting an art exhibition can support lifelong learning (Carr, 1992; Falk & Dierking, 2016), wellbeing, and connection (Cotter & Pawelski,

2022). Literature examining visitors' experience at an art exhibition revealed that historically, art exhibitions have been regarded as spaces for social and cultural exclusion (Bourdieu et al., 1991; Jensen, 2013; Suarez-Fernandez et al., 2020). Additionally, the literature review shed light on how practices like the use of technical language in exhibition texts and labels can contribute to excluding visitors unfamiliar with the art world (Coffee, 2008; Lachapelle, 2007; C. Taylor, 2017). Although there have been changes in practice at art exhibitions (Mayer, 2005), the idea that there is one specific way to understand art that, in turn, informs the content of exhibition texts and labels of art exhibitions is still prevalent in some contexts.

The needs assessment conducted at an art exhibition from a public cultural institution in Guatemala City sought to understand the visitor experience by exploring if and how the perception of museum texts and labels affected their experience. The study revealed that all participants perceived their experience as positive (Packer et al., 2018). Specifically, most visitors described their experiences as related to reflective engagement, aesthetic appreciation, and peacefulness (Packer et al., 2018). Additionally, the study showed that participants are frequent visitors to art exhibitions, visiting one more than five times a year, and most tend to visit alone. When participants in this study visited art exhibitions, they read all or nearly all the labels of the objects they are interested in, and they did so with great interest. While 54% of participants perceived the labels as too intellectual, 39% perceived them as oversimplified. This might be explained by the fact that there were two types of labels at the art exhibition and that those labels differed greatly in size and content. Since the art exhibition was also a contest for emerging artists, three works selected by the curatorial team were displayed with extensive text.

That participants perceived labels as too intellectual is consistent with the literature about art exhibitions that examines how some practices, such as the use of technical art and historical

or philosophical language, can be a barrier to those unfamiliar with the art world (Bourdieu et al., 1991; Lachapelle, 2007; Lachapelle et al., 2003). The Arts Education and Culture Department (AECD) of the Municipality of Guatemala aims to offer educational programs through the arts for broad audiences. It is at the heart of the institution's mission that its programs foster inclusion and offer visitors meaningful ways of experiencing the arts (Municipalidad de Guatemala, 2021).

In the AECD of the Municipality of Guatemala, there is a team that organizes and designs art exhibitions. The members of the art exhibition team also write the exhibition texts and the labels that accompany the works of art. According to the literature, curators and administrators knowledgeable in the art world tend to hold assumptions about how art should be looked at and understood (Ginsburgh & Weyers, 2010; Lachapelle, 2007; Prottas, 2017). Therefore, the art exhibition team's work is a crucial component of the art exhibitions at the AECD, as their work impacts how the visitors experience the art on display.

The following section offers a guide for practice designed for the members of the exhibition team at the AECD in the Municipality of Guatemala. The first part of the section describes the framework containing the three main components of the guide: critical reflection, research-informed practice, and collaborative inquiry. The second part of the section explains each component, elaborating on its definition and purpose. The final part offers a set of recommendations for art exhibition designers at the AECD in the Municipality of Guatemala.

A Guide for Practice for Museum Professionals

The art exhibitions at the AECD of the Municipality of Guatemala are designed by a team consisting of curators, administrators, graphic designers, and exhibition staff members whose work is to conceptualize, design, and carry out art exhibitions. The institutional purpose of these art exhibitions is to offer the public a meaningful opportunity to engage in the arts

(Municipalidad de Guatemala, 2021). Current practice for the AECD team adheres to the traditional notion of designing art exhibitions and educational programs where art historical interpretation is the guiding principle of their work (Lachapelle, 2007; Mayer, 2005). In the way the work is done, the works of art are central in the design of the art exhibitions. This specific practice implies that meaning is in the object on display, and that visitors need to find this one specific meaning through art-historical interpretation (Mayer, 2005). Consistent with the shifting notions within the field of visitor studies, the guide described in this chapter aims to offer a way for practitioners to move away from this traditional model and consider visitors' voice as central in the meaning-making experience (Lachapelle, 2007; Mayer, 2005).

To achieve the aim of placing visitors as central in the design of art exhibitions and offer them meaningful experiences through the arts, this guide for practice offers art exhibition designers a tool to structure their work designing art exhibitions. The following guide explains a framework for critical reflection, research-informed practice, and collaborative inquiry. It is hoped the guide will contribute to the shift in thinking about visitors as central to an art exhibition (Mayer, 2005) and promote practices that contribute to social wellbeing (Cotter et al., 2022, 2023; Cotter & Pawelski, 2022).

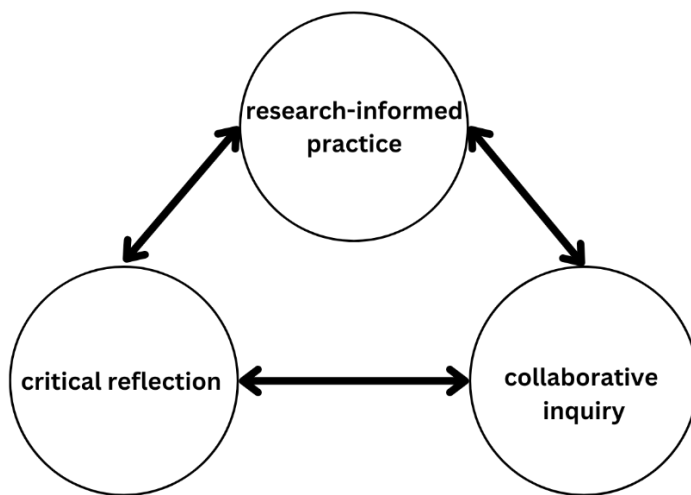
The Art Exhibition Design Framework

The art exhibition design framework combines research with practice. The framework includes three basic components: (a) critical reflection about positionality and bias (Fook, 2021; Mezirow, 1991; Ravitch, 2014; Wink, 2011); (b) research-informed practice targeting specific outcomes at an art exhibition (Barends et al., 2014; Biesta, 2007; Cain, 2018; Kvernbeek, 2016), and (c) collaborative inquiry (Donohoo & Velasco, 2022; Weinbaum et al., 2004). This section offers a thorough analysis of each component of the framework. In each case, there will be a

definition of the component followed by a discussion about the component's connection to the literature and empirical findings of the needs assessment study. Finally, there will be recommendations about the purpose of each component and its implementation in the context of the Arts Education and Culture Department of the Municipality of Guatemala.

