# Mediated Seeing:

# Unpacking Visitor Photography in Art Museums and Galleries

by Chien Lee

Department of Sociology

Goldsmiths, University of London

Thesis submitted for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

2019

# Abstract

Photographic recording has gained a key role in shaping contemporary experience—everyday and extraordinary. When brought into the art museum space, this photographic perception may challenge the institution, which has historically privileged quiet contemplation and appropriate manners. How do art museums now accommodate two types of seeing—photographic and direct? How does the performance of the first type configure the visitor's encounter with the artwork? Visitor photography is treated in this research as a potentially destabilising factor inside the art museum: it re-shapes both the experiential space and visitors' relations with the exhibited artworks. To explore this topic, ethnographic studies were carried out at four London-based art museums and galleries, as well as interviews with visitors and museum professionals—curators, educators, visitor experience managers, and invigilators. The findings show that, on the one hand, while curatorial plans still do not usually take into consideration photographic seeing, many art museums have acknowledged and responded to visitors' demands to be allowed to take photos by relaxing their photography policies. Visitor photography has thus gradually become normalised in the gallery space. On the other hand, picture-taking can be seen as competing with direct-seeing, given the limitations on visitors' attention and time. To some degree it has become a popularly performed ritual through which visitors re-work their ways of seeing and re-establish their connection with artworks and the museum. It is suggested that this altered dynamic between art museums, artworks, and visitors requires art museums to rethink both exhibition design and their roles as art mediators.

# Declaration of Authorship

I, Chien Lee hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

Signed: Date:

## Acknowledgements

My deep thanks first go to my supervisor, Professor Mike Featherstone, whose works have inspired me long before this research started. His patient guidance during this PhD study has opened up ways of seeing. The same appreciation goes to my second supervisor, Dr Monica Sassatelli, for continuously pointing out to me possible directions. Her constructive critiques and warm encouragement mean greatly to me. I would also like to thank Dr Tomoko Tamari, who has been present along this research journey, offering insights which helped to untangled thoughts. Conversations with them served as bridges, doors, and frames.

I would like to acknowledge my upgrade examiners Professor Victoria Alexander and Dr Alex Rhys-Taylor for thoughtful advice; my viva examiners Professor Sunil Manghani and Dr Oonagh Murphy for constructive criticism; Dr Sylvia Lahav, for sharing with me her rich experience in art museums and galleries; Dr Maggie Studholme, for proofreading my thesis with care and professionalism. I would also like to express my deep gratitude to Ms Bridget Ward for always being there for me. Both her administrative and emotional support have been indispensable from the beginning.

My appreciation extends to my departmental colleagues Kaoru Takahashi, Lieta Vivaldi, Dean Weston, Ignacio Rivera, Benny Lu, Ming-Te Peng, Shih-Ming Yang, Pablo de Frutal, Mahsa Alami, and Ka-Hin Tsang for kind help and stimulating discussions; fellow Goldsmiths students Heewon Hwang and Carlota Vida for friendship and thoughts on art.

I'm hugely indebted to my participants. Without them, this research would not have been possible. I would like to express my thanks to Caireen McGinn, Antonia Blocker, and Shirley McNeil for helping with organising my ethnographic work; Dr Alexander Gerstein, Dr Karen Serres, Paul Luckraft, Annie Bedford, Dickon Moore, Stephanie Christodoulou, and Ian Pocock for sharing their insights. My gratitude also goes to those who wished to remain

anonymous. Through knowing their interest in art and art museums, I found meaning in continuing this project.

Last, but not least, I would like to thank my parents and friends for believing in me. Because of them, I know I am a person first.

I write simply for no word can truly express my gratitude. All the people who have, at various points, journeyed with me in the course of this PhD remind me time and again why it is meaningful to do Sociology.

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# Chapter 1. Introduction

Seeing artworks in an art museum or gallery, since the birth of this type of institution, most commonly implies seeing them with other visitors. At the same time, in the contemporary world, it often means seeing them along with other visitors taking photographs. While these spaces for the public exhibition of art are essentially meant for shared viewing, they were not originally designed for photographically mediated seeing. Conventionally, appreciation of artworks is usually associated with attentive contemplation. Most significantly, this ideal form of perception is expected to be lived through seeing directly with the eyes. Picture-taking, however popularly performed for a long time outside—and now inside—the museum space, has not yet been discussed and responded to as a proper way of seeing. Indeed, art museums and galleries might react to visitors' desire to take photos with a relaxation of their photography policies—and many have done so. Nevertheless, the institutional attitude remains ambiguous: it is not clear if picture-taking as a way of engagement with artworks is considered a necessary compromise that museums must make to maintain their attraction for visitors, or if it has been accepted as part of normative perception, appropriate for experiencing artworks. Moreover, a change in photography policy does not necessarily lead to a change in the conceptualisation of art connoisseurship or exhibition design. Photographic seeing establishes a relation with artworks which differs from that of seeing by direct gazing, since each perceptive form requires a particular set of bodily behaviours and engenders certain types of attentiveness. The disparity leads to a challenge for the art museum, which has to reconcile the historically institutionally privileged gaze with the currently popular experiential mode.

Born in modernity with the civil state and urban culture, the practice of art museums has since occupied a significant place in both society and the art world. The characteristics of each individual art museum may vary widely, might even conflict with one another. Yet, there is one principle which underlies the function of the art museum. That is, it serves as a place where art and the public encounter—or do not encounter – each other, for it controls what artworks should and should not appear in front of the public's eyes.[1] It is true that artworks exist and can be encountered in everyday contexts. However, firstly, a large number of works can only be experienced in the art museum. Secondly, the institution has an authoritative voice to reassure people that what is on display is art and should be thought so.[2] Hence, it becomes a place for out-of-the-ordinary experiences. More than that, it is a place for the originals. Admittedly, copies are sometimes shown, either for reasons of conservation or because of mistakes in authentication. But in general, the museum commits itself to exhibiting the real thing. In this regard, the relationship between it and photography as a reproductive technology is one of contradiction. Undeniably, the art museum has used photography for documentation of artworks and dissemination of knowledge.[3] In recent decades it even accepts the latter as a possible form of art. Nevertheless, in a system which privileges the authentic, photography can occupy only an inferior position. Photographic seeing in this sense violates the principle of the art museum.

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[1] Tate, for example, keeps the majority of its collection in the Tate Store (see Bradley, 2015). The V&A's project for a new venue in East London aims to'open up its vast stores of object. It will also put on view large items which are normally kept in storage, including Frank Lloyd Wright's plywood-panelled 1930s office for Pittsburgh department store owner Edgar J.Kaufmann, and the 15th century marquetry ceiling from the now-destroyed Altamira Palace near Toledo, Spain' (Brown, 2018).

[2] It is not infrequent for art museums or galleries, especially those devoted to contemporary art, to be joked about: the exhibits – and anything and everything inside - might be considered as or mistaken for art. In fact, that kind of misunderstanding has happened and seems to be considered embarrassing to either—or both—the visitors or the current state of the art world (see Hunt, 2016). Thus, it is possible that a dependable voice which can deliver clear message about what art is, is welcomed by visitors.

[3] While visitors being allowed to take pictures is a relatively new phenomenon, within the same century in which photography was invented, photographers were employed by the institution to document both museum spaces and objects (McShine, 1999: 17; Stylianou-Lambert and Stylianou,

This tension is further deepened by the expanding tourist culture. Historically the tourist gaze has been entangled with the practice of photography. The contemporary prevalence of photographic devices contributes to the phenomenon of tourist seeing becoming ordinary. Itself often an active player in the tourism industry, the art museum inevitably has to deal with ‘the visitor with a camera’. Therefore, on the one hand, the museum has to decide if it wants to or must allow the photographic eye. This demands that it re-examines its self-designated missions in society. On the other hand, it needs to decide how it should respond to the trend in terms of exhibition design, curatorial agenda, educational programmes, and visitor behaviour regulation. The current state of visitor photography in art museums and galleries has been unpacked in this research through a review of the existing literature and empirical work including ethnographic observation conducted at four London-based art museums and galleries as well as interviews with both visitors and museum professionals.

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2014: 117). The UK photographer Roger Fenton, for example, was assigned as the first official photographer at the British Museum in the 1850s (Walsh, 2017: 26) and ‘prepared for a first photographic campaign in the museum to produce images that were to be sold to the audience’ (Troelenberg, 2017: 10). The commercial and promotional value has kept photography a close collaborator with the museum. The now popular subject of visitor photography, Mona Lisa, only began to attract public attention after its theft in 1911. Its stolen status was not identified immediately since the guard assumed that it had been taken to the studio to be photographed for the sake of producing promotional materials. After it was confirmed lost, photos of the empty space it previously occupied circulated widely in the newspapers. This incident put it in the public's eye, turning it from an ordinary museum exhibit—in terms of the visitor attention it attracted—into a world renowned piece (Henning, 2015; Storries, 2006). What is clear is that the first photo of the Mona Lisa was produced not by visitors but commissioned by the institution. Moreover, long before the relaxation of photography policies, photographically reproduced images of artworks had appeared on a wide range of museum commodities, from exhibition catalogues and postcards, mugs and tea towels, to bags in the gift shop. Through these practices, the art museum demonstrates an attitude towards photographic reproduction which is not hostile.

Its aim has been to capture how seeing artworks in art museums is lived in the contemporary world and the implications of this.

## Artworks in Art Museums and Photography: a Personal Experience

When this PhD research started in 2015, my awareness of visitor photography as a significant part of a museum visit dated back at least two decades. It is worth pointing out that, for me, looking at the exhibits has always been entwined with observing other visitors' ways of being in the museum. In view of this, the accumulated experience formed a solid base for the ethnographic studies I conducted during this doctoral research, and it is deemed essential here to give a concise delineation of my past art museum visits in relation to photography. This will, firstly, explain the origin of my research interest. Secondly, the account will reveal—to some extent at least—both the changed and unchanged aspects of the art museum experience in relation to photography.

The first art museum experience I am able to recollect took place at the Taipei Fine Arts Museum in the 90s when I was about seven or eight years old. Although I can hardly remember being taught about expected museum behaviour at that age, I already had a strong sense that the art museum was a quiet place where conversations should be whispered and the idea of photographing the artworks on display did not ever occur. However, I can recall clearly my excitement at finding a set of bookmarks printed with images of paintings just seen, including one by which I was especially impressed. The desire to own something which would serve as a link between the visit and me was ardent and that being satisfied brought great joy. While the artist's name has been lost in my memory, the image of the painting still appears vividly in my mind. The latter is possible because each time I consulted the bookmark, the experience of standing in front of the painting returned, and that was so because I had spent a concentrated moment looking at it.

My early experiences at various museums in Taiwan, including the aforementioned Taipei Fine Arts Museum and the renowned National Palace Museum, built up the idea of museums as strictly no-photography spaces. As a result, during the visit to the British Museum in 1998, I was greatly surprised by the permission to photograph when I accidentally walked into a scene in which two other visitors were taking pictures right in front of one of the Assyrian winged human-headed lions. I was simultaneously embarrassed for ruining a photogenic opportunity and puzzled by what had just happened, since it contradicted my so far cultivated expectation of behaviour in museums. In other words, until then, that I should be careful to avoid intruding on others' photographic undertaking did not appear to me to be, unlike at other tourist attractions, an issue in museum space.

The next pivotal moment happened when I stood before the Mona Lisa in the Louvre in the summer of 2002. When growing up, I had two art history books for children which I enjoyed browsing from time to time. The part about Mona Lisa puzzled me because I could not fathom from the photographic image why this particular painting was so highly thought of. Therefore, I had nursed a great hope to solve this mystery through the visit to Louvre: perhaps seeing the original would reveal the true power of the work. Instead, I was surrounded by a large photo-taking crowd, human voices, and the mechanical sounds of cameras. The glimpses I was able to manage of Mona Lisa behind a glass case did nothing to help me understand its merits. However, my bewilderment at the fame of the painting has since been largely replaced by questions about the meaning of photographing original artworks.

Four years later, at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York in 2006, my repeated visits to the Edward Hopper exhibition both deepened the question and saw possible answers emerging. That I could not help switching between seeing and photographing when feeling drawn to the artworks was a result of my constant disappointment in the postcards offered in various art museums' gift shops. Not only did postcard images fail to satisfy in terms of quality, but often the artworks which fascinated me did had not been made into postcards and when they had, the images did not correspond to what I saw. Taking photographs myself was an attempt to reflect what I visually perceived right at that spot from that angle with that distance between the artwork and I. The uniformly reproduced images on postcards might represent the artworks, but not my experience of the artworks. Nonetheless, in the same period, two relevant questions occurred to me when inside MOMA or the Metropolitan Museum of Art where visitor photography was prohibited. Firstly, if I could not photograph equally every artwork I felt connected with, was I not giving more value to those I did? In turn, my incomplete collection of photographic images did not reflect my real-life experience and feelings. Secondly, the difference in terms of the impact on my experience between busying myself with picture-taking and giving my full attention to seeing an artwork directly[4]—though a result of having no alternative—was deeply felt.

The enthusiasm for photographically capturing my encounter with artworks reached its height and began to diminish next year when I spent a summer studying art history in London. Along with the increased frequency of my visits to art museums and galleries was an increased longing to be alone with artworks, and the awareness that I was hardly ever left feeling unsupervised. This partly contributed to my reduced camera use, for even at the exhibitions at which I was certain that photography was permitted, I felt uncomfortable taking pictures due to a feeling that it would not be regarded as an appropriate way of seeing art, that it might violate the intentions of the professionals behind the exhibitions, including both artists and curators. At the same time, I found it difficult to accommodate both picture-taking and direct-seeing in one visit. Each experiential mode demanded a different combination of bodily movements and attention. Constant oscillation between them disrupted my concentration on the artworks. Furthermore, unless my intention was to create some ‘new’ works out of the displays, the documented images ceased to satisfy as well: they seemed to correspond less to what I saw directly with my eyes and thus could not serve the purpose of ‘capturing the moment’, which would in turn allow the past moment—or at least the image of it—to return undistorted.

While increasingly conscious of the tacit rule of aesthetic appreciation, I also began to ponder over the reasons for banning visitor photography: if it was allowed at the Courtauld but not at Tate Modern, it could not be for the sake of conservation since both exhibited valuable originals. This question met no answer: my teachers appeared just as perplexed as I was. In fact, they admitted it was a subject that had never occurred to them before. At that point, Facebook saw its user numbers growing fast and Apple Inc. had just launched its first iPhone. Photographic activities and photographic images have since occupied a large amount of time in people’s everyday lives as well as both physical and virtual space. The entanglement between artworks, art museums, photography, and seeing as a tourist thus intensified and those questions, which emerged from my personal experience and contradictions in it, have not only remained but become ever more imperative. This research is an attempt at—if not reaching definitive answers—exploring how these problems have become problems and what possibilities they might open up.

## Looking Sociologically at Visitor Photography from a Visitor's Standpoint

What is shown by the aforementioned personal experience of visitor photography is, first of all, that my approach to both art museums and to visitors taking photographs in them was from a visitor's perspective. This stance continued throughout the research and, importantly, framed my ethnographic observation in the selected art museums and galleries. Admittedly, I was able to enter various areas usually inaccessible to ordinary visitors—for instance, peeping into the security headquarters at the Courtauld Gallery or joining a tour in Tate Stores, where Tate keeps its collection that is not on display. Also, being known as a researcher by the institutions I was studying, I was offered chances to sit down with members of staff for interviews and could occasionally exchange with them words which reflected the daily working of the gallery spaces. However, significantly, the sense of being a guest invited 'back stage'—to borrow Goffman's (1963) words — was clear. I was never a participant in the making of the gallery spaces, but always an observer. The special temporary permission to step inside the staff circle did not lead me to develop the mindset of a museum professional. Instead, I remained an outsider who looked at the museums and galleries with relatively intense concentration. My curiosity was that of a visitor.

Secondly, my interest in how visitor photography in the socially shared spaces of art museums, and its social consequences, reflects a strong sociological tendency. This led to my choice of sociology as perspective from which visitor photography was examined. While, as revealed in the literature review chapter that follows, visitor photography has become an issue of concern to museum professionals, art critics, and art commenters, there seems to be a lack of sociology-based inspection. With the art market growing ever vaster and the public funding for art museums facing fierce competition and constant funding cuts, a sociological study that illuminates overlooked aspects of the way artworks in art museums and galleries are experienced is now necessary. This also enables an understanding of how seeing is performed and negotiated in our time and how photography becomes a force shaping today's museums.  At the same time, by studying the specific spaces of art museums and galleries, sociological studies can grow richer, with insights into the way privileged cultural spaces and practices are currently maintained and transformed.

This research examines, first of all, how art museums are offered as spaces for experience. This has been approached through the study of their various dimensions, including their architectural arrangements, the selection and exhibition of artworks, their guiding and educational programmes, and visitor regulations and invigilation. Knowing the way in which the space is maintained enables an understanding of the options available to visitors, and the restraints they face. Close attention has been focused on the changed stance of art museums on visitor photography, which reflects a larger shift in the relationship between the institutions and the public. Following this, scrutiny centres on how visitors live their visit bodily with picture-taking. This question is twofold: on the one hand, it concerns how picture-taking is embodied by visitors through a series of movements; on the other hand, it asks how the photographic process has to be bodily accommodated or cooperated with by visitors in general, whether they are taking pictures or not. Finally, I focus on how photography mediates visitors' encounter with artworks in art museums or galleries so as to reveal the consequences and possibilities of experiencing artworks not through direct seeing but through looking at photographic images of artworks; not through the conventional museum manners constituted by moving-standing-gazing but through bodily investment in the form of picture-taking.

Art museums in our age often advertise their exhibitions —and are advertised by, for example, travel guides—as unmissable 'experience'. What this thesis attempts to probe is not what that experience is. Instead, by looking at art museums as institutions which provide space-artwork for visitors to interact with in all their corporeal, cognitive, and emotional capacities, it examines how that interaction is lived. In other words, how that experience can possibly be had. Through examining the role that visitor photography—which has become a prevalent phenomenon— plays in this process, its aim is to disclose the current state of seeing practiced in art museums.

While people photographing artworks has been commonly observed, and debates on whether art museums and galleries should give their permission can been seen in news columns and personal blogs, there has been a quietness in the realm of sociology about this particular way of seeing and its mediating effect. However, existing literature generated both in and outside sociology, on the art museum and its visitors, photography, and tourist practice, has informed the study theoretically and empirically and thus paved way for further questioning. On the one hand, there is sociological understanding of each of the aforementioned subjects; on the other hand, there is knowledge produced in other disciplines, including museum studies, curatorial studies, photography studies, and tourism studies. The significance of the latter is that they offer insights obtainable by practitioners in those fields yet often unavailable to outsiders. Moreover, because they are all some distance from sociology, enlisting these disciplines' insights enabled careful consideration and reconsideration of the sociological point of view. Moving between different disciplinary frameworks—arguably, not entirely dissimilar to switching between direct and photographic seeing—allowed me to present various types of perception and conceptualisation, giving the analysis of visitor photography more depth.