Figure 4.1

Art Exhibition Design Framework



Note. The art exhibition design framework is interdependent and iterative. It assumes ongoing cycles of critical reflection, identifies specific outcomes, and includes data collection and analysis to gain an understanding of the site and the extent to which the outcomes are being attained.

Critical Reflection

A Definition

In defining critical reflection, it is important to make the distinction between reflection and critical reflection (Béres & Fook, 2020; Brookfield, 2009; Mezirow, 1998). Reflection is a form of thinking (Béres & Fook, 2020) that does not imply transformation (Mezirow, 1998).

Critical reflection is about deeply examining and challenging one's assumptions (Béres & Fook, 2020; Mezirow, 1998; Wink, 2011) with the aim of improving practice and developing an ethical perspective that acknowledges the relationship between language and power, and is aligned with social justice (Béres & Fook, 2020).

According to Mezirow (1997), transformation occurs when an individual is able to effect change in their frames of reference. Frames of reference include the set of assumptions that an adult has acquired throughout life and serve as a lens through which they create meaning from experience. Frames of reference are the structures that shape beliefs and actions in the world. They incorporate two dimensions: habits of mind and a point of view (Mezirow, 1997, 1998). Habits of mind are the customary ways of thinking, feeling, and acting that are informed by culture, education, society, and other influences (Mezirow, 1997). Habits of mind then shape a particular point of view that an individual expresses in their meaning-making experiences (Mezirow, 1997).

Central to Mezirow's (1997) transformative theory of learning is critical reflection (Lundgren & Poell, 2016). For an individual to change their frames of reference, they need to critically reflect on their beliefs and assumptions (Caswell, 2021). Critical reflection is also central to improving practice (Ravitch, 2014). Critically reflecting on professional practice can lead to an increase in awareness about specific aspects that need to be examined through a critical lens (Ravitch, 2014).

The Context of Art Exhibitions

Art exhibitions have historically been associated with social and cultural exclusion (Jensen, 2013) and that frequent visitors to art exhibitions tend to be highly educated and have high incomes (Bourdieu et al., 1991; M. Falk & Katz-Gerro, 2016; Jung, 2014; Suarez-

Fernandez et al., 2020). Additionally, specific practices, such as the use of language in museum texts and labels, further promote social and cultural exclusion at art exhibitions (Bennet, 2019; Blunden, 2020; Coffee, 2008; Lachapelle, 2007). These practices are carried out by museum professionals and informed by a longstanding art historical tradition about how visitors should approach the art in an art exhibition setting (Ginsburgh & Weyers, 2010; Lachapelle, 2007; Mayer, 2005; Prottas, 2017).

The empirical study in this dissertation revealed that participants perceived labels as too intellectual. This finding is supported by the literature about art exhibitions where the use of scholarly language in an art exhibition's text and labels can be a barrier to visitors unfamiliar with the artworld (Bourdieu et al., 1991; Lachapelle, 2007; Lachapelle et al., 2003). As all members of the art exhibition team in the AECD are all experienced practitioners, their identities as artists, art historians, administrators, and scholars inform their work. They are part of a tradition that has engaged in over a century-long discussion about the relationship between objects, ideas, and society (Teather, 1991). Historically, this tradition has responded to Eurocentric values regarding the interpretation of the objects on display (Ginsburgh & Weyers, 2010; Prottas, 2017; Teather, 1991). In the context of art exhibitions in a Latin American country like Guatemala, critical reflection would be a way to rethink current frames of reference and incorporate context-specific knowledge to develop new ways of seeing and doing the work of designing art exhibitions and educational programs. To effectively transform practice and create spaces where equity and inclusion for all visitors are at the forefront of the agenda, the art exhibition team at the AECD can "learn, unlearn, and relearn" (Wink, 2011, p. 36) and develop critical reflective skills to inform their work at art exhibitions.

Developing Critically Reflective Practice in the Arts Education and Culture Department of the Municipality of Guatemala

Both reflection and critical reflection have been recognized as essential to improve practice in different professions (Fook, 2021). Fook and Gardner (2007) developed a model to bring critical reflection to professional practice in any discipline. The model was designed for small groups of professionals to reflect on specific aspects of their experience and practice. The model has two stages. Stage 1 of the model consists of “unsettling” (Fook & Gardner, 2007, p. 52) participant’s assumptions through a reflective process. Stage 2 of the model is about how the participant’s practice may be transformed as a result of the reflective process. The theoretical underpinnings of the model rest on four pillars: the reflective approach to practice, reflexivity, postmodernism/ deconstruction, and critical social theory. The reflective approach to practice is about examining hidden assumptions and reflecting on how they impact professional practice. Reflexivity is about how our identities and context inform the creation of knowledge (Crenshaw, 1991; Walby et al., 2012). Postmodernism and deconstruction question the idea of a single truth and how language and its uses is connected to power structures and dominant discourses. Critical social theory is about how unexamined assumptions may perpetuate practices that promote exclusion.

In Fook and Gardner’s (2007) model, a facilitator guides the process. The process consists of three sessions, ideally held 1 week apart. The first session is the introduction to the model and culture of the sessions, and it has a duration of 3 hours. The two subsequent sessions are about Stages 1 and 2, respectively, and have a duration of approximately 6 hours each. The purpose of becoming critically reflective is to transform professional practice in a way that considers participants’ beliefs and their connection to a particular context (Fook & Gardner,

2007; Ravitch, 2014). In the AECD of the Municipality of Guatemala, Fook and Gardner's (2007) model could provide an effective way to introduce critical reflection and apply it in their professional practice.

As designed, the model consists of three sessions: an introductory session, a second session about critically examining hidden assumptions, and a third session about how the critical reflection of assumptions can transform practice. The introductory session includes an explanation of how critical reflection is both about analysis and taking action (Fook & Gardner, 2007; Mezirow, 1998; Wink, 2011). It also sheds light on the process of becoming aware of and "unsettling" (Fook & Gardner, 2007, p. 67) assumptions (Fook & Gardner, 2007; Mezirow, 1978, 1998). In Stages 1 and 2, the four theories that inform critical reflection—(a) the reflective approach to practice, (b) reflexivity, (c) postmodernism/deconstruction, and (d) critical social theory—guide the questions for discussion.

Table 4.1 offers samples of the questions that can guide the process of critical reflection in the context of the AECD of the Municipality of Guatemala. The questions are an adaptation of Fook and Gardner's (2007) model and are by no means prescriptive. The purpose of Table 4.1 is to illustrate how the different philosophical traditions inform the types of questions that can guide the process of critical reflection.

Table 4.1*Sample Questions for Critical Reflection Stemming From Four Philosophical Traditions*

Category	Stage	Question
Reflective practice	Stage 1	Are there any contradictions between what I say and do and the implications of my actions?
	Stage 2	What do I need to change about my thinking to address these contradictions?
Reflexivity	Stage 1	How does my identity shape my professional practice?
	Stage 2	How can I be open to considering other perspectives and points of view?
Postmodernism/ Deconstruction	Stage 1	How does my use of language impact my professional practice?
	Stage 2	In what ways do I need to examine my ways of doing to be more aligned with my desired practice?
Critical social theory	Stage 1	What assumptions do I hold about my professional practice?
	Stage 2	What do I need to change about my beliefs and practice to become less restricted?

Note. Adapted from *Practising Critical Reflection: A Resource Handbook*, by J. Fook and F.

Gardner, 2007, Open University Press, pp. 74–76.

To further inform critical reflection in art exhibitions, additional themes to consider are (a) the inclusion of multiple voices and partnerships (Lachapelle, 2007; Saul & Jolie, 2018; Teather, 1991), and (b) the role of visitor experience (Blunden, 2020; Hubard, 2011; Teather, 1991). Including multiple voices in the process of critical reflection means considering how diverse perspectives can enrich art exhibitions. One example is being intentional about including indigenous individuals and communities in designing art exhibitions (Anderson, 2020; Saul & Jolie, 2018; Teather, 1991). In Guatemala, with an indigenous population of over 40% (*Portal De Resultados Del Censo 2018*, n.d.), including multiple perspectives would be a more accurate representation of the diversity in the country.

Critical reflection on the role of visitor experience means examining the assumptions around how art should be looked at and understood (Lachapelle, 2007; Prottas, 2017; Teather, 1991). Traditional practice places curators and designers in a position of authority where they

hold the knowledge to read works of art and that there is one right way to do so (Lachapelle, 2007; Mayer, 2005; Rice, 1988). Although there have been shifts in thinking about the role of the visitor in the meaning-making experience (Mayer, 2005), critically reflecting on the visitor experience would offer the art exhibition team a framework to consider moving away from traditional practice and embrace other ways of doing.

Critical reflection requires a deep examination of one's assumptions (Béres & Fook, 2020; Mezirow, 1998; Wink, 2011). In the context of the AECD of the Municipality of Guatemala, adopting critical reflection would be a way to improve practice and acknowledge how the work of the art exhibition team can be more aligned with the mission of the institution of offering individuals meaningful ways of experiencing the arts (Municipalidad de Guatemala, 2021) and social justice (Béres & Fook, 2020). This section offered a model (Fook & Gardner, 2007) to implement critical reflection to small teams of professionals to “learn, unlearn, and relearn” (Wink, 2011, p. 36) and design art exhibitions that are “broadly inclusive” (Pedersen, 2000, p. 41).

Research-Informed Practice

Defining Research-Informed Practice for Art Exhibition Designers

Research-informed practice is about making changes that improve practice and move away from actions that do not produce desired outcomes (Kvernbekk, 2016). In research-informed practice, decision-making should be guided by good-quality evidence and critical thinking (Barends et al., 2014; Begg et al., 2014). Engaging in research-informed practice requires (a) an examination of what counts as good evidence (Barends et al., 2014; Cain, 2018) and (b) the application of research into practice (Cain, 2018; Hardiman, 2012).

Evidence can come in many forms, such as professional experience, practice-based knowledge, seeing what others are doing in similar settings, empirical studies, and other sources (Barends et al., 2014; Ravitch, 2014). Even though different types of evidence can be helpful for professional practice, in the Art Exhibition Design Framework, the component of research-informed practice will focus on the use of evidence from empirical research and its application in practice. As research is being constantly produced in different areas of knowledge, working with evidence from empirical studies offers practitioners the possibility of expanding their perspective and considering other ways of doing (Barends et al., 2014).

Many researchers produce knowledge that can inform professional practice; however, practitioners need to be cautious about the ways in which it is translated and applied into practice as there is a risk that their findings will be misunderstood or inaccurately applied in specific settings (Hardiman, 2012). Additionally, the dangers of using unfounded evidence and relying on one's beliefs and assumptions to inform practice can prevent practitioners from reaching their desired goals and seeing the reasons for those results. Research-informed practice requires practitioners to effectively evaluate and choose the best evidence to engage in practice that is aligned with their goals (Barends et al., 2014).

Research as a Tool to Improve Practice in the Context of Art Exhibitions

The empirical study in this dissertation is a starting point for the types of evidence that can inform the work of the art exhibition team. The knowledge it generated about the local, specific needs (Ravitch, 2014) of the art exhibitions designed at the AECD offers practitioners initial ideas about the aspects of practice that could be examined and, therefore, the possibility to engage in meaningful work that advances desired outcomes. As the study was carried out in one

of the art exhibitions designed by the art exhibition team at the AECD, its findings are “deeply contextualized” (Ravitch, 2014, p. 5) and close to their work.