Firstly, Bourdieu’s idea of habitus has been used to analyse perceptions of art museum visitors. Though admittedly some parts of Bourdieusian theorisation have become obsolete, and can be updated with more recent sociological studies, the former allows the embodied aspect of perception to be revealed by breaking the binary differentiation between mind and body, and illuminating the fact that both the visitor and the visit are never natural entities but subject to unevenly-allocated social resources. Next, Urry and Larsen’s classification of the tourist gaze laid the foundations for further understanding of the practice of seeing. This provided a typology that uncovers differences in each mode of visual engagement with the world. From here, picture-taking, which consists of particular bodily movements could be further distinguished from direct-seeing. Secondly, my examination of art museums and galleries borrowed from Hetherington his insightfully summarised principles upon which the art museum organises its space as container of experience. This enabled me to see how each of the art museums or galleries in focus separates itself from the everyday lifeworld and maintains its uniqueness as an interior. In turn, how picture-taking might or might not challenge this separation and maintenance and thus the possibility of art museums could be unpacked. Thirdly, drawing upon recent developments in the sociology of art, which sees aesthetic experience as a happening process not entirely predetermined by social structures, the idea of mediation was adopted as a research tool to investigate the role played by photography in the experience of artworks. Within these frameworks, how visitor photography is bodily lived in the space of art museums and galleries, and what its mediation might mean to the experience of artworks in these institutions were explored.

The investigation was, firstly, carried out through a review of the literature, presented in **Chapter 2**. This helps to outline the characteristics of photographic perception and its tensions with artworks, the tourist culture that entangles contemporary experience with photographic practice, the organisational power and principles of the art museum, and the comparative lack of studies of visitors' in-situ embodied experiences. Built on learning obtained from the existing literature as well as what is absent from it, **Chapter 3** delineates the methodological considerations and research design. The four London-based art museums and galleries selected for case studies —the Courtauld, Tate Modern, Raven Row, and Zabludowicz Collection—are introduced. The two qualitative research methods, ethnographic observation and interview, are outlined, followed by a discussion of how they were empirically applied, how the collected data was analysed, and how the ethical concerns involved in the empirical work were tackled. The reasons for omitting photographic illustrations from the research are also explained here.

**Chapter 4** displays the result of an attempt at tracing the current state and trajectory of changes in the visitor photography policies of a group of major art museums and galleries. On the one hand, reviewing the largely obscure past of visitor photography policies and the available official explanations for adjusting rules, it shows the relationship between the lifting of a prohibition and the technological advance of photographic devices. On the other hand, officially written rules and guidelines concerning visitor photography are looked at, with individual opinions published as etiquette advice and art museums' programmes designed to coordinate with visitors' visual engagement with artworks. Turning the focus to the four case studies, **Chapter 5** discusses how each is achieved through a set of boundaries—of architecture, economics, culture, invigilation, and photography restrictions. This, when interacting with visitors of various types results in a distinct atmosphere which in turn shapes visitor behaviour and experience. The second half of the chapter pays attention to four types of museum professional as significant mediators in framing the art museum experience: curators, educators, visitor experience professionals, and invigilators. This furthers both the understanding of where visitor photography stands in museum professionals' work and how it is regarded. **Chapter 6** then pays attention to the lived bodily processes of visitor photography in each of the institutional spaces. Drawing on Urry and Larsen's typology of the tourist gaze, a typology of picture-taking in the art museum is built. Moreover, through revealing what cannot be captured by Urry and Larsen's typology, the distinct features of photographic-seeing are examined together with Its lived effect in terms of how visitor photography activities shape the exhibition space and affect the experience of other visitors. Findings from interviews with visitors are also included, demonstrating conflicted views about photographing artworks in the gallery and the emphasised importance of memory as the purpose of picture-taking.

**Chapter 7** brings back a summary of Hetherington's three spatial motifs, around which art museums are organised: interiority, singularity, and outside. How visitor photography might or might not, through confronting these three motifs, challenge the maintenance of art museums and galleries is explored in this chapter. Focus then turns to an examination of how, in a society where experience is in high demand, art museums and galleries react, not only to make their experiential spaces possible but to attract people inside, and how visitor photography is involved in this effort. Looking at the visitor side, **Chapter 8** discusses the various ways in which picture-taking mediates their experience of artworks. Visitors' right to have the option of taking photographs is dealt with by asking how visitor photography allows visitors to have control over their own encounter with artworks. This is approached from three angles: experience, collectable memories, and the creation of meaning. The affordances and restraints of visitor photography, now a popular activity and unique mediator, are thus presented. **Chapter 9** concludes the research findings by returning to the research questions. The limitations of this thesis are reflected on, pointing to further research directions and projects.

What is offered in this thesis is a way of seeing visitor photography. I am highly aware that the practice of art museums is made up of multiple layers and supported by a complex network of decision-making. There are inevitably aspects overlooked by this research. It is not that different from not being able to visit every art museum, see every exhibition, and look at every displayed artwork. The aim has been to supplement existing depictions of art museums and galleries with a small yet detailed study of visitor photography, showing how seeing artworks is allowed and practiced in today’s art museums and galleries.

# Chapter 2. Mapping the Understanding

## Introduction

Perceiving ‘the visitor’s photography mediated experience of artwork in the art museum’ as consisting of the interplay between the art museum, photography, the visitor, and the expanding tourist culture, this chapter traces scholars’ understanding of each practice in order to build up a solid basis for this PhD research. Keeping its central focus on sociological research, the discussion also includes literature generated by the disciplines of museum studies, museology, art history, and tourism studies. This is because, as the sociologist Volker Kirchberg recognises, ‘museum sociology’ is a yet to be established field (2015: 232), and because each discipline has yielded valuable and relevant insights. The chapter is divided into three sections. The first addresses topics including the art museum’s photography policies, the tensions between photographic perception and visual artworks, and the tourist culture which entangles contemporary experience with photographic practice. The second section looks at the organisation of the art museum as a space where artworks and the public meet and the expected mode of seeing for the artwork it contains. Through reviewing the existing literature on visitors, the section also reveals the comparative lack of studies of visitors’ in-situ embodied experiences. Current epistemological and methodological development in the sociology of art, however, indicates possible means of further investigation that in turn form the basis of this research. The final section discusses the idea of experience that is emphasised and used in today’s museum practice. Both the spatial principles used by the art museum to produce experience and the way photographic activity adds a mediascape for experience are examined. The key concepts of this research are thus mapped out to guide the methodological design.

## 2.1 A Visitor with a Camera: Taking Photographs of Artworks in Art Museums

Whether visitor photography is permitted is a frequently asked question, a fact acknowledged in recent years by art museums by including the answer on their visitor information webpages and signage in gallery spaces. This section exposes the lack of academic literature on the design and impact of photography policies through exploring this issue. I will then address the tensions that photography brings to the perception of artworks. Finally, the tourist culture—which has entwined with photography since the latter's birth—will be discussed. This reveals the way that contemporary experience and perception are inseparable from the tourist mode of relating to the world.

### 2.1.1 Can I Take Pictures?: the Changing Rules of Visitor Photography

Historically, the use of cameras has been banned in most, if not all, art museums. However, the twenty-first century has seen a revision of photography policies. In 2009, Nina Simon, the executive director of Santa Cruz Museum of Art and History, summarised the rationale underlying each photography policy, which could include a combination of aspects: legal (Allan, 2007; Butler, 1998); conservational (Schaeffer, 2001); economic (Edwards and Morton, 2015: 18); security; and experiential concerns. In spite of the existence of a few studies that focus on one of the above, there is little literature tracing the history of photography policy and its impact on the experience of art (Stylianou-Lambert, 2016: 11). News articles (Bailey, 2014; Miranda, 2013; Shardlow, 2014) and online tourist forums like TripAdvisor sometimes list art museums and galleries that permit or forbid visitor photography, yet they remain limited in terms of the number of institutions included and without well researched explanations.

A visitor's need to take photos is a recognised issue that could be discussed from two angles. The first considers changing photography policies. Although this is a topic which has generated lively debates on news sites[5] and blogs run by art professionals,[6] there remains a lack of academic literature that addresses the establishment and alteration of photography policies. This led to my pilot research which included an outline of the adjusted photography rules of leading art museums based on information extracted from new articles and online debates. This can be found in the methodology chapter. The second angle discusses programmes provided by art museums in response to the trend for photography. Creating photographic activities, voluntarily establishing exhibitions as the background for visitor selfies, or inviting visitors to put their cameras and mobiles away, all reveal institutions' specific attitudes towards photography and objectives for the visitor experience. This, again, is a relatively ignored topic in academic studies and was explored further in the pilot research.

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[5] For example, 'Should Museums Allow People to Take Photographs in Galleries?', 30 Jul 2012, *Museum Association*, see members' comments below https://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/news/30072012-poll-should-museums-allow-photography
Also Gibson, E. (2013) The Overexposed Museum, *New Criterion, 32(4)*: 19-21. https://www.newcriterion.com/issues/2013/12/the-overexposed-museum

[6] Examples include *Museum 2.0* by curator Nina Simon and *Art History News* by art historian Bendor Grosvenor.

### 2.1.2 The Tensions between the Photographic Perception and the Artwork

Literature that focuses on how photography has altered people's ways of seeing can be divided into two groups. The first—to which seminal figures including Walter Benjamin ([1936]1999), Roland Barthes ([1981]2000) and John Berger (1972) have contributed—concentrates on the photographic image. The second examines the practice of photographing itself, and has generated insights by Pierre Bourdieu (1990a), Susan Sontag ([1977]2008), and John Urry (1995; with Larsen, 2011), to name just a few. This is not to claim that each of these scholars is confined to just one group, but to indicate that there is a difference in each group's main focus. Recently, the divide between the activity of taking photos and the photograph as a still image has been to some extent closed by the digitisation of photographic devices. Taking a picture is now at the same time seeing that picture on the mobile or camera screen (Urry and Larsen, 2011: 181; Larsen, 2014: 33; Lister, 2016: 271). To borrow Shanks' and Svabo's words, it has become 'a continuous way of looking' (2014: 238). However, photography as the presentation of images and photography as a means of engagement, though equally important, involve two distinct kinds of process. Therefore, each area of discussion offers an understanding of different aspects of photographic perception.

The challenges brought by photography to the perception of the artwork can be discussed from three intertwining yet distinct aspects. The first is related to photography's function as a technology of reproduction. The second concerns the recording capacity of photography. The third involves the alteration generated by photographic seeing. These three points, discussed below, seem to be more relevant to how photography as an image surface affords a specific kind of perception, but this does not mean that photography as a gesture that intervenes in experience will be ignored. Further exploration into the latter is given in the section on the relationship between the tourist culture and photography.

The first challenge presented by photography is a consequence of its reproducibility. After the invention of photography, people approached the original[7] artwork in novel ways, which was recognised as early as the first half of the twentieth century by Benjamin. In his influential essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* ([1936]1999), Benjamin uses the idea of aura to indicate the conflict between the perception shaped by photography and the original artwork. The auratic quality of an object—natural or cultural—lies in 'its unique existence at the place where it happens to be' (Benjamin, [1936]1999: 214). The original artwork can only appear in one place at one time and is thus irreplaceable. In contrast, the photographic image of the artwork can be infinitely and identically reproduced and these copies can be 'inserted into situations which would be out of reach for the original itself' ([1936]1999: 220). In other words, unlike the original, a photographic reproduction does not support the existence of an aura. For Benjamin, the peculiarity of aura in relation to the appreciation of art is bound to a certain mode of perception: contemplation. In the era of photography, however, the audience is educated into another way of seeing: distraction (Benjamin, [1936]1999: 232-4; see also Petersen, 2010; Schwartz, 2005). More familiar with seeing photographic images thanks to the training of cinema (see Lash, 1988, 1990), s/he does not experience the original artwork in ways different from enjoying the products of mass culture. One kind of pleasure in seeing art has been thus replaced by another: the critical and contemplative by the playful and irreverent (Henning, 2015: 586). Urry and Larsen's description of postmodern cultural consumption continues this line of argument. They observe that postmodern cultural forms, 'mechanically, electrically and digitally reproduced and distributed', are 'anti-auratic'; the mode of consumption is distraction rather than contemplation (2011: 98). The audience is portrayed as one which, shaped by and embracing the photographic way of perception, prefers immediate sensations and does not care about the aesthetic properties of the original artwork.[8]

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[7] The idea of the original in terms of artworks in art museums is itself a complex issue. While usually used to refer to a work produced by its own artist in contrast to facsimiles, there are those who argue—for example, Bruno Latour and Adam Lowe (2011)—that contextual change and conservation work both cast doubt on the concept of 'a pure "original"' (Henning, 2015: 583). W.J.T. Mitchell (2005), on the opposite side, claims that the digital photograph of an artwork can remove the traces of aging and thus looks more like the artwork's original state. He asserts that 'if aura means recovering the original vitality, literally, the "breath" of life of the original, then the digital copy can come closer to looking and sounding like the original than the original itself (p. 320). Moreover, the sociologist Gordon Fyfe, through examination of reproductions in the form of engravings, demonstrates that the relationship between the original and the reproduction, and whether one is viewed as superior to the other, is also a historically and socially specific production (Fyfe, 2004). Bearing these arguments in mind, in this research the idea of the original is still used to refer to the work 'in the form given to it by the artist' (Hubard, 2007: 248; see also Schwarcz, 1982). This definition is apt, because it coincides with that used by both the museum system and visitors when voicing the wish to see 'the real thing'.

A tension is thus generated because, first of all, the original does not receive the contemplative attention it requires according to the dominant premise of aesthetic experience, in which the Kantian thesis still plays a vital part (Bourdieu and Darbel, [1969]1991). This leaves a question about whether this encounter is still meaningful. Moreover, following Benjamin's logic, the distracted audience does not rank the original and the reproduction in a hierarchy for they are considered no different from each other.[9] Consequently, the reasons people still visit original artworks are uncertain. It was John

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[8] In the field of psychology, empirical investigation has sought to find out if participants react differently to original artworks and reproductions. Locher and Dolese (2004), for example, find evidence that the hedonic properties of original works are rated higher than that of reproductions by both art trained and untrained participants. The ratings of pictorial qualities, however, show no significant difference. Yet they also note that there exists a difference between a museum environment in which original works were shown and the research settings where reproductions were viewed. The former is found to have a positive influence on audience perception.

[9] For Benjamin, this contributes to the possibility of the democratisation of art. If seeing the original in the museum setting ceases to make a difference, art can reach those who cannot easily access art museums. The idea that the image of art can travel to people is caught by Malraux in his *Museum without Walls* ([1947]1967). For him, the availability of photographic reproductions means people do not need to go inside certain art museums to see certain works anymore. Both geographic and economic barriers are thus reduced.

Berger who in his equally important work, *Ways of Seeing* (1972) provided a possible explanation and theorised what seeing the artwork might mean. Agreeing with Benjamin that the original is no longer 'unique and exclusive' because its image can be copied (1972: 23), Berger observed that seeing the original can still be impressive because of its market value: '…the uniqueness of the original now lies in its being *the original of a reproduction.* It is no longer what its image shows that strikes one as unique; its first meaning is no longer to be found in what it says, but in what it is' (1972: 21). He uses the term 'bogus religiosity' to describe viewers' worshipful relationship with the original artwork (1972: 23). The main purpose of their quasi-religious visit[10] is to pay homage to the work's being the very first, instead of appreciating its aesthetic properties.[11]

Seeing the original becomes an extraordinary and thus memorable occasion that is, arguably, compatible with the other feature of photography – recording - which brings the second challenge to the perception of art. Seeing a work of art is an experience. Taking pictures of it, debatably an experience as well, does not equate to seeing it. Without making judgements about which is more important, it is essential to recognise that the recording of an encounter is not the same as the encounter itself, which is experienced and then recorded, and should be discussed in its own right. Photography's recording function largely contributes to its significance in the fabrication of contemporary life. Pierre Bourdieu in his analysis of photographic practice, originally published in 1965, points out that there is a link between its popularity and its function of memorialisation (1990a). Two factors are involved. Firstly, the desire for photographic recording is inseparable from a belief in its capacity to capture reality. It establishes a relationship with reality with which non-mechanical reproduction cannot compete. It is not to say that photographic does not distort. Susan Sontag recognises that both photographs and paintings are interpretations of reality ([1977]2008: 6). However, she reflects that photographs also function as ‘the registering of an emanation (light waves reflected by objects)—a material vestige of its subject in a way that no painting can be’ … ‘even one that meets photographic standards of resemblance’ ([1977]2008: 153). A photograph simultaneously reminds the photographer of the experience of, and activates a belief in, ‘once-being-there’ (Barthes, [1980]2000: 87); it is ‘certificate of presence’ (Hirsch and Spitzer, 2006; Olin, 2002; Schroeder, 2002). Secondly, with technological advancement, photography has become more accessible economically to a larger public and less demanding in terms of the operational skills needed (Gye, 2007: 280). Unlike other techniques of visual recording—sketching, for example, photo-taking does not require time-consuming training. Furthermore, the now common inclusion of camera into mobile phone design encourages proficiency in picture taking. As observed by digital ethnographer Larissa Hjorth, ‘many users—not necessarily interested in photography per se—are becoming avid practitioners in the making, circulating and socialising of their own images’ (2007: 228). Photographic recording is now not only built-into our daily devices but a relatively easily acquired skill.[12]

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[10] The U.S. anthropologist Margaret Mead, however, thinks that the pilgrimage is important. For her, making the actual journey—'even on the subway'—is curial to the appreciation of artworks (1960: 19).

[11] Olga Hubard's qualitative study (2007) in the discipline of art education seems to confirm this point. It demonstrates that between the original and the reproductions—postcards and digital images, the former is preferred by participants not only because of its physical qualities but because participants know it is 'the real thing and, thus, unique and special' (2007: 262). López-Sintas et al (2002), based on in-depth interviews with 21 Spanish museum visitors, also point out that the viewer's awareness of the artwork's originality, together with sufficient cultural capital to interpret the artwork's social value, contribute to the possibility of an 'unforgettable aesthetic experience'.

Moreover, producing photographic memories is encouraged by a cultural trend of recording, archiving, and sharing. Mike Featherstone points out that ‘to record and archive a life becomes a theme in modernism' (2006: 595). In societies where changes continuously take place, memory is desired as a compensation for 'what gets continuously lost' (Brockmeier, 2015: 18).[13] The culture of sharing is further accelerated by the smartphone and social media which allow and encourage instant dissemination of images (see Good, 2013; Hoskins, 2009, 2011; Ibrahim, 2015; Van Dijck, 2008; Van House, 2009; Villi, 2013). Within this culture of memorising and sharing, recording has often become an aim, the main activity of an experience. The danger is, firstly, that what cannot be photographed is more likely to be overlooked. Artworks which are 'unphotographable'—used by Steve Garlic to describe situation in which 'no matter hard you try and (en)frame the photograph, somehow you cannot "capture" the experience you wish to record' (2002: 299-300)—or not considered photogenic are less likely to receive attention.[14] Sontag warns against letting photography guide the perception of the world by saying 'whatever can't be photographed becomes less important' (Movius, 1975; see also Gye, 2007: 286). Secondly, artworks might be reduced to 'photo op', as the US art historian Harriet F. Senie suggests (2003: 188). In her research on public art, she discovers that when the main function of the artwork is to contribute to a good photo, whether it is seen as art or is appreciated ceases to matter.  Furthermore, the digital device that allows instant checking of the resulting image can mean that the picture-

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[12] On the one hand, not everyone is a professional or expert photographer who engages in photography-mediated seeing to such a degree that even without a camera, s/he is seeing in a photographic way, noticing (Forrest, 2016) and readily imagining what things encountered with the

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naked eye would look like when captured photographically. On the other hand, significantly, the identification 'photographer' has become less distinct in our time when photography devices and instructions are easily accessed (Forrest, 2016; Hand, 2012).

[13] The French philosopher Bernard Stiegler (2009) examines the relationship between photography and memory and voices concern about the dangers of the photographic form of memory. Based on Roland Barthes' idea that photography functions as a certificate of what has happened, Stiegler argues that photographic recording comes to serve as a prosthetic memory. This technologically preserved memory opens the way for commercial exploitation. What he calls the 'industrialisation of memory' is, as Robert Sinnerbrink explains, a 'colonisation of temporalising consciousness' (2009). That is, the real-time of the lived world is suppressed by industrial time and this leads to a threat to the individuation of consciousness. His argument points to the danger of gratifying the desire for memory with photographic recording.