An initial idea that can be further examined is how visitors in this study described their experience at an art exhibition. In this study, most visitors perceived their visit as related to reflective engagement and aesthetic experience (Packer et al., 2018). Recent research about the experience of reflection (Bertling, 2019; Høffding et al., 2020) and aesthetic appreciation (Bao et al., 2016; Lankford, 2002; Leder et al., 2004; Tröndle & Tschacher, 2016) could offer the art exhibition team a deeper understanding about current visitor experience outcomes.

Art exhibitions are also spaces where different forms of thinking can thrive, such as deep observation and critical reflection (Pepper, 2019; Ritchhart, 2007; Tishman, 2017). Art is also a vehicle to cultivate empathy and critically reflect on biases, assumptions and stereotypes that perpetuate social injustice (Arnold et al., 2014; Porto & Zembylas, 2020). Finally, the art exhibition team could explore how to design art exhibitions that promote other visitor experience outcomes aligned with the mission of the AECD such as community-building and offering meaningful ways of engaging with the arts (Municipalidad de Guatemala, 2021).

Developing Research-Informed Practice in the Arts Education and Culture Department of the Municipality of Guatemala

How to bridge research with practice has been the subject of extensive discussions in many disciplines (Biesta, 2007; Cain, 2018; Spencer et al., 2012). Researchers have put forward different frameworks and models about the ways in which research can inform practice in different settings (Biesta, 2007; Cain, 2018; Nutley et al., 2008). Although there is literature on how the arts can be a form of research (Bjerregaard, 2020), and the ways in which art exhibitions

offer opportunities for research (Pepper, 2019), there is a gap in the literature about how to incorporate empirical research in the practice of designing art exhibitions.

As a plan about how the art exhibition team can inform practice with empirical research, this section will draw on ideas about how research has informed practice in education. Nutley et al. (2008) posited two main contrasting approaches when connecting research and practice in education. The first is the rational-linear perspective that assumes that research use is linear, where knowledge production and its practical application are “straightforward and unproblematic” (Nutley et al., 2008, p. 55). This perspective assumes knowledge is objective and researchers are considered authorities in the field. The second approach is the interactive perspective that adapts research to specific local contexts. The interactive perspective assumes that knowledge is contextualized and subject to ongoing change. Under this perspective, practitioners work with research and translate it into their practice in ways that suit the specific context.

In addition to the two different perspectives, there are three different models of how research can inform practice (Nutley et al., 2008, 2009). The three models can be operationalized either with the rational-linear or interactive perspectives; however, this section will address only the models within the interactive perspective. The first is the research-based practitioner model, where the individual practitioner actively interprets research findings in context. Under this model, practitioners decide how to apply research to practice. The second model is the embedded research model, where practitioners do not engage with research. This is a top-down approach where research informs practice via policies and procedures bypassing the practitioner. The third model is the organizational excellence model, where organizations take the lead in the ways in which research will inform practice.

For the art exhibition team at the AECD, the recommendation is to adopt the interactive perspective and the research-based practitioner model. Although this perspective and model offer practitioners the highest levels of autonomy, practitioners need to develop the skills to become judicious consumers of research. To guide research-informed decision-making, Cain's (2018) model detailed in table 4.2 can be a starting point.

Table 4.2

A Process for Research-Informed Decision Making

Assumptions >	Evidence >	Discussion >	Decisions
Reflection on implicit and explicit assumptions about a specific areas of practice/ art exhibition	Critical examination of the research studies that will inform practice	Discussion within the members of the art exhibition team	If and how research will inform practice

Note. Adapted from *Becoming a Research-Informed School: Why? What? How?* (1st ed.), by T.

Cain, 2018, Routledge (<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315143033>).

The first element of the research-informed decision-making model is reflection. As a starting point for addressing potential avenues for change in practice at the AECD, reflecting on implicit and explicit assumptions is critical, as they are the foundation of our frames of reference (Mezirow, 1998). This element is aligned with one of the components of the art exhibition design framework that identifies critical reflection as essential to improving practice (Fook, 2021). The second element is about evidence. Practitioners need to evaluate and critically examine the evidence that is being considered to inform practice (Profetto-McGrath, 2005). Often, research will present contradictory findings on the same topic, thus the need to compare and evaluate multiple sources (Cain, 2018). The third component is about discussion. Discussion is about considering different perspectives on how to use the research to inform practice. Finally, the last component of the model is when practitioners decide how the research examined will inform practice. To summarize, Cain's (2018) model proposes that practitioners use research with an

awareness of their assumptions and after discussions with their team to make decisions about their work.

This section offered an outline of how members of the art exhibition team could develop a research-informed practice in the AECD. One limitation of this proposal is that as English is the universal language for research (Rao, 2018), access to Spanish-speaking practitioners may be limited. There is, however, an opportunity for the art exhibition team to generate knowledge from their specific context (Ravitch, 2014).

Collaborative Inquiry

Defining Collaborative Inquiry for Art Exhibition Designers

Collaborative inquiry is about groups of practitioners engaging together in questions of professional practice to gain a deep understanding of the issues they identify as important (Donohoo & Velasco, 2022; Weinbaum et al., 2004). It is a process by which practitioners gather evidence and examine their experiences to reflect and learn from those experiences (Weinbaum et al., 2004). The process of collaborative inquiry offers practitioners a structure to learn from their work in a systematic way that results in new ways of thinking and more reflective practice (Donohoo & Velasco, 2022; Weinbaum et al., 2004).

Collaborative inquiry can be transformative as it impacts practitioners and their professional practice (Donohoo & Velasco, 2022). Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) put forward the notion of inquiry “as a stance” (p. 295), where practitioners engage in critical reflection and take an active role in transforming their frames of reference to understand their professional practice better. The perspective of inquiry as a stance is closely connected to critical reflection as it requires a constant examination of assumptions and reframing of beliefs (Fook & Gardner, 2007; Mezirow, 1998; Ravitch, 2014; Wink, 2011). Donohoo and Velasco (2022) clarified that,

while there have been associations between collaborative inquiry and different forms of qualitative research, such as action research and other similar approaches, the central purpose of collaborative inquiry is to support professionals in their specific contexts.

Collaborative inquiry has been extensively studied in the field of education. In this field, collaborative inquiry has focused on questions about students, teachers, and organizational learning (Weinbaum et al., 2004). Fewer studies have examined this approach in the museum setting (O'Neill & Hooper, 2019; Villeneuve & Love, 2017; Williams & Sparks, 2011); however, this gap in the literature offers an opportunity for art exhibition designers to learn from the well-documented experiences in education and consider adopting it to inform their practice. Taken together, the two bodies of literature offer a robust understanding of collaborative inquiry and how it can inform professional practice for art exhibition designers.

Collaborative Inquiry in the Context of Art Exhibitions

The practice of collaborative inquiry has made its way into art exhibitions in a variety of ways (A. R. Love, 2013; O'Neill & Hooper, 2019; Villeneuve & Love, 2017). One approach has been to include visitors to art exhibitions and other arts professionals to work together on curatorial projects (Tooby, 2019). In this approach, curators, arts professionals, and visitors become peers as they move away from traditional roles and embrace other ways of curatorial practice (Tooby, 2019). Other approaches engage in collaborative inquiry by bringing together practitioners from different disciplines to move toward a common goal (Williams & Sparks, 2011). A case study about a collaborative inquiry project at a children's museum involved collaboration between a museum and a university to conduct a study about the perceptions of visitors to an exhibition developed to promote health and nutrition in children (Williams &

Sparks, 2011). These two approaches offer different ways collaborative inquiry has made its way into the museum setting and the multiple possibilities it offers to inform practice.

The empirical study in this dissertation examined an art exhibition that had been designed and carried out following traditional practice in which three independent curators selected the works of art that were accepted into the exhibition and awarded first, second, and third places to the participants. A process of collaborative inquiry where the members of the art exhibition team engage together in questions about their practice and how to improve their work would be a space for rethinking and critically examining traditional ways of designing art exhibitions. This process could allow practitioners to identify ways in which they can move away from the association of curatorial practice in an art exhibition with “taste-making in the market” (Tooby, 2019, p. 138) and toward a more equitable and inclusive practice (Pedersen, 2000).

Developing a Culture of Collaborative Inquiry in the Arts Education and Culture

Department of the Municipality of Guatemala

There are different approaches to implementing collaborative inquiry in professional practice (Donohoo & Velasco, 2022; Weinbaum et al., 2004). Although some approaches place more emphasis on the use of data (N. Love, 2009), others emphasize reflection (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Weinbaum et al., 2004) and creating a culture of inquiry in the organization (Weinbaum et al., 2004). Adopting the process of collaborating inquiry into practice implies that practitioners will have autonomy and agency in deciding what aspects of their work they want to examine and are also collectively responsible for the outcomes of their efforts (Weinbaum et al., 2004).

To engage in collaborative inquiry, members of the art exhibition team at the AECD need to develop the skills required to examine data, understand that there are different structures or

protocols to examine the work, and decide on the rules that will shape the culture of the inquiry group (Weinbaum et al., 2004). Among the resources they will need to engage in improvement efforts through inquiry is time allocation, which is only possible with leadership support (Fisher & Frey, 2014; Weinbaum et al., 2004). Time allocation during the workday would support practitioners in their learning (Guskey, 2014), and it would be a way for the institution to communicate that ongoing learning is essential (Learning Forward, 2011). For collaborative inquiry to be effective, it needs to be a part of the institution's culture (Rohlwing & Spelman, 2014, p. 10) and be of sustained duration (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

To help practitioners visualize a practical way of engaging in collaborative inquiry, Donohoo and Velasco (2016) put forward a model that outlines four stages for collaborative inquiry (see Table 4.3). The four-stage model is a way for practitioners to guide their inquiry efforts in a structured way. Even though the model provides a linear visualization of the different stages of inquiry, the process is cyclical rather than linear, as members of the inquiry group clarify their thinking in the process (Donohoo & Velasco, 2016).

Table 4.3

A Model for Collaborative Inquiry

Stage	Explanation
Stage 1: Framing the problem	Facilitators help the collaborative inquiry group identify a focus and explore the link between professional practice and outcomes.
Stage 2: Collecting evidence	Facilitators offer guidance to reach a common understanding and construct knowledge. Members of the collaborative inquiry group decide on the evidence they need to collect, and the process of collecting it.
Stage 3: Analyzing evidence	With sufficient and relevant evidence about the subject of inquiry facilitators guide the team through the process of examining the data in a systematic way.
Stage 4: Documenting, sharing, and celebrating	The collaborative inquiry group document, share and celebrate their learning. They also discuss their next focus of inquiry.

Note. Adapted from *The Transformative Power of Collaborative Inquiry*, by J. Donohoo and M.

Velasco, 2016, Corwin (<https://doi.org/10.4135/9781071872963>).

The model by Donohoo and Velasco (2016) is one way of going about collaborative inquiry. Weinbaum et al. (2004) suggested using protocols as structures to help guide the learning conversation and engage in a deep examination of the issues that the members of the collaborative inquiry group perceive as important. The tools offered by Donohoo and Velasco and Weinbaum et al. are not mutually exclusive and can be used either separately or in conjunction to serve the groups' needs best.

The component of collaborative inquiry discussed in this section aimed to offer members of the art exhibition team at the AECD a framework to start considering implementing collaborative inquiry in their practice. Engagement with this process could offer them a space to rethink aspects of their work through different perspectives as they work together towards improving practice. The ideas and strategies outlined in this section offer a starting point for the collaborative inquiry process and different ways it can be incorporated into practice.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the development of a guide for practice with a set of recommendations for the art exhibition team in the AECD of the Municipality of Guatemala. The guide bridges research and practice through a framework for critical reflection, research-informed practice, and collaborative inquiry. I hope this guide offers the art exhibition team a practical way to rethink current practice and contributes to the efforts of thinking about the visitor as central to the process of designing an art exhibition (Mayer, 2005).

Implications for Future Research

The empirical study in this dissertation examined how visitors described their experience in an art exhibition and their perception of museum labels. With a small sample size of 19 participants, one avenue for future research is replicating this study with a larger sample size and

a different population. Additionally, future research could benefit from conducting a study such as the one presented in this dissertation in the context of a large museum either in Guatemala or in other parts of the world. Finally, the study in this dissertation was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic such that the restrictions in place at that time provided me with a different set of conditions than those I would find under usual circumstances. One such condition was that physical distance and mask-wearing mandates were still in place when conducting non-participant observations, which may have prevented participants from interacting in the ways they would do under normal circumstances.