[14] Not only is it possible that photographable artworks receive more attention on-site, those which have been photographed are more well-known off-site. Peter Walsh reflects that after the invention of photography, 'those painters and art works that rise to the top of the post-photographic hierarchy of art are those best known through photographs' (2007: 29). Again, photography plays a crucial role in determining whether a work of art will receive attention.

taker spends more time examining the recorded image than looking at the artwork (see Muellner, 2013).[15]

The final problem presented by the photographic perception of the artwork is the unavoidable photographic alteration. Firstly, photography has its own unique texture. The US scholar Barbara Savedoff criticises both Benjamin and Berger for not taking into consideration the textural difference between the original and the copy and raises the concern that a photographic reproduction exchanges the texture of the original with 'flat glossy paper or an iridescent screen' (1993: 458). While this is a just evaluation, Benjamin does recognise another kind of alteration enabled by photography. Using the term 'unconscious optics', he reflects that photography 'reveals entirely new structural formations of the subject', unavailable to the naked eye, through enlargement ([1936]1999: 229-230). Considered by Benjamin to be a positive effect, this still poses the challenging question of what it means to see photographically an original that was created to be seen by the naked eye. The last kind of alteration, enabled by photography's ability to isolate a detail from the work as a whole, is seen by Berger to be a distinct feature of photographic reproduction (1972: 25). The cut image, viewed separately, generates different meanings. In short, in the process of reproducing and recording, photographic seeing is also refabricating, representing, and reframing. Photography might be employed to capture something that is ‘real’ and ‘one-of-a-kind’, but it makes the viewer look away or see something else.

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[15] Jessa Lingel and Mor Naaman's research (2011) on audience video-recording of live music events observes participants' concentration on device screens instead of events. Whether picture- or video-taking, visitors in art museums echo or differ from their findings is explored via ethnographic study by this research.

### 2.1.3 The Expanding Tourist Culture and the Ubiquitous Photographic Gaze

When considering photography as an activity, as we have started to do following Bourdieu and Sontag, it becomes crucial to include another closely related activity: tourism. Although mass tourism began prior to the invention of photography in the nineteenth century (Heafford, 2006: 44, see also Sharpley, 2018), there is broad agreement that the paths of the gradual democratisation of photography and the development of tourism have overlapped to a great extent (Belk and Yeh, 2011; Chalfen, 1987; Crang, 1997; Garlick, 2002; Larsen, 2006; Osborne, 2000; Pearce, 2011; Scarles, 2009; Sontag, [1977]2008; Urry and Larsen, 2011). As Urry and Larsen point out, the strong link between the tourist vision and photography exists because the latter serves as ‘the most important technology for developing and extending the tourist gaze’ (2011: 155). Importantly, there has seen a blurring of boundaries between the tourist and the everyday (Lash and Urry, 1994; Rojek and Urry, 1997; Wang, Xiang and Fesenmaier, 2016). That is, what used to be features of tourist attitudes and behaviours now demonstrate themselves in many—if not all—other activities and occasions, including the art museum visit, which itself is often co-developed with tourism (see Hetherington, 2006: 602). Thus, understanding the characteristics of tourist culture is essential to a more complete understanding of the practice of photographic perception (Garlick, 2002: 292; Urry and Larsen, 2011).

Discussion of the entanglement between tourist culture and contemporary life can begin from the observation that the tourist serves as a metaphor of postmodern way of life (Bauman, 1996; Dann, 2002). The ideas of journey and travel have been used frequently in the tradition of postmodern critics to describe a life involving constant movement, resisting fixity (Featherstone, 1995: 126; see also Selberg, 2010: 232). Zygmunt Bauman goes further to include the tourist in a set of allegories that delineate the difference between modernity and postmodernity in terms of ways of organising life. Under modern conditions, life is structured in the way of the pilgrim: with a determined goal for the whole journey (1996: 29). A sense of purpose and continuity is thus possible. However, postmodernity disables this strategy. Facing the ever-shifting environment, the pilgrim who has a consistent plan and a lifetime goal fails to cope. Four other types of strategy, previously adopted only by those who lived on the margins of societies, come to play a central role: the stroller, the vagabond, the tourist, and the player. The tourist, who is central to gaining insight into photographic practice for this research, depicts a figure who moves from home to an unfamiliar place in order to experience the new and the interesting and then moves back to where s/he belongs. Crucially, as Bauman points out, 'the tourist's world is fully and exclusively structured by *aesthetic* criteria' (1996: 30). That is, the tourist rejects harsh realities and demands the pleasant.[16]

The 'touristification of the everyday' (Franklin, 2003: 208) is considered to result from both the rapidly changing, increasing eventful everyday environment and, within it, the growing centrality of visual consumption. Firstly, the familiarity of slowly evolving daily surroundings is replaced by a sense of strangeness caused by the endless stream of new constructions and new events. Strangerhood, as the U.S. anthropologist of tourism Dennison Nash reflects, is what defines the tourist transaction (2012: 44). Moreover, the simulational world which ceaselessly supplies fascinating visual sensations has, as Baudrillard recognises, turned the banality of everyday reality into the aesthetic (1983). What Bauman thinks of as the tourist's aesthetic criteria of structuring experience, as discussed previously, is thus demanded and encouraged by these aestheticised daily conditions. Consequently, the tourist attitude towards life—seeking the aesthetic and the interesting—is customarily assumed. As Featherstone observes, 'the pursuit of new tastes and sensations and the construction of distinctive lifestyles' have become the central focus of contemporary living (2007: 66). The German sociologist Gerhard Schulze's theorisation of experience in affluent societies corresponds to this view that the aesthetic is increasingly the organising principle of life (2005; see also Gronow, 1997: 162; Sulkunen, 1997: 5).

Secondly, closely linked to the demand for the aesthetic, visual consumption (which in the past characterised mostly tourist events) has come to underlie the everyday (Lash and Urry, 1994: 259). Guy Debord forcefully points out that our lifeworld has turned into one of spectacle, 'a social relation among people, mediated by images' ([1976]1977: para. 4; see also Crary, 2001). Urry and Larsen's summary of types of tourist gaze can help to understand how seeing might be now practiced daily. Based on their analysis of the tourist experience, ways in which places are consumed through looking are differentiated 'in terms of the socialities involved, the lengths of time taken and the character of visual appreciation' (2011: 19). They are outlined in Table 2.1.

**[Table 2.1 Urry and Larsen's Typology of Gaze]**

| Type of Gaze | Characteristics |
|---|---|
| Romantic Gaze | Emphasises a personal, semi-spiritual relationship with the object, a lonely contemplation (or only with significant others). |
| Collective Gaze | Involves conviviality, a collective consumption of the place. Other people also viewing the site are necessary to give liveliness or a sense of carnival or movement. |
| Spectatorial Gaze | Involves the collective glancing at and collecting of different signs that have been very briefly seen in passing at a glance. |
| Reverential Gaze | Describes the spiritual consumption of the sacred site. |
| Anthropological Gaze | Describes how individual visitors scan a variety of sights/sites and are able to locate them interpretatively within a historical array of meanings and symbols. |
| Environmental Gaze | Involves a scholarly or NGO-authorised discourse of scanning various tourist practices to determine their footprint upon the 'environment'. |
| Mediatised Gaze | Indicates a collective gaze where particular sites famous for their 'mediated' nature are viewed. Those gazing on the scene relive elements or aspects of the media event. |

Urry and Larsen's typology of the gaze demonstrates that the tourist experience is not necessarily fleeting or hurried. Nor is it unsupported by strong knowledge. Yet there is also a risk of superficial or little engagement. When the tourist gaze is applied largely to originally non-tourist places and activities, the danger of superficiality follows. The spectatorial gaze, especially, has the tendency to reduce experiences to surfaces, which can be glanced at and passed by. Sightseeing is a commonly condemned behaviour within discourses of travel (MacCannell, 2011) for being superficial (Urry and Larsen, 2011: 18; see also Baudrillard, 1983) and 'entertainment-orientated' (McKercher, 2002). Bauman warns of this 'grazing behaviour' for it devours only the untried taste and sensations (Franklin, 2003: 208).[17] The everyday tourist, the theory goes, has a short attention span and her/his relationship with what is encountered remain at a merely superficial level.

In the visual consumption of the tourist experience, photography is seen to be a central facilitator (Dinhopl and Gretzel, 2016; Urry and Larsen, 2011). Firstly, it serves as a guiding force (Sontag, 1979; Urry and Larsen, 2011: 186). The tourist seeks the new but when facing the unfamiliar, s/he also wants to feel that the situation is within her/his control (Bauman, 1996: 29-30). Susan Sontag considers that photography provides the disoriented tourist with a purpose: 'unsure of other responses, they take a picture' (1979: 9, see also Garlick, 2002).

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[17] The tourist's constant search for the sensational can be seen in Simmel's discussion about the metropolitan life. He reflects that the shock of the new which previously was only experienced during revolutions and social movements is, in modernity, encountered 'as permanent flux' (Frisby, 1992: 42; see also Berman, 1983; Harvey, 1989). Facing the endless and overwhelming stimuli, the modern human could be numbed into indifference, suffer from a state of ennui, and develop a protective psychological shell that is the blasé attitude towards the life-world (Simmel, [1903]1950; Frisby, 1992: 48). The blasé attitude will turn people to 'more excessive, adventurous, and risky behaviour' (Aho, 2007: 448). Observation of the shock experience engendered by the metropolitan surrounding (Frisby, 1994: 88) and the craving for the unique and the sensational is echoed by Benjamin (Benjamin, 2005; see also Jay, 2006: 334)[17]. A vicious cycle inevitably emerges: the more stimulating the environment is, the more indifferent the living person becomes and the more eager s/he purses more sensational and engaging experiences.

This implies a refusal of experience, because taking a photo becomes a reflex response: stop, take a photo, and move on (Sontag, 1979: 9; Urry and Larsen, 2011: 178; see also Bruner, 1995: 236). Merely feeling occupied and active, however, does not fully explain the sense of purpose given by picture-taking. It is participation in the production of long-lasting memories[18], I argue, that reassures the tourist. Now we have moved to the second reason for photography's significance in the tourist experience. Picture-taking can be thought of as belonging to a broader set of activities that involve collecting and purchasing souvenirs. This is because memorability, the capacity to both remind of an experience, and to activate a belief in once-being-there, is both an affordance of photography (Barthes, 1993; Belting, 2011; Bertella, 2013; Kuhn and McAliister, 2006) and the essential purpose of a souvenir (Goss, 2004; Macionis and Sparks, 2009: 202; Swanson and Timothy, 2012). An integral part of photography therefore, is that a photo can function as a souvenir (Houston, 2001: 369; Sontag, 1979).[19]

The existing literature on the relationship between experience and souvenirs can provide a framework with which to examine the visitor's photographic activity. As they have historically played a significant part in travel and tourism, discussion of souvenirs largely takes place in tourism studies (Ali et al, 216; Gordon, 1986; Goss, 2004; Hung et al. 2016; Rickly-Boyd, 2002; Swanson and Timothy, 2012). For the visitor, not just the experience, but the remembrance of the experience, is what matters. The development of the digital mobile, which can serve as 'a wearable gallery' (Reading, 2009: 83; see also Green, 2009), has further intensified the souvenir dimension of experience.

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[18] In the field of Psychology, Linda Henkel (2013) conducted two small-scaled experiments in visitor photography, exploring the connection between memory and taking pictures of museum exhibits. What is revealed is an ambiguous relationship between the two and the significance of focused attention in the making of lasting memory. While the activity of photography can divide the participant's attention and thus reduce the possibility of recollecting the seen, attentive photo-taking, helped by the effect of zooming-in, can increase the possibility of vivid memory. It appears that concentrated activeness plays a significant part in a recallable impression – a theme which will be scrutinised in Chapter 8.

[19] Photographs can serve literally as commercial souvenirs. See, for example, 'souvenir books' produced in the U.S. in the nineteenth century (Snow, 2012).

The souvenir's relationship with experience has multiple layers: both derive from appreciation of the latter's value of being out-of-the-ordinary and flatten their uniqueness into something standard or popularised; paradoxically, a souvenir both connects people to and distances them from their experience. The souvenir's emphasis on the memorable past turns one's attention away from the immediate. The U.S. literary scholar Susan Stewart reflects that '[t]he double function of the souvenir is to authenticate a past or otherwise remote experience and, at the same time, to discredit the present. The present is either too impersonal, too looming, or too alienating compared to the intimate and direct experience of contact which the souvenir has as its referent. This referent is authenticity' ([1984]1993: 139). It should be noted, however, that Stewart's observation points out an intimacy provided by the souvenir that is at least partially enabled by the souvenir's tactility (see Benjamin, [1936]1999; Leslie, 1999; Gordon, 1986: 135; Houston, 2001; Rickly-Boyd, 2002: 282; Wilkins, 2010). This might be a quality especially treasured on those occasions where it is usually absent— as in the case of the art museum, in the encounter between the visitor and the artwork—even at the expense of losing immediate connection with the present. The idea of tactile intimacy will be further discussed in section 2.3., concentrating on the relationship between the materiality of the photographic device and the experience.

Secondly, tourist photography often attracts criticism for being mere 'quotation' (Osborne, 2000: 85). This can be understood together with the mediatised gaze (see Table 2.1). In Urry and Larsen's account, the mediatised gaze mainly refers to visual consumption prompted and framed by previous film consumption, yet the range of media can go beyond the film genre. The term 'hermeneutic circle' is used to describe the circulation of identical or similar images in the tourist process (2011: 179): before embarking on a trip, the tourist has already consumed certain photographic images of the place or object to be visited, and when s/he is really in that place, in front of that object, s/he takes pictures which look like what s/he saw pre-journey. Further empirical studies have supported this argument (see for example, Bell, 2016; Caton and Santo, 2008; Jenkins, 2003; Stylianou-Lambert, 2012). In the case of the art museum visitor, before entering the gallery space, s/he already possesses certain ideas about how some work looks because of images provided online and in guidebooks, or because art education relies heavily on photographic reproduction (Berger, 1972; Donahue-Wallace et al., 2009; Fyfe, 2004; Henning, 2015; Hubard, 2007; Nelson, 2000; Stankiewicz, 1985; Zeller, 1983). There is thus a contradiction between the tourist quest for the unexperienced, and photography which focuses the visitor's attention on the already familiar.

### 2.2 The Art Museum, the Artwork, and the Visitor

Art museums are, historically, part of the development of urban life (Bennett, 1995; Prior, 2011a, 2011b), entangled with photography (Henning, 2015; Walsh, 2007), consumer culture (Klonk, 2009), and tourism (Alexander, 2003; Berger: 1998). They serve as a major institution where non-mundane visual activities can take place. Featherstone points out that in Benjamin's modern time, the culture industry began to produce 'a wide range of symbolic goods and experiences' (2007: 24). An art museum, on the one hand, provides content for the visitor to experience. On the other hand, through spatial arrangement, pedagogical schemes, and either tacit or written rules (as in the aforementioned photography policies, for example) it shapes the way its exhibits are experienced. The next section first reviews the art museum with its correlated institutions, religious or commercial, for together they play the roles of civilising agencies and experience providers, and influence one another's organisation of the visitor experience. The discussion extends to two forces that directly involve the encounter between the art work and the visitor: the curatorial and the educational. This reveals their central position in the art museum's engagement with the public, as well as the missing focus of the visitor's photographic perception. Attention then turns to the exhibition of the artwork, exploring how its institutionalisation results in the requirement for certain kinds of perception and the change which has taken place in recent years. Finally, studies of the visitor who actually 'sees' the artwork are examined. Discussion about Bourdieusian insight into visitor habitus is followed by reviews of a recent attempt at focusing on embodiment and of emerging yet still rare studies of visitor photography.

### 2.2.1 The Art Museum

The art museum distinguishes itself from other agents in the art world, since its function depends essentially on its engagement with the public (see Adorno, ([1967]1988); Pelowski et al., 2014: 4). Although there is a long recognised issue concerning the limited scope of its public reach (see for example Barrett, 2011; Bourdieu and Darbel, [1969]1991; Hendon et al., 1989; Hooper-Greenhill, 2007; Prior, 2003), historically the museum has had an educational role and thus, as J. Mark Schuster asserts, 'a corresponding concern for reaching all parts of the population' (1995: 111). The Louvre, founded in 1793 based on the French royal collection (Abt, 2011; Lewis, 1992: 12; McClellan, 2003: 5), is considered by Carol Duncan to be ‘the first truly art museum’ (1991: 88). It served as a public institution which addressed its visitors as citizens, the state’s shareholders (Duncan and Wallach, 1980: 456; McClellan, 1994). Considered to be a successor to the cabinet of curiosities (Alexander and Alexander, 2007; Crimp, 1993: 225; Hooper-Greenhill, 1992) and the princely collection (Bennett, 2011: 267-8; Duncan, 1995; Hooper-Greenhill, 1992), the public art museum, however, develops a revolutionary relationship with society because it aims to admit not only the selected few, but in principle everyone.

As an experience provider, the museum is never just a physical space to be strolled through without restraints but, consisting of a network of professionals and agendas, exercises power by directing its visitors. Duncan and Wallach discern a civilising ritual at work (1995), which aligns the art museum first of all with a group of ceremonial institutions—including temples, churches, and shrines—which adopt interesting architectural arrangements to ‘impress upon those who see or use them a society’s most revered values and beliefs’ (Duncan and Wallach, 1978: 28), and secondly with commercial institutions like arcades, department stores, shopping malls, the world exposition and fair, where taste can be articulated and appropriate social conduct can be learned (Bennett, 1995: 30). Sociologist Tony Bennett uses the term ‘exhibitionary complex’ to describe this kind of institution which, through exhibiting culture and art, functions on a Gramscian model of hegemony (see Gramsci, 2000) to gain people’s active support for ‘the values and objects enshrined in the state’ (1995: 87; see also Rydell, 2011; Shelton, 2006). Its operation not only involves ‘show and tell’ (Bennett, 1995) but the structuring of the visitor experience. Duncan and Wallach state that ‘[the] totality of art and architectural form organises the visitor’s experience as a script organises a performance’ (1978: 28). While not dismissing the possibility that individuals, with their own unique socioeconomic trajectories, may react differently to what is encountered in the museum space, the ideas of script and performance are crucial because they recognise the interplay between visitor agency and institutional-architectural power. Both parties require careful scholarly consideration.

The similarity between the public art museum and the commercial exhibitionary space has been growing further and fast. Literature on the evolution of the museum reveals that the convergence of commerce and culture has, in the current moment, intensified (Bennett, 2011: 275-6; Joy et al., 2014; Macdonald and Alsford, 1995; McLean, 2004; Smith, 2011: 545). On the one hand, the 'spectacle of commodity culture' is not exclusive to the shop but exercised in the museum (Mathur, 2005: 700). On the other hand, the commercial space largely resembles exhibitionary architecture (Bennett, 1995: 51) and borrows the aesthetic of display from the art museum (Crawford, 2004; Smith, 2011). As Featherstone suggests, the result is that museums have become transformed into 'places where one has an experience, rather than where knowledge of the canon and established symbolic hierarchies are inculcated' (Featherstone, 2007: 70; see also McCraken, 2003: 143).