Implications for Practice

Practice in an art exhibition setting could benefit from studying the implementation and evaluation of the art exhibition design framework presented in Chapter 4. Understanding how each framework's components connect to the professional practice of art exhibition designers could shed light on how the framework may be refined to better suit the needs of practitioners in the field. Additionally, it would be beneficial to conduct a qualitative inquiry process that examines curator's and administrator's perceptions of visitor experience at an art exhibition and the extent to which findings from the studies reviewed are consistent with the context of the AECD the Municipality of Guatemala.

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Appendix A

Visitor Experience Survey

The following words and phrases can be used to describe the way we feel or respond to various situations in our lives. We want to know the extent to which these words and phrases describe what you experienced as part of your visit here today. We do not want to know how you normally feel, only how **the visit today** made you feel.

Please indicate which of the following words or phrases best describe what you experienced today in your visit (tick all that you experienced **more than you would in your everyday life**):

I felt :

- | | | |
|---|--|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Privileged | <input type="radio"/> Amazed | <input type="radio"/> Tense |
| <input type="radio"/> Sociable | <input type="radio"/> Deep in thought | <input type="radio"/> Stressed |
| <input type="radio"/> Connected spiritually | <input type="radio"/> Alert | <input type="radio"/> Grateful |
| <input type="radio"/> Independent | <input type="radio"/> Honoured | <input type="radio"/> Fortunate |
| <input type="radio"/> Active | <input type="radio"/> Energetic | <input type="radio"/> Peaceful |
| <input type="radio"/> Thoughtful | <input type="radio"/> Concerned for others | <input type="radio"/> Exhilarated |
| <input type="radio"/> Refreshed | <input type="radio"/> Reflective | <input type="radio"/> In control |
| <input type="radio"/> Attentive | <input type="radio"/> Reverent | <input type="radio"/> Confident |
| <input type="radio"/> Excited | <input type="radio"/> Relaxed | <input type="radio"/> Introspective |
| <input type="radio"/> Concerned for nature | <input type="radio"/> Fascinated | <input type="radio"/> Intrigued |
| <input type="radio"/> Overloaded | <input type="radio"/> Mobile | <input type="radio"/> Frustrated |

I experienced a sense of:

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Beauty | <input type="radio"/> Deciding | <input type="radio"/> Concentration |
| <input type="radio"/> Fulfilment | <input type="radio"/> Fellowship | <input type="radio"/> Attachment |
| <input type="radio"/> Nostalgia | <input type="radio"/> Self-discovery | <input type="radio"/> Aesthetic appreciation |
| <input type="radio"/> Respect | <input type="radio"/> Enjoyment | <input type="radio"/> Connection with nature |
| <input type="radio"/> Grandeur | <input type="radio"/> Pondering | <input type="radio"/> Compassion |
| <input type="radio"/> Wonder | <input type="radio"/> Elation | <input type="radio"/> Connection with objects |
| <input type="radio"/> Choice | <input type="radio"/> Sacredness | <input type="radio"/> Self-actualisation |
| <input type="radio"/> Togetherness | <input type="radio"/> Growth | |

It engaged me:

- ☐ Spiritually ☐ Physically ☐ Mentally

It engaged my:

- ☐ Senses ☐ Imagination

Your age: ☐ < 20 ☐ 20 – 29 ☐ 30 – 39 ☐ 40 – 49 ☐ 50 – 59 ☐ 60 +

Your gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female

How often do you visit this attraction: ☐ This is the first time ☐ Once or twice per year
☐ Less than once per year ☐ More than twice a year

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME

Appendix B

Visitor Experiences Dimensions, December 2011

Obtained through personal communication with Dr. Jan Packer on August 24, 2021

Attention

- Alert
- Attentive
- Concentration
- Engaged mentally
- Observant

Privilege

- Fortunate
- Grateful
- Honoured
- Privileged
- Respect

Personal growth

- Accomplishment
- Fulfilment
- Growth
- Self-actualisation
- Self-discovery

Fascination

- Amazed
- Fascinated
- Engaged the imagination
- Intrigued
- Wonder

Compassion

- Compassion
- Concern for animals
- Concern for nature
- Concern for others
- Concern for the world

Autonomy

- Choice
- Confident
- Deciding
- In control
- Independent

Aesthetic appreciation

- Aesthetic appreciation
- Appreciation of objects
- Beauty
- Grandeur
- Engaged the senses

Connection

- Attachment
- Connected to the past
- Connection with objects
- Connection with nature
- Nostalgia

Spiritual engagement

- Connected spiritual
- Reverent
- Sacredness
- Engaged spiritually
- Worship

Togetherness

- Community
- Companionship
- Fellowship
- Sociable
- Togetherness

Reflective engagement

- Deep in thought
- Introspective
- Pondering
- Reflective
- Thoughtful

Physical activity

- Active
- Energetic
- Mobile
- Engaged physically
- Vigorous

Excitement

- Elation
- Enjoyment
- Enthusiastic
- Excited
- Exhilarated

Peacefulness

- Peaceful
- Refreshed
- Relaxed
- Restored
- Serene

Tension

- Frustrated
- Overloaded
- Stressed
- Tense
- Uncomfortable

Appendix C

Object Quality Label Scale

Bennett, R. (2019). Object label quality and label readership in small museums. *International Journal of Arts Management*, 21(3), 42–56. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45221726>

OBJECT LABEL QUALITY SCALE
1. Physical quality
(i) I did not have to get into an uncomfortable physical position (e.g., having to bend down) in order to read the labels. (mean = 2.70; standard deviation [SD] = .80)
(ii) The lettering on the labels was big enough for me to be able to read the contents of the labels without me getting too close. (mean = 2.60; SD = .81)
(iii) The labels were written using words I could easily understand. (mean = 2.91; SD = 1.1)
(iv) The labels contained just the right amount of information: not too much and not too little. (mean = 2.19; SD = 0.9)
2. Interest
(i) After reading the labels I felt more interested in the objects they described than before I had read the labels. (mean = 2.55; SD = 0.88)
(ii) The labels made the objects they described 'come to life'. (mean = 2.25; SD = 0.77)
(iii) The labels caused me to think hard about the objects they described. (mean = 2.34; SD = 1.0)
(iv) The labels made me curious about the objects they described. (mean = 2.26; SD = 0.77)
3. Instructive value
(i) After reading the labels I felt I knew a lot more about the objects they described than before I had read the labels. (mean = 2.92; SD = 1.0)
(ii) The labels helped me understand the meanings of the objects they described. (mean = 2.88; SD = 1.12)
(iii) I learned a lot about the objects from reading the labels that described the objects. (mean = 2.60; SD = 0.9)
(iv) The contents of the labels were very educational (mean = 2.61; SD = 1.10).
4. Respect
(i) I felt that the labels had been deliberately written in ways designed to be 'above the heads' of most of the museum's visitors. (mean = 2.89; SD = 1.21)
(ii) I felt that the labels were written in a way that 'talked down' to visitors. (mean = 2.11; SD = .09)
(iii) The labels were too bookish and too intellectual for my liking. (mean = 2.15; SD = .08)
(iv) As I read the labels I felt I was being treated more as a pupil at school than as a visitor to a museum. (mean = 2.15; SD = 1.0)

Appendix D

Visitor Experience Table Responses

Dimensions of Visitor Experience	Endorsement of Dimensions of Visitor Experience	Individual items of visitor experience	Endorsement of individual items
Physical activity	4 (3%)	I felt active.	2
		I felt mobile.	0
		I felt vigorous.	2
		I felt energetic.	Not included
		It engaged me physically.	0
Excitement	8 (6%)	I felt excited.	1
		I felt exhilarated.	0
		I felt enthusiastic.	2
		I experienced a sense of enjoyment.	3
		I experienced a sense of elation.	2
Aesthetic appreciation	17 (12%)	I experienced a sense of aesthetic appreciation.	6
		I experienced a sense of appreciation of objects.	6
		I experienced a sense of beauty.	5
		I experienced a sense of grandeur.	0
		It engaged my senses.	Not included
Peacefulness	16 (12%)	I felt peaceful.	6
		I felt serene.	3
		I felt relaxed.	4
		I felt refreshed.	2
		I felt restored.	1
Togetherness	14 (10%)	I felt sociable.	2
		I experienced a sense of togetherness.	3
		I experienced a sense of fellowship.	2
		I experienced a sense of companionship.	3
		I experienced a sense of community.	4
Spiritual engagement	1 (1%)	I felt connected spiritually.	1
		I felt reverent.	Not included
		I experienced a sense of sacredness.	0
		I experienced a sense of worship.	0
		It engaged me spiritually.	Not included
Attention	12 (9%)	I felt attentive.	6
		I felt alert.	1
		I felt observant.	3
		I experienced a sense of concentration.	2
		It engaged me mentally.	No included
Fascination	13 (9%)	I felt fascinated.	1
		I felt amazed.	1
		I felt intrigued.	5

Dimensions of Visitor Experience	Endorsement of Dimensions of Visitor Experience	Individual items of visitor experience	Endorsement of individual items
Privilege	12 (9%)	I experienced a sense of wonder.	
		It engaged my imagination.	6
			Not included
		I felt privileged.	5
		I felt honored.	1
Compassion	2 (1%)	I felt fortunate.	0
		I felt grateful.	1
		I experienced a sense of respect.	5
		I felt concerned for nature.	Not included
		I felt concerned for others.	1
Reflective engagement	19 (14%)	I felt concerned for the world.	0
		I felt concerned for animals.	Not included
		I experienced a sense of compassion.	1
		I felt reflective.	6
		I felt thoughtful.	Not included
Connection	7 (5%)	I felt introspective.	2
		I felt deep in thought.	6
		I experienced a sense of pondering.	5
		I experienced a sense of connection to the past.	1
		I experienced a sense of connection with nature.	Not included
Autonomy	3 (2%)	I experienced a sense of connection with objects.	4
		I experienced a sense of attachment.	0
		I experienced a sense of nostalgia.	2
		I felt independent.	0
		I felt confident.	3
Personal growth	10 (7%)	I experienced a sense of choice.	0
		I experienced a sense of control.	0
		I experienced a sense of deciding.	Not included
		I experienced a sense of accomplishment.	3
		I experienced a sense of fulfillment.	6
Tension	0 (0%)	I experienced a sense of growth.	0
		I experienced a sense of self-discovery.	1
		I experienced a sense of self-actualization.	0
		I felt tense.	0
		I felt frustrated.	0
		I felt stressed.	0
		I felt overloaded.	0
		I felt uncomfortable.	0

Appendix E

Rethinking Practice: A Guide to Designing Visitor-Centered Experiences in Art Exhibitions

The guide to designing visitor-centered experiences in art exhibitions was designed for professionals who conceptualize, design and carry out art exhibitions. The guide bridges research and practice by offering art exhibition designers a framework for critical reflection, research-informed practice, and collaborative inquiry. The guide also aims to provide practitioners with tools for thinking about the visitor as central to designing an art exhibition and help reflect on practices that promote human flourishing (Cotter et al., 2022, 2023; Cotter & Pawelski, 2022).

The implementation of the guide into practice consists of three sessions with a duration of two hours each. In each session, the members of the art exhibition design team and a facilitator come together to actively apply the tools from the guide to their professional practice. The sessions are designed to occur on-site at the Arts Education and Culture Department of the Municipality of Guatemala. In-person workshops allow the facilitator to estimate participants' engagement levels and listen to all the team members' voices.