Two seemingly contradictory processes simultaneously contribute to this current state. First, and especially after Bourdieu's (1991) critical analysis of its institutional exclusiveness (Prior, 2011a) and the emergence of pressure for funding (McClellan, 2008: 183), the late twentieth century art museum began to adopt an approach which aimed at developing a new audience. Moreover, it had to compete with other visitor attractions, and more popular and commercialised forms of visual entertainment (Berger, 1998; Bennett, 2011: 275-6; Macdonald and Alsford, 1995; McIntyre, 2009: 156; Stevenson, 2005). This resulted in the museum moving towards becoming the provider of 'spectacular or simulational “experiences”‘ (Prior, 2011a: 514). Secondly, there is a growing trend, both for museums to be dedicated to informal learning (Mayer, 2005), and for scholarly studies that highlight the importance of the museum’s pedagogic responsibility (Chang, 2006; Hein, 2006; Hooper-Greenhill, 2011; Hooper-Greenhill and Moussouri, 2000; Leinhardt et al., 2002). Central to current theories of education in museums is the idea of participation, which emphasises personal meaning and active engagement (Falk and Dierking, 2002, 2016; Hein, 1998). As a result, the educational mission does not disappear from the museum agenda but is delivered to the public in a way which appears more visitor-centred (Mayer, 2005) and experience based (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992).

While more spectacular architectural spaces (Freudenheim, 2010; Lampugnani, 2011), themed events (Zerovc, 2015), and expanded and diversified consumption areas like cafés and shops (Duncan, 1991; Mihalache, 2014; Prior, 2003, 2011a) are provided, the presentation of the artwork itself has significantly changed over the years. There is a shift in the institutional focus from permanent collections to temporary exhibitions (Arnold, 2015; Barker, 1999; Heinich and Pollack, 1996: 235, 245; Klonk, 2009; Prior, 2011a, 2011b). More than that, the organisation of the exhibition has grown to operate on a curator-authored,[20] event-like model (O’Neill, 2012; Heinich and Pollack, 1996: 236; Zerovc, 2015: 177-8). That is, the exhibition works less like a mere grouping of artworks than a curator’s thesis (Arnold, 2015; Balzer, 2015; O’Neill, 2007). Nathalie Heinich and Michael Pollak recognise four major tasks of the curator—’safeguarding the heritage, enriching collections, research and display’—and consider that the focus has moved away from the first three to the last, which allows ‘a certain personalisation’ (1996: 235; see also Arnold, 2015; Norton-Westbrook, 2015). The significance of this shift is that the curator becomes the main power-holder in the production of art experience.

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[20] The James Ensor exhibition (Oct 2016-Jan 2017) at the Royal Academy of Arts in London, for example, has the names of both the artist and the curator in its title: ‘Intrigue: James Ensor by Luc Tuymans’. The pamphlet provided at the entrance is as much an account of Tuymans’ personal journey of discovering Ensor as it is an introduction to the artist and his works.

Yet despite the fact that the curator has reached ‘supervisibility’, to borrow a term used by the US scholar of curating, Paul O’Neill (2012) and that curatorial discourses have generated an extensive literature (see, for example, Hoare et al., 2016; Millard, 2016; O’Neill, 2012; Zerovc, 2015), curatorial practice remains a relatively overlooked topic in sociology. Indeed, Bourdieu recognises the curator—among the art dealer, the art historian, etc.—as one of the agents participating in the production of value of artists and artworks (1987); Victoria Alexander examines the negotiation the curator has to make with external funders (1996); and Gordon Fyfe, from an Eliasian perspective, theorises the curator-visitor relationship as one between the established insider and the outsider (2016). Nevertheless, empirical analysis in the relationship between the curator and the shaping of experience is scarce. One rare example is Sophia K. Acord (2009, 2010, 2014) who examined the situated realisation of the curatorial plan. Adopting the framework of mediation, the curator is treated by Acord as a mediator in the process of formulating artistic experience (see also Acord and DeNora, 2008; Farkhatdinov and Acord, 2016). By analysing visual recordings of the exhibition setting process and through interviews, her research reveals the disjuncture between the curatorial intention and its material enactment. While this provides invaluable insight, the dissimilitude between the curatorial design and its performative realisation by visitors awaits exploration.

Another mediator who has increasingly become a centre of discussion in museology and museum studies, that corresponds with the aforementioned increase in attention to museums' pedagogical resources and practice, is the education professional (Hein, 2011; Hooper-Greenhill, 2000: 28; McLean, 2004; Reeve and Woollard, 2015). The museology specialist Christopher Whitehead points out that unlike curatorial work which involves producing interpretations of artworks through organising displays and developing texts such as labels, education practice 'has developed along a separate trajectory, primarily involving the design and running of events', including talks and workshops (2012: Loc 177). With a goal of either 'teaching' or assisting the 'learning' of the visitor (Falk, Dierking, and Adam, 2011; Falk and Dierking, 2002, 2016; Mayer, 2005), the education staff is often closer to the public. While there is usually a divide between the curatorial and education departments in art museums (McClellan, 2008: 182), in recent years there has been an awareness of the importance of bridging the two departments and sharing their knowledge and skills (Evans, 2014; Hein, 2011; Ware, 2017). For instance, The Columbus Museum of Art's ongoing project 'Photo Hunt', which turns visitor photographs inspired by its exhibitions or related themes into an installation,[21] is an outcome of the institution's curator, Catherine Evans, and her colleagues' attempt to change the usual division of responsibilities: 'curators proposed and designed the thesis for an exhibition, and educators used this content to generate educational activities and programming' (Evans, 2014: 153). Their project shows first of all that the educational professional's deeper understanding of visitors could enable curators to engage the public more meaningfully; secondly, it explores the possibility of integrating photographic perception into exhibition design. However, Evans' example remains a rare case of using both the curatorial and educational departments to engage the public via visitor photography. The question of how practices and discourses regarding photographic perception are generated by collaboration between the two departments (or the lack of it), requires further sociologically informed study to unpack the constraints and opportunities.

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[21] CMA Photo Hunt: https://www.columbusmuseum.org/category/cma-photo-hunts/

### 2.2.2 Seeing the Artwork

In the exhibition space, where the public is allowed to meet the artwork, visual perception is often the dominant mode of engagement. Seeing, as the major activity through which experience in the art museum is encouraged to happen, is a well explored topic. An extensive literature has examined ways of seeing and how seeing is privileged in a modern society in which a large number of museums have been opened (see for example, Berger, 1972; Jay, 1993; Mirzoeff, 1999). At the same time, arguably, the rise of visual cultural studies reinforces the centrality of the visual. Recent studies show an increasing interest in other sensory aspects of the museum visit and have added more understanding of the bodily experience (see Bubaris, 2014; Candlin, 2004; Classen, 2007; Classen and Howes, 2006; Rees Leahy, 2016). Yet they too acknowledge that the museum experience is largely led by the visual (Bennett, 2011; Classen and Howes, 2006; Rees Leahy, 2016, Spock, 2015: 384; Stewart, 1999). Cultural historian Constance Classen identifies a sensory shift in museum practice when the museum grew into a public institution, theoretically open to every citizen. While visitors to the art collection would have previously had the chance to touch and handle displays, as in, for instance, the Ashmolean Museum in the UK, by the mid-nineteenth century museums began to allow only visual appreciation (2007; see also Rees Leahy, 2016: 12). According to Classen (2007), the sensory shift was to begin with largely associated with a broader change in the scientific worldview from multi-sensory research methods to visual observation. While previously used as legitimate means of information gathering, by the end of nineteenth century, non-visual senses like smell, taste, and touch were dismissed as 'savage' (Classen, 2007: 907). As a consequence, tactile contact with the exhibits in museums lost its legitimate scientific value. Secondly, with the growth in visitor numbers, prohibiting touching has become a practical strategy for object conservation. This observation echoes McClellan's reflection that the preservation of objects would always gain priority over public access (2003: 2). Thirdly, more visitors meant that not only more visitors from the privileged classes, but visitors from more classes were permitted. While an upper class man's handling of objects was deemed an appropriate style of connoisseurship, a working class woman's touching of exhibits was condemned as vulgar, and worried over as a sign of disrespect. Since the purpose of welcoming the general public into museums was to install in them a sense of the values considered important by the politically and culturally powerful, irreverence could not be allowed. Politely looking at an untouchable object from a distance is thus a necessity to ensure veneration and serves as a constant reminder of who has the power to determine the correct amount of freedom and regulate visitor bodies.

While visual reception orients contemporary life experience, there is a wide range of ways of seeing—Urry and Larsen's list of types of tourist gaze, above, shows that. Martin Jay points out that there are 'tacit cultural rules of different scopic regimes' (1993: 9). That is, within each institutional context, spectatorship is carried out following a set of often unspoken rules. The rules of the art museum are related, on the one hand, to its being a civic agent as previously discussed, and on the other hand, to its dedication to art. The former results in what Bennett terms 'civic seeing', a way of engagement that requires 'perceptual attentiveness' (2011: 273). Emerging against the background of the overly stimulating urban environment in the nineteenth century, this is deemed superior to seeing that is adopted for popular visual entertainments which 'lure the eye into civically unproductive forms of visual pleasure' (Bennett, 2006: 264). While civic seeing is also encouraged and practiced in commercial-cultural spaces like the department store, and the gaze of the museum-goer is sometimes parallel to that of the shopper, since both are immersed in the aesthetic pleasure of visual consumption (Bennett, 1995; Crawford, 2004: 17-8; Friedberg, 1994), I argue that there is one essential difference: the former is 'interested'. Unlike the shopper, who has the opportunity to make a purchase and can thus possess the object, the museum visitor can only look. Although Anne Friedberg asserts that the department store and the museum share similarity in that both are places of consumption, her description in fact shows the difference between them: while the former is a venue 'with mass-produced objects for sale', the latter displays 'objects with "aura" which were not for anything but temporary experiential consumption' (1994: 79). To experience without being able to possess the experienced object gives the experience a disinterested dimension. This could be applied to museums of all kinds, but the art museum distinctly reinforces this disinterestedness. While museums of history and science are more about learning facts or the results of studies, the museum of art largely privileges a Kantian idea of aesthetic contemplation guaranteed only by disinterestedness (Bourdieu, [1969]1991). Bourdieu observes that 'the constitution of the aesthetic gaze as a "pure" gaze, capable of considering the work of art in and for itself, i.e. as a "finality without an end", is linked to the *institution* of the work of art as an object of contemplation' (1983, 317-8). Since the nineteenth century, museum professionals have made conscious decisions and attempts to create a space for bodiless, visual contemplation by removing distracting interior decoration (Bennett, 1995: 171; Crary, 1994; Klonk, 2009; Rees Leahy, 2016; Waterfield, 2015), culminating in the rise of a more extreme model in the twentieth century, what O'Doherty identifies as the 'white cube' ([1976]1999). With its white walls and displays set 'at eye level and with sufficient distance between them' (Klonk, 2009: 191), the white cube space is designed not only to block out the everyday life outside the museum but also to strip everything except the artwork off its interior. The artwork in this pristine space demands the visitor to experience it purely visually and supress all other senses. Thus the art museum, as Rees Leahy concludes ‘produces both the artwork as an object of attention and also the corresponding gaze of the disinterested viewer’ (2016: 4).

Contemplative perception, however privileged by the art museum, faces a challenge not only from photographic perception (as examined in section 1.1.2) but from within the institution itself. Firstly, both Hooper-Greenhill (1989) and Bennett (2006; 2011) recognise the tension between civic seeing and a contemplative aesthetic gaze. The former type of perception is part of a pedagogical proposal which aims at bringing every citizen into the museum. The latter, however, requires elite connoisseurship (Bourdieu, 1984; Bourdieu and Darbel, ([1969]1991). The public might come into the museum and look in the civic manner, yet privileged aesthetic pleasure might escape them. Secondly, the very publicness of the art museum, as Benjamin suggests, disables contemplative perception. For him, the painting—unlike, for example, architecture, epic poems, and films—’simply is in no position to present an object for simultaneous collective experience’ ([1936]1999: 228). In other words, a painting allows only a small audience, which may even be limited to an audience of one. A crowd can hardly see, let alone contemplate (see Griswold et al., 2013: 351).[22] Thirdly, the museum environment itself can be a source of distraction. Adorno, in his discussion of the art museum, cites the French poet Valery’s complaint about the eye being forced to take in too many pictures at one time ([1967]1988: 177). Finally, despite the continual adoption of the white cube model, the museum has blended itself into wider popular and commercial culture. Instead of demanding a ‘singular and fixed spectatorial position’ considered by the institution to be ideal for contemplative appreciation, in the last decade the art museum has offered ‘multi-sensory forms of engagement’ (Bennett, 2011: 276-7; see also Balzer, 2015: 59-60; Bennett, 1998; Papastergiadis, 2017). As Prior cautions, it is important to recognise that aesthetic contemplation and connoisseurship coexist in the museum with entertainment and consumption (2003: 63, see also Rees Leahy, 2005; Prior, 2011a, 2011b).

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[22] The pleasant spaciousness often shown in installation shots of exhibition (see O’Doherty [1976]1999) or tour films like those made by Exhibition on Screen (https://exhibitiononscreen.com/) is in reality often compromised by an increasing number of visitors.

While institutionalised and curatorially positioned, the artwork itself with its materiality still plays a significant part in shaping audience perception. Recent sociological research on art has begun to use the idea of affordance, originally developed by the psychologist Gibson (1979), to examine how different art forms invite different embodied actions (Acord and DeNora, 2008; DeNora, 2000, 2003; Griswold et al., 2013; Sutherland and Acord, 2007). Adopting this approach, Griswold, Mangione and McDonnell (2013) point to the aspects of orientation and distance which are both essential to the experience of art. The former refers to the ways in which visitor ‘bodies are oriented to experience and move thorough exhibition spaces’, and the latter concerns ‘the distance or intimacy between audiences and art objects (2013: 351). The importance of the distance between the artwork and the visitor was observed early by Simmel, in his discussion of the picture frame. He identifies the frame’s function as maintaining a boundary between the painting and the viewer: ‘it excludes all that surrounds it, and thus also the viewer as well…and thereby helps to place [the art work] at that distance from which alone it is aesthetically enjoyable’ (1994: 11). The abandonment of the frame by twentieth-century modernist artists and the white cube gallery are, paradoxically, also attempts to keep the visitor’s visual focus, for they see the frame as a distracting devise and an interruption to the seamless gallery space (Kiilerich, 2001; O’Doherty, [1976]1999; Savedoff, 1999). Either way, distanced contemplation is stressed. In contrast, a recent development in art has seen a surge of installation and participatory works that defy the idea of distance. It is not that the distanced contemplative mode of appreciation is meaningless with these kinds of artworks, yet the intended joy, which requires the visitor's physical interaction with the work, cannot be realised (Griswold et al., 2013: 352). Installation works offer immersive experiences that absorb the visitor's whole body and encourage exploration and playing (Bishop, 2005; Hawkins, 2010; Sutherland and Acord, 2007, Yaneva, 2003). Participatory projects, emphasising the collective dimension of experience, also aim at eliminating the dividing line between, to borrow the words of the art historian Claire Bishop 'performer and audience, professional and amateur, production and reception' (2006: 10; see also Bishop, 2012). Two questions—so far neglected by scholarly research—emerge: first, how does photography interfere in the distance-intimacy relationship between the visitor and the artwork? And secondly, which type of art more strongly resists photographic perception and which one better corresponds with it?

### 2.2.3 Studying the Visitor: Reconnecting the Body and the Sociological

Understanding of visitors has so far been largely produced by what is generally called visitor studies. As the scholar of museum and heritage Lee Davidson recognises in his comprehensive review, this encompasses 'museum-based studies, conducted either by internal staff or external consultants, as well as university research' (2015: 503). In past decades, visitor studies have proliferated and gained recognition, reflecting a growing emphasis on the museum's responsibility to the visitor instead of simply to the collection, as well as the museum's felt pressure to attract more visitors (Arnold, 2015; Black, 2015; Davidson, 2015; Hooper-Greenhill, 2011). While important knowledge has been generated regarding the demographic composition of visitors, visitor satisfaction, learning effects, and the relationship between a visitor's experience and their memory of past visits (Davidson, 2015, see also Packer and Ballantyne, 2016),[23] the immediate encounter between the visitor and the situated exhibit remains a far less explored area (Kirchberg and Trondle, 2012).

Unlike research conducted in museum studies, sociology, as Janet Wolff points out, can provide a perspective 'invaluable in directing attention to certain critical aspects in the production of culture', that is, 'institutions and social relations' (2005: 89). Pierre Bourdieu and Alain Darbel's seminal study of art museum visitors *The Love of Art* (1991) sets up a great example and has generated continuing debates. They reveal that the ideal aesthetic enjoyment, obtained via the pure gaze, has to be supported by a certain cultural cultivation, which is inseparable from socio-economic resources that are acquired, rather than innate. Bourdieu uses one of his key concepts, 'habitus', to describe the visitor's engagement with the exhibit: 'an objective relationship between two objectivities, enables an intelligible and necessary relation to be established between practices and a situation, the meaning of which is produced by the habitus through categories of perception and appreciation that are themselves produced by an observable social condition' (Bourdieu, 1984: 95). Cultural habituses, including visitors' 'attitudes, artistic preferences, bodily habits and cognitive competences' (Prior, 2005: 125), are things one comes to have – in contrast to the idea that they are things one is naturally born with (Bourdieu, 1993: 234). Functioning as a structuring structure (Bourdieu, 1990b: 53), habitus plays an essential part in the continuous formulation and reproduction of class distinction. Bourdieu's account is first of all able to 'break the mind-body duality and consider embodiment' (lisahunter and emerald, 2017: 143); secondly, it illuminates the fact that neither the visitor nor the visit are natural entities but subjected to unevenly-allocated social recourses.

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[23] Studies which attempt to assess visitors' museum experiences often do so by focusing on visitor satisfaction or learning effects. For example, Pekarik, Doering and Karns' (1999) examine pre-visit expectations and post-visit outcomes. Falk and Dierking (2000) develop a 'contextual model of learning' to analyse and describe the structure and process of visits. They reveal a significant connection between prior-experiences, memories of past visits, and the actual visit. However, firstly, the aesthetic perception often stays outside their focus. Secondly, since most investigations are based on surveys and interviews, as Volker Kirchberg and Martin Trondle point out, 'the immediate aesthetic reactions in the exhibition halls' are not directly observed' (2012: 448). While they offer precious understanding, the actual, situated experience itself is less touched.

While Bourdieu's concept of habitus remains a vital analytical tool, there are three major lines of critique of his approach that are especially relevant to this research. These involve class division, the body, and the aesthetic experience. Firstly, since Bourdieu and Darbel's research, both the art museum and the public have changed. The former, as previously discussed, has worked towards a more inclusive model and become open to multi-sensory perception. The latter, generated by an evolving culture-scape in which the boundaries between high and low art have broken down, is 'less dichotomised' in ways of seeing (Prior, 2011a: 518; see also Hooper-Greenhill, 211; Prior, 2003; Urry and Larsen, 2011). While understanding of these changes can be kept up to date by more current studies (see, for example, Daenekindt and Roose, 2014), the second and third critiques point to more problematic dimensions of Bourdieu's research framework and methodology. Bourdieu's treatment of the visitor body is described by Martin Trondle and Wolfgang Tschacher as 'de-bodied' (2012: 79).[24] Meanwhile, as the sociologist Ori Schwarz points out, he is criticised for reducing aesthetics to 'sophisticated social investment' (2013: 417; see also Alexander, 2003; Hennion, 2001, 2004, 2007; Stewart, 2015; Wolff, 1993). It appears that when attempting to reveal the class interest of the Kantian disinterested aesthetic perception that denounces sensory pleasure (Shusterman, 2006; see also Turner, 2005), Bourdieu reinforces a conceptual framework which does not acknowledge that experience is a bodily, multi-sensory, process that exerts agency and cannot be completely equated with the outcome of cultural cultivation. In his theory, the body is almost wholly rendered as a vehicle of class interest. There is thus no room left for studying experience as a situated process in which aesthetic enjoyment is not guaranteed by schooling. [25]

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[24] Trondle and Tschacher themselves participated in a five-year long research project 'eMotion', employing wireless data acquisition systems to record visitors' physical positions and physiological parameters, to assess the time spent in front of each work and the audiences' physiological reaction (Trondle and Tschacher, 2012). However, while its result reveals that art reception is embodied, this scientific empirical approach, working against the 'de-bodied' Bourdieusian tradition (Trondle and Tschacher, 2012: 79), appeared to reduce visitors to bodies only.

The need to include the visitor's body in the study of the art museum experience is based on the premise that the latter is enacted through the former (DeNora, 2014; de Bolla, 2003) and that seeing is, as Urry and Larsen suggest, 'an embodied social practice that involves senses beyond sight' (2011: 20). Furthermore, while the art museum might attempt to discipline the visitor body, the latter can never be wholly controlled and predicted (Hoberman, 20111). In museology, Helen Rees Leahy (2016) not only works with the Bourdieusian idea of habitus but brings the visitor body centre stage. She reflects that 'the *habitus* of the practised museum spectator is palpable in their demonstration of socially acquired and sanctioned bodily techniques within the exhibition', including walking pace, proper standing position and the distance between artwork and viewer (2016: 6). There is research on the visitor body and its relationship to museum experience scattered across museum studies and the museology literature, though these more often evaluate an exhibition or learning effect than sociologically informed critique. Ken Arnold, reflecting on the growing focus on museum visitor research, describes it as an ‘analysis of what happens...to people as they walk at an unnaturally slow pace around constrained spaces with the expectation of finding and experiencing things that might affect or even change their worldview’ (2015: 325). Whether this expectation is shared by all visitors is debatable, yet Arnold’s statement about the peculiar slow-walking which, while it does not always happen on every-day social occasions, is potentially more likely to be seen and, importantly, expected in the museum context (see also Mason, 2017: 27; Schmitz, 2017: 289-290), indicates that the visitor’s body in the museum is unique and deserves careful study. Limited energy is another significant aspect. Originally an idea developed by Benjamin Gilman (1916), ‘museum fatigue’ describes the decrease in visitor attention due to mental or physical exhaustion (Bitgood, 2009; Falk and Dierking, 2016; Hein, 1998; Rees Leahy, 2016; Spock, 2015). While this symptom might be attributed to the physical arrangement of museums and exhibitions—for example, their scale, and difficulty of navigating, Rees Leahy points out that the museum as the power holder greets its visitors with a ‘disconcerting sense of oppression’ from the very beginning: museum fatigue is ‘endemic in the institutionalisation and spatialisation of art within the museum (2016: 136). It is important for further studies, like Rees Leahy’s, to treat the art museum experience as an embodied encounter between the visitor and the institution when investigating the uneven distribution of power which shapes the museum experience.

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[25] Between 2007 and 2010, scholars including Andrew Dewdney, David Dibosa, and Victoria Walsh collaborated with Tate, developing an analysis of audiences based on a project called Tate Encounters: Britishness and Visual Cultures. While over 600 undergraduate students from London South Bank University participated in sharing their experience of visiting both Tate Modern and Tate Britain, there was a more focused examination of Tate Britain through twelve students and their families, whose visits were documented over a period of two years (Dewdney et al, 2013: 3). This study points to a disjunction between Tate's preconception of its audiences and the reality. This institutional misrecognition led to a questionable authority enjoyed by Tate, which prided itself on being culturally representative and socially relevant. What is required, as Dewdney et al reflect, is to see art museums as embedded in 'the social', described by Latour as '"…not a place, a thing, a domain or a kind of stuff but a provisional movement of new associations"' (2013: 5). Empirical studies of actual visitors' lived experiences are considered a critical way to understand how values are distributed. Significantly, Dewdney et al pay attention to and reveal the transcultural spectatorship and transmedial practices that not only Tate, but art museums in general, have to deal with and have adopted. While, through studying the use of photographic technologies, this doctoral research intended to contribute to the understanding of transmedial experience, the transcultural aspect of seeing is beyond its reach and, as will be discussed in Chapter 9, can be and should be an essential focus of future studies.

In regard to criticism of Bourdieu’s treatment of aesthetic experience, there has been a demand to bring the aesthetic back into sociological research (Alexander and Bowler, 2014; Zolberg, 2005). Recent sociological studies of art have made efforts to treat the aesthetic experience in its own right instead of as a symbolic representation of socioeconomic class (Hennion, 2003, 2007; Prior, 2011c; Schwarz, 2013). De la Fuente, basing on his reading of work by the U.S. sociologist Harvey Molotch (2003), urges us to recognise that 'objects are both aesthetic and social' (2007: 420). By paralleling the aesthetic with the social, he is giving the former a space which does not entirely overlap with that of the latter. Robert Witkin and Tia DeNora use the concept of 'aesthetic agency ' (1997) to emphasise that 'an individual's social performance is shaped not only by her or his adherence to contextually appropriate and socially recognised codes and repertoires of action…but also by her or his own emotional, aesthetic, and affective preparation for action' (Acord and DeNora, 2008: 228).[26] Within this framework, instead of being seen as 'a mere non-problematic realisation of pre-existing dispositions', the act of perceiving art is treated as a performative process 'which entails a certain degree of uncertainty' (Schwarz, 2013: 418). Moreover, this process is not necessarily an isolated contemplation but meanings and knowledge are generated together with other visitors (Heath and vom Lehn, 2004; Sutherland and Acord, 2007: 134). This recent development insists that meanings occur during interaction (Acord and DeNora, 2008: 226) between visitors and objects as well as between visitors. In short, this development in sociology opens up the possibility of investigating aesthetic experience not as a given but as being formulated by what people 'do' (Sutherland and Acord, 2007).

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[26] In the field of empirical studies of art and aesthetics, Martin Trondle and Wolfgang Tschacher (2016) investigate the correlation between art expertise and aesthetic appreciation by using entrance surveys, exit surveys, and physiological and locomotion recording. Their findings demonstrate that while visitors with high knowledge expressed an expectation of 'critical, political, or socially engaged' artworks instead of beautiful—which corresponds to the dominant discourse of contemporary art, they reported after a visit 'having experienced beauty similar to other visitors' (97-8). In other words, there exists a disparity between 'self-assessment and actual experience' (98). That is not to deny that the possession of art knowledge does not contribute to the experience for the former enables a sense of assurance and is linked to a higher rate of satisfaction with the beauty aspect of art. This research disputes Bourdieu's conception of aesthetic appreciation as a decoding process while confirming that cultural capital matters to the experience of the work of art.

In art museums, visitors not only interact with artworks and other visitors but with other objects and devices that co-shape experience. Though remaining largely overlooked, the use of cameras and camera-phones has begun to attract research interest in recent years. Theopisti Stylianou-Lambert (2017) conducted a study of forty visitors' attitudes towards photo-taking at the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery. She lists six motivations for taking photos: aiding memory, sharing, further research and education, inspiration, self-identity building, and photography as a form of art. Chiefly based on in-depth interviews, her research pays less attention to the embodied performance of visitor-devices and their effects on the space and on other visitors—which is the main focus of this PhD scheme. In research carried out at the British Museum, however, the picture-taker's body was scrutinised as part of an evaluation of its exhibitions, with a quantitative approach. In both 2010 and 2014, the institution adopted tracking methods to study 200 visitors to its Sutton Hoo displays in Room 41. The findings were further analysed by Ellie Miles, then its Interpretation Officer (2016). That study provides insights into the relationship between picture-taking and visitor engagement: it shows that those who took photos might be 'more methodical in their movement around the gallery' and have 'a deeper engagement with the gallery as a whole' (2016: 81). These observations offer a basis for, and invite, future research. However, two criticisms could be aimed at the research method used. Firstly, visitor behaviours are categorised as 'single object, follower, browser, completist, Sutton Hoo completist', according to the visitor's way of approaching the display (2016: 79). Debatably, a single visitor can use a combination of the above strategies—for instance, following the narrative scripted by the exhibition as well as being a completist who 'stops at almost everything in the gallery' (2016: 79)—instead of choosing only one. Secondly, the research purposefully leaves out what it terms 'walkthroughs', those who did not stop to 'look at part of the gallery for at least ten seconds' (Miles, 2016: 77). Arguably, there might have been visitors who photographed or filmed without stopping and were consequently excluded from analysis. Yet their appearance and behaviours do alter the gallery-scape and their way of engaging photographically constructs their visits and is thus meaningful. Qualitative studies will complement this research and add further understanding.

Guide material is another category of device, and unlike the exhibited artwork which is indispensable for the visit, nevertheless often significantly supports and orients the visitor experience. As demonstrated above, the museum exerts a scripting effect. Yet the visitor has to be able to 'read the script' in order to behave properly and acquire possible aesthetic pleasure (Rees Leahy, 2016: 5-7). While not every visitor is familiar with this 'reading' practice, museums nowadays usually provide textual guidance, including maps, labels, panels, information sheets, and notices about photography policies—warnings about prohibition or invitation to take and share pictures (with a hashtag, for example). Audio-visual guides are also not uncommon in the art museum. Together they form an on-site pedagogical scheme, in contrast to pre-visit education, that instructs visitors about what should be seen and how (Kleinbeck, 2017: 164), specifying proper visitor manners (Rees Leahy, 2016), assisting orientation (Falk and Dierking, 2000 117), and reassuring the visitor that s/he is welcomed (Bourdieu, 1993; Bourdieu and Darbel, [1969]1991). The institutionally provided itinerary often reflects the ideas of the curator or exhibition planner of how a 'meaningful experience' should be pursued (Joy and Sherry, 2003: 273). Although the visitor's performed trajectory will not be an exact copy of the institutional ideal (Heath and Lehn, 2004), each type of media has its 'choreographic effect' for 'organising our movement and our time, soliciting different modes of attention and different viewing positions', to borrow the words of Michelle Henning word (2011: 304). How photography-mediated seeing interacts with guide media and how this interplay might shape visitor experience is also included in this research.

### 2.3 The Staging of the Art museum Experience

The previous sections show that the art museum functions as a provider of experiential materials—space, artworks, guides, and rules—and that, to date, relatively little is understood about the visitor's lived performance in relation to the 'museum script' provided (to borrow Duncan and Wallach's term). While 'experience' seems to be a term that appears frequently in art museum produced texts—often delivered to the public in conjunction with 'must have', what having an art museum experience means demands questioning. In this part, I first address the issue of the increasing emphasis on experience in the discourse of museum professionals. Attention is given to how this phenomenon is linked to the idea of an experience economy, what is significant about having an experience, and the gap between professionals' preferred experience, what they think the visitors want and what they therefore provide. Secondly, drawing from Kevin Hetherington's insights, I examine the organising principles historically adopted by art museums to maintain a space for experience. Thirdly, the idea of media-scape is introduced, to show how photographic practice alters the experiential realm of the art museum. Picture-taking is revealed as the consumption of mediated texts. This leads to understanding the photographic image as a mediator in the experience of artwork. Each point opens up questions to be explored in my empirical research.

### 2.3.1 The Emphasis on Experience

'Creating experience' has become a key focus in the circle of museum practitioners. Organisations like the New York based Museum Hack offer 'unique experiences' via tour hosting;[27] and advanced digital technology, has provoked popular discussion of how an 'immersive experience' can be achieved, at platforms like MuseWeb foundation which has run conferences in the past two decades,[28] to name just two examples. The two Harvard business professors Joseph Pine and James H. Gilmore's idea of the experience economy (1999; 2007) has, as the exhibition designer Tom Hennes suggests, gained currency not only in the business and entertainment fields but in the museum circle (2002: 106; see also Falk, Dierking and Adams, 2011; Forrest, 2013; Kotler, 1999; Roppola, 2012; Smith, 2011; 545; Von Hantelmann, 2014). In Pine and Gilmore's theorisation, the consumer making a purchase is in search of not only product and service but of an experience as a designed or staged commodity: 'to spend time enjoying a series of memorable events staged by a company—as in a theatrical play—to engage him in a personal way' (1999:12). In this sense, the experience is valued for 'its more or less intense existence in the moment, subsequently becoming a memory', as the arts and business scholar Anne-Britt Gran points out (2010: 26). The rhetoric of providing visitors with an 'unforgettable experience' appears constantly in the discourses of museum professionals and scholars of museum research (see Farkhatdinov and Acord,

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[27] Museum Hack https://museumhack.com/about/
[28] MuseumWeb https://www.museweb.net/

2016: 496).[29] While what can be attributed to unforgettable experience remains ambiguous and open for exploration, one key shift of the institutional approach is that, as Falk, Dierking, and Adams observe, instead of serving experience which is 'one size fits all', the art museum now endeavours to provide experience which is 'customised to the wants and desires' of the visitor (2011: 335). This stance is exemplified by a statement made by Nicholas Serota, the director of the leading art museum Tate from 1988 to 2017: 'I don't want the Tate to be a shopping mall. But if people want to buy something, they should be able to' (quoted in Wu, 2003: 138).

Professionals involved in the exhibition of artworks in art museums react to visitor photography on in mixed ways. There is an insistence, often announced in curators' statements, that an exhibition of artwork is not designed with the intention of serving photographic desire and perception.[30] Cliff Lauson, curator of the Hayward Gallery, in the introductory text to the 2019 autumn exhibition Space Shifters stated that 'the viewer's experience and the act of perception' are focuses that exhibiting artists 'maximise' and that 'the experience of the sculptures and installations in this exhibition cannot be captured on either the printed page or on a screen'.[31] On 26th September 2018, Lauson held a ticketed talk with a number of participating artists. One audience member in his seventies recalled hearing during a tour he had previously attended some teenagers comment about this show being the most Instagrammable and asked Lauson which exhibit he would consider most Instagram-worthy. Lauson, whose Instagram account displayed a number of pictures from Space Shifters, responded that many works had been made when no Instagram existed, and these should be looked at instead of serving Instagram. It should be noted that although experience and picture-taking were depicted by the curator as being against each other, this exhibition, said to be best experienced via direct looking, was accommodated in a gallery that allowed visitor photography and was hosted by a curator who took and shared picture of artworks in exhibition.

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[29] The Art Fund Museum of the Year prize 2016 was awarded to the Victoria & Albert Museum in London for, as the director of the Art Fund and chair of the judges Stephen Deuchar points out, its capacity to provide its visitors with an 'unforgettable experience'. Thus, although what constitutes this kind of experience is not specified, the emphasis on a memorable visitor experience is recognised by the UK's largest art prize with its £100,000 award as a direction museums should pursue.
Victoria and Albert Museum wins Art Fund Museum of the Year 2016, 6 Jul 2016
http://www.artfund.org/prize/news/2016/july/victoria-and-albert-museum-wins-museum-of-the-year-2016

[30] See, for example, Luke, B. 'At the Age of Instagram and the Power of Going Viral', 27 Mar 2019, *The Art Newspaper*
https://www.theartnewspaper.com/feature/art-in-the-age-of-instagram-and-the-power-of-going-viral

[31] https://www.southbankcentre.co.uk/blog/space-shifters-introduction-exhibition-curator

Often, concessions to visitor photography made by the professionals were revealed in personal opinions instead of official institutional statements. For example, on 20 Jul 2016, the Norwegian artist Ragnar Kjartansson, whose solo exhibition was being held at the Barbican gave an introduction to his works, together with Barbican curator Leila Hasham. During the Q&A session, I expressed my surprise at the permission for photography, considering that ticketed Barbican exhibitions in general do not allow picture-taking. Kjartansson replied that he thought contemporary audiences could not experience an artwork without putting a screen in between and if that was the way people felt, he would respect it. Another instance is the German-British artist Tino Sehgal’s interview with Arno Raffeiner, in which the former reflected on the impact of experience and the recording economy. Sehgal considered seeing with one’s own eyes ‘the richer option’: ‘This act of recording…is a little bit like someone who gets poured a good wine and then dilutes it with apple juice. Why would you need the apple juice?’ (2016: 234). However, he also pointed out that he had not interfered with people who took photographic recordings of his works in recent years. While, as discussed previously, literature in museology and museum studies shows the museum’s willingness to achieve social inclusion and allow visitors to experience in ways they feel comfortable (to borrow Simon’s (2010) word), the professionals’ attitude seems to be that they disagree with what the visitor wants but respect and provide it. This leads to questions about whether the concession is made only in the form of the museum’s policies (picture-taking) and adjacent facilities (café, gift and bookshop), or it impacts the actual exhibition design itself. This research discerns and further explores this ambiguous area.

### 2.3.2 The Organising Principles of Museum Experience

The organisation of the art museum experience relies on a set of principles through which its extraordinariness can be achieved. Reviewing critiques of the museum’s construction of experience by seminal figures including Adorno, Benjamin, Blanchot, and Malraux, the UK scholar Kevin Hetherington (2014) recognises three interrelating spatial motifs central to understanding the relationship between the museum and the experience it attempts to create: singularity, interiority, and outside.[32] The first and the second are the principles on which the museum operates in order to claim its uniqueness and produce experiential materials. On the one hand, singularity ‘provides the sense of a museum as a legitimate geographical site of experience': in the case of the art museum, it appropriates the singularness of its housed artworks and subsequently establishes itself as 'a container for the experience of art' (2014: 83; see also Ang, 2015). On the other hand, interiority serves as 'the motif of enclosure': experience is valid inside the museum for the latter works as 'an archival totality' (2014: 83). Art is justified as art because it is inside the institutional space. In other words, 'museumness' (Hetherington, 2014) plays a vital role in art perception: 'The museum wall came to signify inclusion and value, for a work of art acquired value only when it was exhibited there' (Joy and Sherry, 2003: 265; see also Bennett, 1995). These two principles, supplementing each other, work to resist the third spatial motif: the outside, which presents and represents the disorder of the masses and the challenge of objects or events beyond the museum-classified archive and narration: 'If the modern world is experienced as all bustle and flux and disordered uncertainty then somehow the museum aims to become a still counter point for contemplation' (Hetherington, 2014: 81).

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[32] The three spatial motifs around which the art museum organises its space is discerned by Hetherington from reading earlier critiques of art museums made by Blanchot, Valery, Proust, Adorno, to name just a few. As he points out, his aim is to demonstrate that ‘within earlier, critical arguments that have questioned not simply the practices but the very principle of the museum is an unacknowledged recognition of *topos* that should remain central to any suggestion around understanding museum (or heritage) experience’ (2014: 73). Thus, those criticisms might no longer seem accurate when applying to art museums and galleries of our time, yet the basic spatial principles of museum they focus still serve as a useful—if not essential—framework for analysing these institutional spaces for art.

The museum's attempt to maintain a singular interior can be seen in German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk's theorisation of the Great Exhibition. Held in the purpose built architecture of Crystal Palace in London in 1851, according to Sloterdijk it had the essence of, and far-reaching influence over, the production of modern experience. What he observes is a hothouse-like environment into which objects, natural or cultural, were moved. Inside this museum of culture, 'a domestically organised and artificially climatised inner space' (2013: 171), visitors could tour in amazement and safety. For Sloterdijk, the Crystal Palace anticipated an 'experience-oriented, popular capitalism in which no less than the comprehensive absorption of the outside world in a fully calculated interior was at stake' (2013: 175). The risk was that this interior would serve as a 'container of boredom' for 'all needs are catered for' (Elden, 2011: 10) and disorder and problems are kept out of sight. In other words, the visitors moving within the highly controlled interior are less likely to problematise what and how they experience. Following this logic, photographic seeing should be questioned: is it a visitor need which is now gradually gratified through changed museum policies or is it viewed by the institution as a disrupting activity it wishes to keep outside?