Summary of the Sessions

Sessions	Themes
1	Introduction to the art exhibition design framework and critical reflection in practice
2	Research-informed practice in art exhibitions
3	The process of collaborative inquiry in art exhibitions

Week 1: Introduction to the Art Exhibition Design Framework and Critical Reflection

Introduction to the program (30 minutes)		
Duration	Theme	Notes
10	Check-in Program expectations	Group introductions, community building activity Participants share their expectations of the program in post-its and stick them on the wall
15	Setting the stage: group agreements for the duration of the sessions	Co-construction of agreements for the duration of the three sessions
5 min	Sessions' goals	Rationale behind the sessions

Introduction to the art exhibition design framework and critical reflection (1 hour and 30 minutes)		
Duration	Theme	Notes
10 min	Introduction to the design of visitor-centered art exhibitions	Introduction to the Art Exhibition Design Framework (Vasquez, 2023) Big picture/ Brain Target 3 (Hardiman, 2012)
40 min	<p>Rethinking current practice</p> <p>Participants divide into pairs and then, the facilitator gives each pair one work of art to work with. The works of art can be varied in theme, content, and technique. Variety in works of art can offer participants different opportunities for writing the labels and offer different venues for discussion.</p> <p>Participants work in pairs to write a label for a work of art. It is important that participants write the label in the way they would traditionally do for the exhibitions they design.</p> <p>Critique and reflect</p> <p>Each pair of participants shares with the rest of the group the label that they created together. The other members of the group offer feedback about their perception of the label presented saying what they</p>	<p>Introduction to critical reflection (Fook & Gardner, 2007)</p> <p>The why of critical reflection (Fook & Gardner, 2007)</p>

	<p>liked, the aspects they suggest modifying and asking questions.</p> <p>After this exercise, participants engage in individual reflection. This exercise can be done in a reflective journal (Caswell, 2022).</p> <p>Reflection questions examples:</p> <p>Why did I write what I did?</p> <p>How do I hope visitors engage with works of art as a result of the label?</p> <p>Who is the typical visitor to art exhibitions?</p> <p>What do I know that visitors to art exhibitions may not know when coming to an art exhibition?</p> <p>How did I consider my knowledge and experience when writing the labels?</p> <p>Does the label I wrote label address the visitors' needs?</p> <p>How do I know?</p> <p>Discussion</p> <p>Discussion space where participants talk about their perceptions of the role of visitors in an art exhibit</p> <p>Critical reflection in practice</p> <p>Participants pair up again to re-design the labels for the works of art, thinking about the visitor as central to the exhibition space.</p> <p>Critique and reflect</p> <p>Each pair of participants shares with the rest of the group the label that they created together. Participants share their perceptions of the new labels.</p>	
10 min	<p>Wrap-up</p> <p>The group comes together in a circle and share their thoughts to the following prompt:</p> <p>Has my thinking changed as a result of this session? How? Are there any aspects of my practice that I would like to further examine?</p>	

Research-informed practice in art exhibitions (2 hours)		
Duration	Theme	Notes
10 min	<p>Recap of the visitor-centered art exhibitions</p> <p>Retrieval practice: group discussion about critical reflection in art exhibitions</p>	Big picture/ Brain Target 3 (Hardiman, 2012)
40 min	<p>Designing an art exhibition with specific visitor outcomes in mind</p> <p>Think (write)-pair-share Participants think about and write for five minutes to the prompt: what is your best experience at an art exhibition? What made it memorable?</p> <p>Participants get into pairs and share the details about their experiences at an art exhibition.</p> <p>Participants regroup, and the facilitator asks about the last art exhibition they designed, offering a space for reflection. This reflection activity can be done individually in a journal or as a group discussion.</p> <p>Reflection questions examples: What did you hope the visitor would take away from the experience of visiting the art exhibition you designed?</p> <p>How do you know the exhibition reached those goals?</p> <p>What are some ways in which the art exhibition team can move toward a practice that has visitor outcomes in mind?</p> <p>Bridging research and practice at art exhibitions The facilitator shares different empirical studies that target specific visitor outcomes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observation • Thinking • Memory • Community-building <p>How can research inform practice?</p>	(Cain, 2018)

	<p>Participants choose an outcome to focus on for the session, and the facilitator shares an example of an empirical study.</p> <p>Group work</p> <p>Participants work together to</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reflect on what they think they know about the outcomes they want to achieve 2. Critically examine the example of the study presented 3. Discuss and decide if and how the team can use the evidence from the study to inform the design of art exhibitions 	
10 min	<p>Wrap-up</p> <p>The group comes together in a circle and share their thoughts to the following prompt:</p> <p>What is my perception about designing art exhibitions with that consider visitor outcomes? Do I perceive benefits and/or potential barriers of using research to inform my practice?</p>	

The process of collaborative inquiry in art exhibitions (2 hours)		
Duration	Theme	Notes
10 min	<p>Recap of the visitor-centered art exhibitions</p> <p>Retrieval practice: group discussion about critical reflection and research-informed practice in art exhibitions</p>	Big picture/ Brain Target 3 (Hardiman, 2012)
40 min	<p>Thinking together about the work</p> <p>Pre-work: the facilitator asks participants to bring any evidence they can find about the last exhibition they designed (pictures, emails, plans). Participants bring all the evidence they found to the session.</p> <p>Group reflection (as a conversation)</p> <p>Participants reflect on their experience designing the last exhibition they worked on and the outcomes of that exhibition using the What? So What? Now What? Thinking routine (Ritchhart & Church, 2015)</p>	(Cain, 2018)

	<p>What? With the evidence, describe the process of designing an art exhibition. What stands out? Are there any contradictions between the intended outcomes and my current practice?</p> <p>So what? So, what does the evidence we gathered say about our current practice? So, what does our current practice say about the alignment between our goals and actions? So what message are we giving visitors about the art exhibitions we design?</p> <p>Now what? What actions could we take to align our practice with our goals?</p> <p>Reflection questions examples: What did you hope the visitor would take away from the experience of visiting the art exhibition you designed?</p> <p>How do you know the exhibition reached those goals?</p>	
10 min	<p>Wrap-up</p> <p>The group comes together in a circle and reflect on the art exhibition design framework.</p> <p>Prompt: Think-puzzle-explore (Ritchhart et al., 2011) What are my thoughts about this model in relation to my practice? What questions do I have about the different components of the model? What are other ways in which the model could be used in my professional practice?</p>	