### 2.3.3 The Photographic Mediation of Experience

The final section deals with the transformation of the experience-scape brought by the practice of photographic seeing. Existing literature indicates two crucial angles from which to reflect on how photography, as simultaneously image and practice, enables a certain kind of experience. The first concerns the experience-scape created through the use of media texts. Sociologist Andre Jansson (2002) uses the concepts of 'landscape, socioscape, and mediascape' to differentiate between three realms of experience. Landscape is physical and 'usually conceived of aesthetically', through sensory impressions (2002: 432). Socioscape describes the 'regionalisation of the landscape, through which basically neutral material spaces are turned into *places* for particular forms of social interaction' (2002: 432). Mediascape refers to mediated texts which, while they are 'consumed in sociophysical spaces, also *represent* these other spaces, providing people with both realistic and phantasmagorical visions of the world' (2002: 432). While the art museum is conventionally experienced as both landscape and socioscape, it is argued that taking photos enables a mediascape. The photographic image appearing on the screen situates the consumer both in immediate and mediated space.

On the one hand, this mediated experience can be seen as the co-presence of the original and the mediated; on the other hand, it triggers the problematic of the 'absent presence', to borrow American Psychologist Kenneth Gergen's idea (2002). Caused by the use of the mobile phone, '[o]ne is physically present but is absorbed by a technologically mediated world of elsewhere' (Gergen, 2002: 227). 'Inasmuch as they also disrupt broadly valued traditions' Gergen asserts, the consequences 'are effects about which one can scarcely be neutral' (2002: 227). Following Gergen, in his study of tourism and technology Andrew Duffy suggests that smartphones possibly alter users' engagement with place and their performances of visits (2017). Neither Gergen nor Duffy concentrate their studies on a phone's capacity for picture-taking, but on its communication function. Nonetheless, debatably, the notion of absent presence can be used to research the photographic space inserted into the physical landscape: how the process of mediation plays a role in the construction of places and affects other people and established traditions.

While Jansson considers sensory consumption a feature of the experience of landscape, it could be argued that it is also an essential part of the experience of mediascape. The second angle can help reveal the unique experiential element created by the bodily practice of picture-taking. In their discussion of the mediascape of tourist experience, Caroline Scarles and Jo-Anne Lester observe that 'Mediation becomes infused with embodied, haptic performances as both producers and consumers rely upon kinaesthetic connections with, and interpretations of, that presented' (2016: 4). Visitors as both producers and consumers of their photographic images, are entangled in a mediation process which requires their bodily investment. Moreover, Anthropologist Heather Horst's study of the everyday usage of mobile phones in Jamaica since 1999 and on the border of Haiti and the Dominican Republic from 2010 to 2012 shows the connection between the 'handheld nature of mobile technologies' and 'mobile intimacies' generated from the contact between the hand and the device (2016: 162; see also Ito, 2005[33]). Holding the mobile in the palm is, as Horst observes, 'an act that brings the materiality of the phone into a fundamental relationship with the hand and the body' (2016: 163) and consequently an aesthetics originates from this 'intimate zone[s] of everyday life' (2016: 162). Horst's research focuses on mobile phones, yet her findings can be applied to photographic devices in general for the latter also require the user's hand, which does the holding, touching, and operating. As observed by Anne Cranny-Francis, an Australis based professor in Cultural Studies who investigates the relationship between technology and touch, 'one of the fundamental properties of touch is that it creates a connection between individuals and their worlds' (2013: 200). An intimate engagement is thus established through the picture-taking process.

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[33] While Japanese Cultural Anthropologist Mizuko Ito's study concerns mainly the intimate relationships with other people created by photo-sharing through handheld devices, it also helps to emphasise the unique affordance of the handheld nature.

Both lines of analysis can be linked to the 'art-in-action' approach in the sociology of art, drawing on Latour's actor-network theory. It uses the idea of mediation to describe the social nature of the construction of art experience, involving various kinds of mediators (Acord and DeNora, 2008; Acord, 2009). Mediations, as Acord points out 'are not only between different human actors or social groups, but include active roles played by artworks, objects, and other aesthetic materials' (2009: 18). While there is a lack of literature concerning lived photography as an actor which mediates the experience of art, the idea of mediation can serve as an investigating tool. The next chapter will discuss how photography can be understood as a mediator which co-constructs the experience of artworks.

## Conclusion

This chapter has explored various themes that are significant for investigating the photographic practice performed by the visitor in the art museum and the curatorial work which might or might not take the former into consideration. In spite of a dearth of discussion concerning both changed photography policies in relation to their experience of artworks and visitors' picture-taking, existing literature provides a substantial understanding of the art museum, the professionals, the visitors and the photographic seeing which is entangled with an expanding tourist culture. The art museum has the power to determine the exhibit, and through written and tacit rules as well as spatial arrangement, regulate the way in which the visitor should move around and interact with them. However, the visitor who corporeally performs the ‘seeing’ has both aesthetic agency and demands. With the expanding tourist culture in which cameras and mobiles are constantly used to ‘capture the moment’, seeing photographically has become a signature phenomenon of our time and the art museum inevitably has to choose strategies for coping. Actively participating in the experience economy which aims to deliver experience to the consumer, the institution feels the pressure to adjust its practice and programme as well as making concessions to draw the public in through its doors.

Photography, as a reproductive and recording technology, challenges the conventional experience of the artwork which is originally intended to be seen by the naked eye. In the face of the visitor’s desire to take pictures, the art museum has so far exhibited a confused and ambiguous attitude toward photography policies, while little is known about how the museum professionals—those who are directly involved in the exhibition of artwork to the public—react to it. As the curator has become an authorial figure behind contemporary art exhibitions, it is vital to question her/his rationales and plans for arranging displays for visitors to experience, as well as investigating the possible gap between experience as curatorially imagined and produced and experience as bodily performed by the visitor. Unlike the education department, which works closely with the public, the curatorial professional has conventionally remained more distant from visitors and does the work of interpretation in accordance with her/his expertise in art. In the case of photographing artwork, while changing photography policies and the occasional emergence of photographic programmes on the art museum’s part acknowledge visitors’ need to integrate this practice into their experience, the curatorial sector shows little sign of taking this experiential mode into consideration when creating exhibitions. To date, scant attention has been paid to this situation. Equipped with an understanding of the art museum and photography obtained from scholarly literature in relevant fields, this research sets out to explore how the performance of visitor photography interacts with the curated museum exhibition of artworks.

The chapters that come after the discussion of methodology (Chapter 3) respond to each research question, addressing various issues raised by visitor photography in art museums. Firstly, how are art museums and galleries maintained as socially shared containers of experience through realising what Hetherington (2014) summarises as ‘interiority, singularity, and the outside’ in relation to visitor photography? This has to be approached through the examination of a range of institutional policies and strategies: the arrangement of exhibits in relation to the layout of buildings; photography rules, which define what sort of visitor photography can and cannot be allowed, and which leave room of ambiguity; museum professionals whose values and attitudes in relations to artworks and the museum or gallery experience have an impact on the shaping of the institutions. Secondly, how are visitors bodily performing picture-taking, which can be seen as an in-situ procedure? Taking pictures in art museums and galleries is a practice framed by the space visited – its rules and architectural conditions – and therefore differs from photographing in the street or in other types of space. It should thus be observed and studied as a unique type instead of being treated as undifferentiated from picture-taking performed elsewhere. For the ethnographer it is considered significant to be able to observe the visitor bodies expressing themselves through their posture, gestures and various movements. By attending to visitors' bodily details in and around the act of photographing, it is thus possible to discern the particularities of art museum visitor photography as a lived practice. The third question focuses on how the embodied processes of visitor photography leave, in the shared gallery space, social consequences. The issues dealt with in the first and second questions respectively are brought together and examined as a whole. On the one hand, it is asked how the embodied gaze, when mediated by picture-taking, challenges or reinforces the three special principles of interiority, singularity, and the outside.  On the other hand, and equally important, this study explores the nuanced possibilities of visitor experience when photographic mediation plays a part their bodily – and thus unavoidably cognitive and emotional – negotiation of the gallery space and rules.

# Chapter 3. Methodological Exploration

## Introduction

The methodological considerations and shape of this research are built on learning obtained from and the existing literature as well as what is absent from it, as discussed in the last chapter. The research design, outlined in the following pages, proposed to investigate aspects of visitor experience that have to date been relatively overlooked by sociologists, including the corporeal performance of museum visits and photographic seeing. Starting from Bourdieu's idea of habitus, which serves to reveal the link between people's competence in art appreciation and their sociodemographic background, I explored ways to 'look' at the in-situ body which makes the art experience possible. The second part presents findings from a pilot study conducted at Tate Modern, demonstrating themes that emerged as relevant to the research, which demanded further exploration. Following this, the third part argues that visual observation with attentive senses is crucial for data collection, for experience—even in a vision privileged museum— is inevitably multisensory and a relatively holistic understanding requires information collected by all the senses. In the fourth section, I introduce a selection of four London-based art museums and galleries as my case studies. They include the Courtauld Gallery, Raven Row, Tate Modern, and the Zabludowicz Collection. Each occupies a unique place in the art world as well as on the tourist itinerary. The focus on the lived process of experience results in a qualitative research design consisting of ethnographic observation and interviewing. Discussion of these two methods, and how they are empirically applied, is followed by an outline of the analytical process. The fifth part argues against including photographic illustrations into the presentation of the research outcome. It shows how the study of lived, multisensory spatial experience cannot be compressed into two-dimensional images. Finally, the ethical concerns involved in this research are listed and further scrutinised with a discussion of researcher positioning. It is considered that sincerity and empathy play an essential part in reaching an understanding of the researched. This chapter thus describes the methodological design of the research, which enables investigation into the performance of visitor photography and the consequences of its mediation of the experience of art.

## 3.1 Conceptual Framework

In order to address the issues that are the focus of the research questions detailed in the conclusion of Chapter 2, a set of methodological considerations and design are accordingly built here to guide the research process. This research attempts to examine, on the institutional side, the current state of visitor photography policy, how photographic seeing is perceived by museum professionals, and how this in turn reveals privileged and thus dominant assumptions about what the art museum experience is and should be—how the perception of artworks in the context of the art museum should be performed and what purpose it should serve. It also explores whether and how the increasingly prevalent practice of visitor photography affects curatorial strategies, educational programmes, and visitor schemes. On the other side, this research looks at how visitors corporeally enact connection with artworks, with a key focus on how photography operates as a mediator in the process, as well as how visitor photography interacts with the spatial motifs of art museums and galleries. While rich literature from various disciplines has provided a substantial understanding of the art museum, the visitor, and photography, this research draws mainly upon both Bourdieu’s critical approach and recent developments in sociology of art, in order to reach a balance between being alert to the uneven distribution of power and cultural resources which support the production of experience and allowing individual aesthetic agency to be acknowledged and observed.

As touched on in the previous chapter, Bourdieu's studies demonstrate that inside art museums, not every kind of experiential mode is equally encouraged. Deeply associated with the institutionalisation of artworks is a contemplative mode of experience (Bourdieu, 1983; Bourdieu and Darbel, [1969]1991). In other words, the art museum demands that its display, institutionally framed as art via ideologies, conceptualisation and space, should be gazed upon in disinterested contemplation. In this line of argument, whether the visitor is capable of carrying out the experience in ways which are privileged by the museum and of making sense in ways that conform to the institutional version, depends largely on her/his sociodemographic background, and whether it can provide sufficient cultivation of taste. The idea of habitus describes a culturally formed cognitive competence in appreciation of art. While studies have shown that there is a recent trend in the art world which promotes interactive or participatory modes of experience (Prior, 2003, 2011a, 2011b; Rees Leahy, 2005, 2016), a Bourdieusian approach is useful because, firstly, the contemplative mode is observed to be still largely expected in the museum space. The association of art museums with quiet rooms might fall into the trap of stereotype, yet it is not generated in a void. Secondly, the interactive and participatory arts do not necessarily equate with an easy access to meaning (see for example, Scott et al. 2013). Thirdly, in turn and most importantly, Bourdieu's approach helps to reveal how social inequality can be reproduced in the process of experiencing art in the museum. If the visitor can extract aesthetic pleasure only when s/he knows how to use the art museum which determines the art agenda, then institutional resources are never for everyone.

Working with Bourdieusian insights, an immediate question is how to treat visitor photography, the ubiquity of which had not happened in Bourdieu's time and which was not included in Bourdieu's study. Recent sociologists of art have worked within the framework of mediation and treated the art experience as a process of 'collaboration' between a set of mediators—subjects and objects (Farkhatdinov and Acord, 2016; see also Acord and DeNora, 2008; Farkhatdinov, 2014; Griswold et al. 2013; Schwarz, 2013). On the one side, there are art museum professionals, including the authorial curator and the educator, who as mediators produce the exhibition of the artwork—which itself is a mediator. On the other side, there are the visitors who bodily make possible their interaction with artwork and, from the experiential process, makes sense of the encounter. Following this line, photography can be treated as yet another mediator. As demonstrated in the course of Chapter 2, photography in scholar discussion is often understood as either lived act or still image. In this research, photography is examined as a practice as well as an image—both mediate the experience of artworks. In other words, both photo-taking as an act and the photographic image appearing to the picture-taker interfere with and shape the experience. Each enables and resists a particular appreciation and appropriation of artworks. By treating the art museum experience as a complex interaction within a group of mediators, the power hierarchy can emerge without dismissing the visitor's agency.

Each mediator is itself a multi-layered complex. I propose to treat each as a lived entity, therefore allowing observation of its corporeal existence and consequences. Since this research focuses on the photograph-mediated art museum visitor experience, attention is paid respectively to the spatial characteristics of the art museum space, the materiality and affordances of the photographic device, and the body of the visitor. It is suggested that the effects of the first and second are realised in the performance of the third. That is, the spatial material and strategies are deployed in such a way that an experiential interior is created, in which—and only in which—the visitor is able to act out a 'museum experience'. Yet without the actual existence of the visitor, no experience would be generated. Therefore, the way that spatial motifs—as discerned by Hetherington and discussed in Chapter 2—are performed and how visitor photography intervenes can and should be studied via an examination of the participating visitor body.

The objective of the empirical study of visitors was to acquire detailed description of the movements of visitor bodies in the space of art museums and galleries34. It was focused, morevoer, on the bodies of visitors with photographic devices. That the body is a crucial aspect of the experiential process is well recognised in Rees Leahy's examination of habitus. 'A successful performance of spectatorship', to borrow her words 'invoked and enacted a precise set of socio-cultural coordinates that defined the "specific activity of looking" within the space of art exhibition or museum' (2016: 6). Both Rees Leahy and Schwarz (2013) use the term technique to describe the bodily act, emphasising the significance of studying it as a way of connecting Bourdieu's insight into power structure with lived experience.

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[34] Tia Denora uses the term 'Slow Sociology' to describe a kind of sociological study which demands 'a form of attention to minutiae', comparable to 'the slow motion, wide-lens, long-take techniques associated with "slow cinema"' (2014: 3). This, interestingly, can be seen in parallel with the 'slow looking' promoted by art museums like Tate (see Chapter 4).

In the case of seeing art, Schwarz considers it 'a way of operating both the body (swaying forward and backward) and the mind (paying attention alternately to different aspects of the artwork)' in order to produce a certain art experience (Schwarz, 2013: 1)[35] and points out that it is 'socially-acquired and socially consequential' (2013: 420). Two points are stressed here: firstly, the repertoire of the visitor's techniques of engaging with artworks is associated with her/his available cultural, economic, and social recourses. Secondly, the performance of techniques has consequences, for each technique enables some kind of aesthetic attention. By focusing on the operation of bodily acts, the corporeal and aesthetic aspect of experience can be researched without risking loss of balance – either by ignoring bodily engagement as a not entirely predictable process or falling into (to borrow Prior's words), an 'aesthetic individualism' (2011c: 134), which overly celebrates agency. By focusing on the technique, research of art experience, is firstly empirically plausible, and secondly remains informed by Bourdieu's insight into the power relations which support the field of art.

Investigation of visitor picture-taking involves two levels of technique performance. Firstly, there are certain techniques required for operating photographic devices. There is a great variety of cameras, photo-mobiles, and photographic apps. Adoption of any of them not only demands economic support and technological familiarity or expertise but is also determined by lifestyle choice and the ethos of the group to which one belongs (Bourdieu, 1990a; Bourdieu and Bourdieu, 2004). The link between one's demographic background and the adoption and handling of certain photographic equipment, though not the primary focus, therefore forms a necessary part of the empirical study. Secondly, the photo-taking itself can be seen as a technique to negotiate one's way in the museum space. I questioned whether and how picture-taking has become an appropriate behaviour at the art museum—congruent with the art museum's photography policy and the professional intention. Through allowing certain modes of attentiveness (see Schwarz, 2013), visitor photography plays a part in building an impression of the artwork seen *in that space at that time by that person*. What kinds of attentiveness are afforded by picture-taking is empirically studied. When taking pictures, the visitor body not only performs a particular set of movements but is rendered attentive to the photographed object—or distracted, since, as pointed out in Chapter 2.1.3, photographing can be a reflex reaction, performed without paying attention and thus denying the emergence of aesthetic experience. In turn, I asked whether the performance of visitor photography serves as a method of art appreciation or a way of engendering aesthetic pleasure. This is a complex issue for, arguably, the possibility of aesthetics in relation to the artwork is not guaranteed by the possession of the expertise to operate photographic devices. For example, a professional, enthusiastic, Leica user might pay attention solely to the photographic image and treat the artwork in the same way as s/he would non-art objects. At the same time, a lay user of a smartphone with only basis photographic functions might find seeing the artwork on the screen enables certain dimensions to be revealed and thus increases the aesthetic pleasure.[36]

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[35] Schwarz's analysis of the techniques of appreciating art is, however, not based on ethnographic observation at art museums but on reading the film *Waste Land*, in which artist Viz Muniz teaches a group of Brazilian garbage pickers the conventional ways of seeing artworks. While pointing out studying the technique as a practical and important way of understanding experience, he does not provide further understanding of a variety of techniques performed by art museum visitors.

In order to reach a more complete understanding of the visitor who sees photographically, the idea of the souvenir is used to examine the art museum visit. The souvenir is considered to serve as a link between experience and memory. The desire for the latter often—if not always—emerges simultaneously with the desire for the former and therefore studying experience cannot neglect an examination of memory and souvenir. As discussed in the previous chapter, the souvenir function is deeply rooted in photography and the remembrance of the experience might be as important—if not more—as the experience itself. That is, the aim of the photographing subject might be to generate a photo instead of experiencing the object. Stephanie N. Merchant's (2012) exploration of the mediative role of videographic souvenirs in the tourist experience of sea diving is a rare example of research within this framework that sees experience as a process of mediation. However, her concern is how the photographic image mediates between the experience and the memory—in other words, the perception of the experience retrospectively, instead of how photography mediates the lived experience. Moreover, in her case, the videography is done not by the diver but a professional cameraman assigned to the tourist diver. Yet, her research discloses the conflict the diver feels when facing the camera: s/he wishes simultaneously to have reality captured and to be filmed 'in a favourable light so as to ensure that the resultant memory objects will invoke positive recollections and be seen by friends and family favourably (2012: 248). This served as a starting point for my investigation of the photographic practice as souvenir making. I examined the relationship between the anticipation of a re-collectable, photographic memory and the actual experience: whether photographs intended as souvenirs in some cases replace artworks as the central focus of the visit, and what types of photographs are desired as souvenirs. It should be noted that this research did not concern the 'afterlife' of visitor photographs (that is, how people edit, use, and circulate their photos after shooting and how their memories of the visit might be mediated by those images are excluded from the investigation). Instead, the research

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[36] There is a wide continuum of possibilities in terms of the combination of the type of photographic device used, expertise (or the lack of it) in picture-taking, and attitudes respectively toward art and photography. It is also possible that a Leica user considers this relatively expensive device as lifestyle choice, symbolising taste and economic power, and operates it with unconcern. Meanwhile, an iPhone photographer can be a professional Instagrammer whose aim is to produce and disseminate eye-catching images. It is not viable for this qualitative research to include every combination. Instead, the goal of this research is to explore and demonstrate how contemporary art experience is

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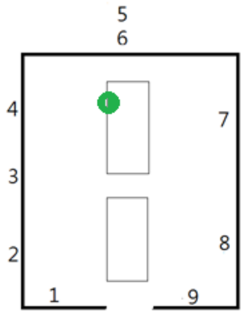
complicated by visitors' use of photographic devices and to suggest possible directions for future studies.

focused on how the process of picture-taking as souvenir-producing directs the visitor gaze and shapes the process of experience.

### 3.2 Pilot Study at the Rothko Room, Tate Modern

During the two years prior to starting formal empirical work, ethnographic observation had been conducted at the Rothko Room at London's Tate Modern gallery. The observation was continued after my upgrade was approved yet some relevant themes which did not appear in the literature review emerged in this pilot study, which therefore needs to be discussed. The justification for beginning the field work at this particular exhibition space requires answers to two questions: why Tate Modern and why the Rothko Room? Beyond the very personal reason that this room was my favourite corner of a museum in London, the Tate Modern which contained it was chosen first of all because it had become iconic both in the art world and for tourism—two fields that increasingly overlap one another, especially via the practice of art tourists. Often claimed as a 'must see' for people interested in art or visiting London, it attracts a range of international visitors with multiple aims, which allowed me to observe a diverse audience. The Rothko Room was chosen as the primary location for observation firstly because it was part of the permanent collection with free entry, and photography was permitted. Secondly, it was considered personally that what visitors encountered in this room—an interplay between two major factors — the works on display and the deliberately dim light—was incongruous with photographic reproduction, since the latter is prone to alter the colour hue, brighten the visual impression, and reduce the artistically deliberate large size. Thirdly, unlike many other gallery rooms at Tate Modern, there two long benches have been installed in the middle of the space. Long term sitting in various positions, necessary for concentrated and detailed observation, was thus possible.

**[Diagram 3.1 Rothko Room, Tate Modern]**



Rothko Room, Tate

With one single opening, this room contrasted with other gallery rooms which had the quality of open spaces, with two or more entrances/exits through which people could easily and accidentally saunter. To visit this room, people needed to actually turn and enter. Since the room was comparatively subdued in terms of lighting, it had a sense of mystery and uncertainty which could be read as an invitation to contemplation, or rejection and intimidation. Inside the room are displayed nine paintings from the Seagram Murals by the American Abstract Expressionist artist Mark Rothko. Diagram 3.1 shows a graphic representation of the spatial arrangement of the Rothko Room. Numbers 1 to 9 indicate the location of each painting, the two squares in the centre represent the two benches, and the green dot demonstrates my position—which shifted every so often—when conducting the observation during the period of 2015-2017. To get a more complete understanding, the observation covered both weekdays and weekends, daytimes and evenings (Tate Modern extended its opening time from 6pm to 10pm on every Friday and Saturday).

Several themes were found to correspond to existing findings on visitors and museums as discussed in the literature review. They are examined in turn below:

Non-visual properties shape the visit

First, sound was highly present in the room. The humming of the ventilation, the hushed-ness of talking making noticeable the occasional loud conversations, feet clacking on the wooden floorboards, sharp 'beeps' sounding whenever someone came too close to the paintings and triggered the alarms, and photographic shutter sounds. Secondly, the temperature of this room often felt colder than others. I was not sure whether this was the result of deliberate control or of a sense of destroyed hope that emanated from the works. The effect was a more pronounced sense of isolation and despondency. Thirdly, there was an olfactory dimension to this room37 38. This sensory information, unlike the visual, cannot be shut down. That is, one can turn the eyes away or close them, yet the ears, skin and nose cannot be switch off. What is heard,39 tactilely felt, and smelled envelop one immediately and co-shape the experience as a whole.

## The indication of the gift shop bags

The gift shop bags of various art museums were a frequent sight. Most noticeable were not only Tate's purple plastic ones but also the National Gallery's paper carry-bags printed with

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[37] In effect, a uniform 'Tate scent' was detectable across its four sites: Tate Britain and Tate Modern in London, Tate St Ives, and Tate Liverpool all exuded the same smell. My first visit to Tate St Ives was in 2008. The current space, renovated and reopened in 2017, still impressed me with the same odour when I visited in 2018. Moreover, its mock gallery at the Tate Store—Tate's storage place in Lambeth, South London, smelled identical. The scent unites the Tate galleries and forms a distinctly Tate brand of experience.

[38] The odour of each art museum hardly ever escapes my notice. The olfactory characteristics affect my comfort and feeling and thus the operation of my senses and sensibility. Furthermore, familiarity with certain museum smells makes the visits homely. It was reported in 2019 that there were scent professionals attempting to reproduce the olfactory properties of the New Museum in New York in the form of perfumery, which when used, could 'emulate the actual smell of walking through the museum' (Ludel, 2019).

[39] The acoustic aspect of museum experience, though relatively ignored by academics, does not escape scholarly investigation. John Kannenberg, for example, has conducted a doctoral research into the sonic experience of museums. His blog *Phonomnesis* (https://phonomnesis.wordpress.com/)record his encounters and analyses.

Van Gogh's sunflowers. The appearance of the latter hinted at a trip to some degree devoted to arts or culture. The sense of the co-existence of interest in art and tourist practices was felt. The existence of the former provoked curiosity. It might meant that bag carriers had visited the gift shops—several of which were installed right next to the entrances—before coming inside the gallery rooms to see artworks, or that they had come into the permanent collection after visiting the ticketed temporary exhibitions, which had souvenir shops installed outside their exits. Significantly, what it showed was first that there existed a demand for souvenirs. Secondly, however relatively secluded the Rothko Room might be, it was still inside an art museum, existing alongside other spaces with various functions. The gift shop bags served as constant reminders. This room therefore felt less like a completely singular experiential space.

### The affordance of the Benches

It transpired that the two long benches exercised their importance through orienting individual visitors' movement in the museum space, and visitor flow as a whole. The benches invited sitting. However, what was invited by sitting was not necessarily looking at artworks. While there were those who seated themselves when viewing the paintings, a considerable percentage of visitors appeared oblivious to the works around them. Instead, they were either checking their mobile phones or engaging in conversations. Equipped with these two benches, a feature not shared in common with most of the gallery rooms at Tate Modern, this space enticed people to stay (it was also possible that the muted light here in contrast to the brightness of the adjacent space gave a sense of restfulness in which one might feel less exposed). The benches provided more choices for a visitor's body. The latter was thus less restrained, confining between standing still and moving around. This feeling of being allowed more liberty and decision-making is explored further in the ethnographic study of visitor photography.

## The impact of the guiding materials

Two types of guiding materials were seen to be consulted by visitors. The first was text based, including panels and labels. The panel introducing them to Mark Rothko and the works exhibited here was installed on the wall by the only entrance/exit to the room. As a result, it was not unusual to see a number of visitors crowded around the entrance/exit reading. The order in which the panel was read and artworks were viewed varied. Notably some read the text and left without entering the room. Due to the dullness of lighting and the distance visitors had to keep from the walls due to the installed alarm, labels placed beside each painting were less easy to read. People could often be seen leaning forward to get closer to the text. The second type of guide was of an audio-visual nature, which appeared to direct users' movements comparatively tightly. Stopping or moving towards another work, the length of time spent with a work, the focus point of the eye, all seemed to relate to the instructions given by the guide. Both types of guiding material exerted some distinct choreographic effects. This in turn provoked a question about whether picture-taking, as Sontag claims, keeps tourists comfortably occupied in unfamiliar situations, could be considered to be another kind of guiding device, mediating the relationships between the visitor and the artwork, the visitor's body and the space. This emergent topic is discussed immediately below.

### The choreographic effect of visitor photography

I also saw that the use of photographic devices can be performed in a variety of manners and each was constituted by a combination of bodily movements. Significantly, often when a visitor took photos, the speed of walking from one painting to the next—or rather from one shooting position to another—was faster than among those who did not take pictures. This was in contrast to the generally perceived idea of 'the museum walk' being of an abnormally slow kind. Furthermore, there was an association between the type of photographic device in use and the set of bodily movements performed. Although the use of the smartphone has become a prevalent phenomenon, a large portion of visitors still took picture with digital cameras. There was a visible difference in the operation of the body between looking through the lens and looking at the screen. While people often held smartphones closer to themselves, those who used cameras were more likely to be seen holding the devices out, towards the objects photographed.

### User concentration versus distraction of other visitors

When photographing, many people had a determined look—in the sense of appearing to have a goal to reach—on their faces; their eyes were kept on the screens or fixed on the lens; their bodies were highly engaged with the photographic activities— moving forward and backward, turning at different angles, supposedly to reach a satisfactory shooting position, and when actual shooting took place, their bodies were very still, even if just for an instant.

While visitors enacting this performance exhibited concentration, it could also distract other visitors. The brightly illuminated screens of smartphones or digital cameras often directed my gaze towards them. While this allowed me an opportunity to glimpse the photographic images there—decidedly different from the original paintings, the screens were distracting and disturbing, because their visual existence stood out.

### Visitor numbers matter – the atmosphere

Visitors are actual. However the disembodied eye might be privileged in the imagination of the white-cube model promoters, visitors were observed to bring with them actual bodies which generated movements, sounds and odours, and as a result changed the feeling of the room and other visitors' behaviours and experience. This recognition both echoed and went beyond Benjamin's statement that a painting permits only a small number of viewers to stand in front of it. That is, being able to stand near a painting and see it from a satisfactory angle was crucial to making the experience happen. When there was more than one visitor wishing to do so, the experience was compromised. Yet it was not just those who competed for the best viewing position of the same painting that had an impact. People moving around the space, in front of other paintings, also shaped the experience. One might focus her/his visual attention on the painting s/he was facing, while the corner of her/his eye caught the shifting of other visitor bodies or her/his ear received the sounds of others' feet clacking on the floor.[40]

### The mediation of the visitor experience by professionals and invigilators

One assumption formed through the exploration of literature review was that while the curatorial sector produced the public presentation of artworks, the educational and learning departments attempted to connect visitors with the artworks exhibited. What entered the picture during this pilot ethnographic fieldwork was the significance of, first, the visitor experience staff, who are among the newest professionals in the museum field. They are concerned with the overall comfort of visitors, often working towards improving access to both the museum space and the understanding of artwork—thus there appeared to be a certain overlap with the educational objectives. It also appeared that the traditional role of invigilators—variously called security guards or wardens—had been re-conceived as visitor service managers and assistants. In the case of the Rothko Room, there was not an invigilator stationed there every minute. Instead, a warden would enter and circle the room at intervals, though not necessarily looking at visitors—some appeared to be deep in thought with their heads bowed down, eyes directed at the floor before each footstep, or checking their smartphones. The sense of supervision was not strict, but it could be felt.

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[40] Observation in the Rothko Room could be compared with what was experienced at the ticketed Rothko exhibition, installed at Tate Modern from 26th September 2008 to 1st February 2009. This exhibition, like many others at Tate, attracted a large number of visitors. The sheer volume of visitor body had an overwhelming effect in the sense that it constantly became the central focus of one's body-mind. That is, negotiating one's way in the crowd and the unavoidable reception of others' conversations and movements occupied one's senses to a degree that concentrating on the exhibits was difficult if not impossible. The Rothko room was never as crowded. However, it had its busy moments and quietness was not always an available quality.

It should be pointed out that themes that were considered important discovered in the pilot research and thus deserving of further exploration are listed in this section as separate points for the sake of relatively clear discussion. Yet they are often inter-linked. They influence one another and thus cannot be described and theorised independently. The discovery of these themes helped to sharpen the sense of observation in the formal ethnographic work and direct the attention to more diverse and detailed dimensions. First, my focus was directed toward the way each sensory dimension of experience affected the 'viewing' of artworks. Secondly, I observed how the presence of non-art objects interfered with the experience. Third, I saw how different types of guiding materials are consulted; fourth, during visitor interviews, I explored the role played by souvenirs in the art museum experience as a whole. Finally, I looked at how each type of photographic device resulted in different ways of picture-taking and thus different modes of experience.

### 3.3 Looking with the Senses

Underlying all these findings from the pilot study is the inseparability of visual perception from other, non-visual, senses (See Howes, 2006b; Pink, 2009; 2011a). While the primary research focus is on how photography mediated looking is performed, instead of on how all the senses are used in the museum space, this looking with all the senses is stressed here because — while arguably ethnographic study unavoidably collects data not only through visual observation but via all the sensory organs,[41] this aspect of data collection is not always included in the presentation of findings, which makes it appear as though the research has been completed without recourse to non-visual apparatuses. Moreover, by treating photographic devices as material objects whose affordances become one focus of the research, it was necessary for the ethnographer to use her body-senses in an observant and empathetic way to approach an understanding of visitors who touch, use and connect with cameras and camera phones.

Differentiation needs to be made between the attentiveness to non-visual information I emphasise here and museum or scholarly practices of sensory interest. The latter is part of the trend of promoting multisensory engagements in art museums and galleries, first of all through the creation of artwork-specific sensory objects for visitors to consume (for example, Tate Britain's *Tate Sensorium*[42], Dulwich Picture Gallery's *Feast*[43], and Two Temple Place

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[41] Walter Benjamin can been seen as an early and significant example, exploring surroundings and objects not from the position of a distant onlooker but as a senses-minded insider. Alan Latham states that Benjamin's focus on everyday objects and places is a result of his recognition that capitalist modernity with its 'material and imageric' has cancelled the necessary distance between the critic and reality (Latham, 1999: 451). The critic therefore has to situate her/himself inside the object through tactile and sensual exploration (Latham, 1999: 451-2). In other words, knowledge is obtained via immediate experience instead of distant musing.

[42] The Tate Sensorium consists of four multi-sensory projects designed by the London-based studio Flying Objet, corresponding to four paintings in Tate Britain's collection. Participants' pulses were detected and recorded by wearable devices. They showed the intensity and change of participants' physical-emotional response to each painting-design pairing. According to the Tate website, 'The experience encourages a new approach to interpreting artworks, using technology to stimulate the senses, triggering both memory and imagination. On leaving, you will be invited to explore the rest of the gallery using the theme of the senses as a guide.'
**Tate Sensorium: Stimulate your sense of taste, touch, smell and hearing in this immersive art experience at Tate Britain** [August-September 2015]
https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-britain/display/ik-prize-2015-tate-sensorium

[43] A series of activities were designed for this after-hours evening event, including a self-initiated tour with a packet of three bespoke sensory creations paired with three paintings in the gallery's collection. They included a candy and a fragrance which resembled the taste and aroma of the food depicted in the painting.
**Gallery Lates: Feast** [6th October 2017]
https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/gallery-lates-feast-tickets-36157688620?aff=eand#

Gallery's *The Sonic Sensorium*[44] [45]); secondly, through special projects, workshops or tours designed with access in mind—allowing knowledge to be acquired by different-able bodies (for example, touch tours during which touching is authorised and guided (see, for instance, Candlin, 2004), The Metropolitan Museum of Art's *The Multisensory Met*[46]). While these practices are, or focus on, one-time events or the temporary lifting of a ban on touching, my concern was mainly the regularly governed art museums and galleries.

During my time spent in various art museums in years both prior to and after the starting point of this doctoral study, I was aware that, while I was primarily visually informed by the field, to rely on vision as the sole data perceiver would result in a limited picture of the art museum visit. Firstly, my body played a significant role in making the experience happen.[47] Seeing is not solely the eye's performance, but a collaborative choreography with the body, which submits to or resists visitor flow, avoids arousing the warden's suspicion—for instance, by maintaining a distance from the artwork — and pauses when the eye is arrested by the work or the information board or when the audio-visual guide instructs. Secondly, other non-visual senses receive or are involved in the production of important and rich messages. For example, the sounds of footsteps and camera-clicking, the vibration of the bench I occupied triggered by people sitting down or getting up, or the smell of perfume all signalled to me, the observer, both the existence of other visitors and their movements. Meanwhile, being also a visitor, these sensory experiences shaped my visits and affected my willingness to linger or leave and the possibility and quality of interaction with the artworks. Acknowledging the bodily, multisensory nature of the art museum experience is the first and necessary step toward accessing a better understanding of its processes and consequences. To borrow the words of Sunderland et al, 'all human experience is mediated via the body and thus the senses' (Sunderland et al., 2012: 1057).[48]

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[44] Created to accompany the Two Temple Place Gallery's then exhibition **Rhythm & Reaction: The Age Of Jazz In Britain (27th Jan – 22nd Apr 2018), The Sonic Sensorium comprised three musical performances, paired respectively with a lollipop, a bottle of cocktail, and a tube of perfume—designed to resemble the taste or smell of the periods in which the music had been composed.**
**The Sonic Sensorium: Jazz Edition** [6th April 2018]
https://www.avmcuriosities.com/blog/2018/19/month/event-the-sonic-sensorium-jazz-edition

[45] Having attended in Tate Sensorium, Dulwich's Feast, and the Sonic Sensorium, I could sense how each project led me away from or closer to the artworks. Presented at the Tate Sensorium with the original paintings, were in effect sensory interpretations of the artworks, which could be seen in the same line with another Tate Modern project more than a decade prior: twelve bands were invited to each choose a work as a source of inspiration for new musical creation (https://www.tate.org.uk/about-us/projects/tate-tracks). Among the results, played via headphones in the Rothko Room, was The Real Tuesday Weld's 'For Rothko with Love' (https://www.tuesdayweld.com/for-rothko-with-love/). Perceiving both the artwork and the sensory interpretation/response, I could compare my own feelings caused by seeing the former and the feelings transmitted by the latter. They might be in harmony and strengthen my emotions. They might be in conflict and arouse my curiosity: I would then question where we saw differently. Dulwich's sensory creations, however, while allowing understanding of the taste and smell of the historical period to which the painting belonged, treated the artwork as historical exhibit. Aesthetic appreciation slid from focus. Two Temple Place Gallery's Sonic Sensorium, became more an event in its own right: while at Tate and Dulwich, the participants faced the artworks when consuming the paired designs, visitors to the Sonic Sensorium sat looking at the musicians while licking the lollipops, sipping the cocktail, and spraying themselves with the perfume. The connection between the exhibits and the event—constituted by their providing historical background for each other—was not always felt. All three projects, however, shared one feature: visitors were provided with things they could touch while the artworks remained at their usual physical distance.

[46] In 2014, multimedia designer Ezgi Ucar collaborated with the Metropolitan Museum of Art. By adding sensory properties like sounds and smells to replicas of a number of artworks, Ucar endeavored to connect the visually-impaired visitors with art.
**Multisensory Met: Touch, Smell, and Hear Art | The Metropolitan Museum of Art**
https://www.metmuseum.org/blogs/digital-underground/2015/multisensory-met

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[47] That perception is made possible through all the senses is a theme stressed by Merleau-Ponty. On the one hand, the object one encounters is a holistic entity which can be perceived as such only when all the senses are employed. In his examination of Cézanne's works, he points out that 'These distinctions between touch and sight are unknown in primordial perception. It is only as a result of a science of the human body that we finally learn to distinguish between our senses. The lived object is not rediscovered or constructed on the basis of the contributions of the senses; rather, it presents itself to us from the start as the centre from which theses contributions radiate' (1964: 15). On the other hand, one can only perceive with all her/his senses for they are not separable: 'My perception is therefore not a sum of visual, tactile, and audible givens: I perceive in a total way with my whole being; I grasp a unique structure of the thing, a unique way of being, which speaks to all my senses at once' (1964: 50).

[48] The relations between sense and understanding can be further explored by understanding 'sense' as of double layers. As Paul Rodaway reckons, it implies both sensation and meaning: 'a relationship between the immediate experience and metaphorical extrapolation (1994: 5), both essential to the fabrication of experience. Through paying attention to people's 'ways of sensing' (Classen and Howes, 2006: 200), it is possible to get insights into their sense-making.

Looking with the senses at the lived field of the art museum serves as a form of data collection which is layered and detail-minded. Firstly, experiences in general and aesthetic experiences specifically are embodied process which involve multiple sensory modalities. As the literature review reveals, it is recognised that the visual occupies a central position in the art museum visit. That is, the activity of looking remains the defining aspect of the experience. Yet, as discussed in Chapter 2.2.3, multiple modes of sensory operation are also involved. They include moving, standing, pausing, hearing, and talking. In the very case of photography, while it is itself a visual-orientated tool, it is also a multisensory object (Edwards, 2010) and its souvenir property offers a kind of intimate, tactile engagement with the artwork. Secondly, as Pink points out, ‘the senses are interconnected and not always possible to understand as if separate categories’ (2009: xiii). A multi-sensory strategy of investigation can avoid a too narrow and one-sided understanding. Thirdly, researchers’ pay attention to ‘how their own sensory embodied experiences might assist them in learning about other people’s worlds’ (Pink, 2009: 25-6; see also Coffey, 1999; Hurdley and Dicks, 2011; Rhys-Taylor, 2010). This allows a place for both the researcher and the researched in the research—a point which is considered essential and related to the researcher’s positioning, as explored in 3.6. Finally, a sensory approach allows research which continues and broadens Bourdieu’s paradigm of habitus (see Csordas, 1990; lisahunter and emerald, 2017; Rhys-Taylor, 2010, 2013)49. What we aimed to be obtain, instead of an installation shot of visitors in art museums taking photographs, was a lived grasp of the lived visitor-photography experience.

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[49] Sarah Pink proposes to move beyond the concept of embodiment (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984), which emphasises the inseparability of knowing and embodied practice, to ‘emplacement’, which addresses the temporal-spatial situated-ness of the body (2009, 2011a). Place is understood by her as a ‘complex ecology of social, material, affective and sensory environmental process’ (Pink, 2011a: 353). Looking closely into this ecological process allows what cannot be predicted by socio-cultural determinants to emerge.

## 3.4 Studying the Enactment of Experience—Defining and Entering the Field

### 3.4.1 The Selection of Case Studies

Four London-based art exhibition spaces were chosen as the case studies for this research, including the Courtauld Gallery, Raven Row, Tate Modern, and Zabludowicz Collection. The finalisation of the selection was the result of reciprocal interest: the institutions' willingness to be involved in the project and the researcher's attachment to the institutions. The list consists of museums and galleries that serve the public. Two crucial points should be further explained in this description. Firstly, no definite line was drawn between museums and galleries in terms of the way they exhibit artworks. That is, while conventionally museums are considered to hold their own collections and galleries as not having such possession, the medium they both adopt to present artworks to the public brings them into one group. The medium referred to is exhibition. As the curator Juan A. Gaitan observes, 'The exhibition is the museum's medium, the biennial's, and the gallery's. It is also, even in our time, art's medium' (2013: 33; see also O'Neill, 2012: 90-91). This recognition not only served as the foundation for regarding both museums and galleries as the research focus, but also led to including, as complementary, empirical findings obtained from commercial art galleries, art fairs like the Frieze London and Photo London, biennials and their parallel events like the Venice Biennale, the Documenta, and the Skulptur Projekte in Münster, as well as non-art or quasi-art museums like the Wellcome Collection, the Design Museum in London and V&A Dundee, parallel ceremonial or exhibition space like cathedrals, arcades, and department stores. Observation at these sites significantly helped me to sharpen my sense of the uniqueness of art museums. Secondly, no definite line was drawn between public and non-public in the sense of funding and ownership. Instead, the focus was on non-commercial art museums and galleries who admitted visitors other than those participating in their membership schemes. Entrance fees might be charged, or the target audience in the minds of curators might be a selective group of small size, yet theoretically, these institutions could not reject those who wished to enter—so long they made the payment (should payment be required).

Each selected case has a distinct set of characteristics that consist of geographic location, photography policy, type of exhibition, ticketing plan, and genre of art represented [see Table 3.1]. In turn, each attracts different types of visitors. The following section introduces them, with a focus on the impression I received as a visitor, and had gathered in the years before the formal beginning of this empirical work. These past connections both generated further research interest and served to support the fieldwork conducted for the doctoral study with deeper understanding.

**[Table 3.1 Case Studies]**

| Museum | Opening | Geographical Location | Photography policy | Exhibition Type | Artwork Genre |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Courtauld Gallery** | At the Somerset House since 1989 | Strand, London (postcode: WC2R 0RN) | Allowed at free, permanent collection; prohibited at ticketed exhibition | Free permanent collection and ticketed temporary exhibition | Pre-modern; modern |
| **Raven Row** | 2009 | Spitalfields, London (postcode: E1 7LS) | Allowed in the whole building | Free temporary exhibition | Contemporary |
| **Tate Modern** | 2000 | Bankside, London (postcode: SE1 9TG) | Allowed at free, permanent collection; prohibited at ticketed exhibition | Free permanent collection and ticketed temporary exhibition | Modern; contemporary |
| **Zabludowicz Collection** | 2007 | Chalk Farm, London (postcode: NW5 3PT) | Allowed in the whole building | Free temporary exhibition | Contemporary |

**Courtauld Gallery**

It was in the summer of 2007 that I made my first visit to the Courtauld. The grandeur and elegance of the interior, and the spiral staircase rising towards an eye-arresting skylight demanded admiration and veneration. During a pre-ethnography meeting to which I was invited, with the Head of the Courtauld Gallery, Dr Ernst Vegelin, curator Dr Alexander Gerstein, and the Visitor Services and Operations Manager Caireen McGinn, I was asked if the relatively domestic interior design was seen to be intimate and thus relaxing for visitors. I reflected that in contrast to the white cube space of many modern art museums, which I felt were less culture-specific and where I was certain of how to behave, the Englishness of the Courtauld interior exuded a strangeness to me as a foreigner. This was not because I was encountering it for the first time. On the contrary, it was because the description and illustration of this type of building I had read in books, and the implications of wealth and power were imprinted on the consciousness. Most importantly, I could not get rid of a stubborn awareness that this type of space served a private function instead of being open to the public. Consequently, there existed a feeling of invading another's home—a sense shared when visiting those stately houses that are often now governed by the National Trust. Uncertainty mounted at not being able to decide the relational role I was required to play: as a guest to a personal home or a visitor to a public gallery. As I visited more often, so a feeling of homeliness had grown. The white cube model in comparison became impersonal with its uniformity. It is similar to the difference in affordance of staying in a chain hotel and a guesthouse. The former's unsurprising monotony could ease the visitor into routine manners; the latter, by blurring the line between the public and the familial, the bureaucratic and the personal, provoked questions regarding behavioural codes. Yet the former with its clinical-leaning procedures and lack of individuality keeps its visitors at a distance—however short that seems at the beginning—which cannot be easily crossed, while from the latter springs a personalised connection the visitor gradually feels in the process of fumbling and discovering.[50] This early experience of mine served as a reminder, firstly, of the complexity of the consequences of interiors, and secondly, that the Courtauld interior could operate a barring effect, which I later found that its professionals could not perceive. Furthermore, artworks contained in the Courtauld gallery rooms simultaneously deepened the sense of awe and invited closeness, for they were mostly paintings that had either been copied photographically and appeared regularly in art history books, or bore the recognisable brush-strokes of famed and familiar artists' hands such as Cézanne, van Gogh, and Manet, to name just a few. Overall, the gallery gave an impression of discriminating taste and discreet affluence.

### Raven Row

It was the Harun Farocki exhibition '*Against What? Against Whom?*' which brought me into Raven Row for the first time in 2009. Upon entering, in the largest room on the ground floor, I immediately joined the seminar group led by theorist and artist Kodwo Eshun, under whose guidance I was conducting my MA study. Because of this clear purpose at the beginning, the anxiety and uncertainty which laced the initial entry and progress further into the building—which despite its white cube gallery rooms did not immediate announce itself as an art gallery—was lessened. Yet after the seminar, when free exploration could begin, the gallery, with two staircases and numerous rooms on its upper floors, was disorienting. This was helped neither by the simply illustrated floorplan, which only furthered the confusion, nor by the video-based exhibits which displayed difficult footage—with sometimes disturbing images and narrative composition that could not always be followed easily. Like the Courtauld, traces of formerly domestic uses of the space could be found and the permeability of the line between the public and the private was felt; unlike the Courtauld, the space was largely painted white, not only including the walls but the bookshelves and mantelpieces, and this whiteness shifted the visitor back to the domain of the art gallery. The experience was not unwelcome, for I did not consider that encounter with artworks should be necessarily comfortable. But what should be noted is that navigation in the Raven Row space was not straightforward but layered, and provoked constant questioning, demanding decision-making and action.

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[50] It might be worth of considering if it is possible that art museums in contemporary times compete to erect spectacular buildings not only for the sake of catching attraction and fame, but through creating an individual identity, eliciting a unique connection with visitors.

### Tate Modern

The pilot empirical study was continued at Tate Modern. While there was still a focus on the Rothko Room, the geographical area of observation was spread out to include the whole site, including its 2016 addition, the Blavatnik building. The artworks on display were grouped thematically in contrast to the chronological hanging favoured by, for example, the National Gallery. Nicholas Serota, the director of Tate until 2017, states that this ‘radical approach’ was adopted ‘so that the visitor is constantly reminded that we view the past through the frame of the present’ (2000: 5). It might also be because, according to some of the staff, the collection owned by Tate could not support a seamless chronological display. Whether or not it was ownership of insufficient artworks that prompted the innovation, during my first few visits in 2007, the theme names, including ‘State of Flux’, ‘Poetry and Dream’, ‘Material Gestures’, and ‘Idea and Object’, did inspire curiosity and issue an invitation to creative and personal associations. Critically, this assuaged my worry that any aesthetic enjoyment or comprehension would be compromised by the disjunction between my rudimentary knowing of art history and the curators' expert knowledge that under-pinned the assembly of a chronological display. In spite of the vastness of the space, the large number of visitors during the daytime gave individuals a sense of anonymity and thus freedom which rendered the museum space closer to the modern city described by Simmel (see Simmel, ([1903] 1950). During late evening opening, in contrast, due to the discernibly smaller visitor size, there emerged an emptiness which encouraged a sense of fellowship not only between the artworks and myself but between the wardens and me, other visitors and me – though this intimacy might have been perceived only on my side. Often at the end of each of those early visits, I would stop at the book/gift shop to browse the collection of postcards. Yet what I purchased were mostly printed images of artwork I had not seen: the postcards were bought because the images attracted and aroused interest in the original works, while postcards of works I had seen unavoidably disappointed with the failure to resemble the original. Nevertheless, I enjoyed being able to pick up any postcards that caught my eye, and other visitors could also be seen to be highly engaged with selecting postcards. Tate Modern had thus for years not only attracted me to return and linger with its collection and presentation of artwork, but also interested me with the extensive possibility that it could link art and visitors through artworks and non-art objects.

### Zabludowicz Collection

The Zabludowicz Collection exemplified an exhibition space which blurred the boundaries between museums and galleries, between the non-profit and the commercial. First, although it owned its own collection, it did not, unlike the Courtauld and Tate Modern, preserve an area for a permanent exhibition. Secondly, self-described as a 'philanthropic endeavour'[51] with free admission, it nevertheless exhibited in art fairs like the Frieze London, representing artists whose works it had collected. The first visit I made to the Zabludowicz Collection was in early 2011 for the *Future Map 10*, showing works by new graduates or emerging artists. Although merely consciously aware, the understanding that the exhibits were created by artists who had not yet been repeatedly endorsed as such by textbooks and critics possibly allowed me to engage with them more playfully. The space, which from its architecture had obviously at one time been a church, also encouraged exploration of ways of moving around and considering the artworks in ways outside familiar museum and gallery conventions.  Less frequented than the Courtauld and Tate Modern, the Zabludowicz had occupied a conspicuous place on my mental map of art museums and galleries in London. Together with its diverse artworks and approaches to exhibitions, it provoked at question about how it delivered an impression that 'felt' unlike commercial galleries that also had free public entry.

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[51] Zabludowicz Collection https://www.zabludowiczcollection.com/about

Each institution was contacted and made aware of my intention to conduct ethnographic observation on site. Liaisons with various departments became the main bridge between myself and the institutions: the Visitor Services and Operation Manager in the case of the Courtauld Gallery; the Gallery Manager at Raven Row; the Curator of Public Programmes at the Zabludowicz. My request for formal recognition of my presence as an ethnographer via email was received and said to be forwarded to relevant personnel. No further contact followed. Yet two staff members of the Visitor Experience Team granted me an opportunity for an interview; communication with a few professionals responsible for digital development, visitor experience, and education was established via either personal conversations or emails. Therefore, a certain degree of recognition had been offered.

### 3.4.2 Methods of Research

To answer the questions about how visitor photography is performed in-situ, and how it interacts with the spatial motifs of the experiential museum space and the state of the art museum professionals' perception of visitor photography which in turn affects how picture-taking is governed, the empirical study focused on two subject groups: on the one hand, these were institutional experience producers, including curators, educational staff, visit experience professionals, and invigilators; on the other hand, they were the performers of experience, namely visitors. The study is based on a qualitative model, combining ethnographic observation with semi-structured interviewing and learning from conversations. The drawback of qualitative research is a lack of the generalisability which quantitative study can claim. However, it does afford possibilities to study culture in action (see Acord, 2009; Schwarz, 2013; Spillman, 2002). In the limited province of doctoral research, this approach can generate in-depth understanding of the topic studied. The main body of data was collected in the four case studies. Each attracts different types of visitor, as a result of a combination of architectural features, curatorial, educational, and visitor programmes, although it should be noted that visitor groups in each of the four museums and gallery might overlap. As the selection of the case studies has been discussed in 3.4.1, the following section examines each research method in detail.

However, before moving to the detailed outline of research methods, it is necessary to point out that this research assigns weight asymmetrically to ethnographic observation and interviewing. That is, ethnographic observation functions as the primary method of gathering data, while interviewing serves to supplement with information. As discussed in Chapter 1, I, the researcher, entered the field with the perspective of a visitor who already frequented art museums and galleries out of personal interest prior to this PhD study. Furthermore, even previously as a mere visitor, I always had the habit of observing others—both visitors and gallery staff—who happened to share the same space with me. This practice was subsequently adopted as the approach of this ethnographic study. In doing so, the researcher did not claim a viewing position above the situation but observed in-situ, as a player in the event (see Bourdieu, 1977: 96-7). It should not be forgotten that, from the beginning, a museum visitor enters gallery spaces to 'look at' scenes and things: the extraordinary, the unusual, the interesting, the performed—all things that both satisfy as well as provoke curiosity, and which refresh ways of seeing. This overlaps with what an ethnographer does.

### Ethnographic Observation

Ethnography has been used in various disciplines to study a wide range of subjects and objects (see Eberle, 2016; Gobo and Marciniak, 2016). In general, developed for the study of culture (Clifford, 1986: 3; Hughson, 2016: 294-5; van Maanen, 2011: 1), it use is based on the assumption that direct observation affords recording and understanding of 'situation'

(Barnard, 2016; see also Gobo and Marciniak, 2016). Bourdieu’s theorisation of habitus is itself built upon solid ethnographic studies (see Hughson, 2016: 299-300). However, as discussed in Chapter 2.2.3, in the case of art appreciation, his approach has been criticised by recent developments in cultural sociology and the sociology of art as neglecting the bodily and sensory aspects of experience. The Czech art historian Ladislav Kesner points out that investigating the experience of looking at artworks should include ‘the spontaneity and immediacy with which people react and respond to images (within the rules admitted in the public space of a museum’ (2006: 11). This, according to Farkhatdinov and Acord, has nevertheless been neglected both by the ‘Bourdieusian sociology of art perception, and by ‘applied studies of visitor behaviours’ (2016: 504).

Ethnography, which attends to bodies and senses, was considered to be an appropriate method for this study because, firstly, the research questions concern, on the one side, professional intentions for and practices of art exhibitions, and on the other side, visitor behaviours. Both involved material entities and the researcher could not merely rely on texts and surveys but needed to situate herself in the actual environment. Secondly, my focus on the visitor experience as a process of mediation, shaped not only by museum materialities but by the visitor’s adopted way of seeing, required attention to the bodily and sensory dimensions of experience. As Thomas S. Eberle argues, ethnography can provide opportunities for exploring ‘the sensuousness of the life-world, the sensuality of our bodily senses’ worlds, and how sensual experience and meaning are interwoven in the constitution of “sense”’ (2016: 247). A sensory approach—as explored in 3.2—is necessarily bonded with ethnography.

In order to capture visitor experience ‘as it is’, this research adopted an approach of unobtrusive observation. That is, to borrow Bitgood’s words, observations were made ‘without visitor awareness in order to minimise a reactive effect’ (2009: 194). The decision to adopt an unobtrusive approach meant that visual recording was not used. While methods of photographic and video recording allow documentation of processes which can be repeated and examined after the experience happens (see Acord, 2009; Farkhatdinov, 2014; Heath and vom Lehn, 2004; vom Lehn, 2006), this research did not adopt them, primarily because of their potential to intrude on both visitor feelings and behaviour. This decision is supported by my own personal experience. Since I myself feel uneasy when being photographed or filmed and would behave differently, I recognised that visual recording might affect other visitors similarly: disturbing both their personal space and altering their behaviours. Furthermore, while sociological observation constantly involved the maintenance of distance—mental and, depending on the case, physical—between the researcher and the researched, proximity is arguably also a crucial factor for insightful revelation. Watching film footage, while allowing repeated reading from which minutiae can be captured, lacks the immersive characteristic of a lived situation in which the ethnographer can feel the atmosphere and energy enabled by the space-people interactive complex. From my experimental attempts at observing visitors from various physical points of view, I found that even if the researcher was situated in the same building as the visitors yet distancing herself—for example, by looking from the first floor platform at the visitors wandering about on the ground floor (in the case of V&A Dundee, which had an interior designed so that such visual transparency became the theme), or by sitting right next to the gift shop area and looking into it (in the case of Tate Modern where souvenir stalls were adjacent to the café zone), keen observation was still difficult to achieve, for the scenes were seen but not felt. In other words, 'being there' was reckoned to be necessary to understand the multisensory process of experience as 'it is'.

As discussed in Chapter 2.3, the art museum functions on the principles of interiority and singularity, attempting to distinguish itself from the outside world. In order to explore whether visitors behave differently before and after crossing the threshold of the institution, the ethnographic work included, first of all observing solely in the museum space, and secondly observing outside the museum, considering visitors' entrance into the building, and noting behavioural changes. Moreover, inside the museum space, the observation paid attention to visitor behaviours in different parts of the building. My concern was with how the visitor performs different actions when situated in sections where artworks were displayed—including the exhibition room and the foyer, and when at spaces where the original artworks were absent—including the bookshop where there were photographic reproductions of artworks, and the hallways and cafés[52] where some more relaxed manner of talking about art might happen.

### Interviews

Interviews were adopted to gain in-depth data which might escape ethnographic attention. As Hein reflects that 'the verbal response that a person gives to a question about his or her behaviour is a different measure than the observation of that behaviour' (1998: 71), listening to 'what people say' can reveal aspects of behaviour unavailable from seeing 'what people do'. Qualitative interviewing, as Jody Miller and Barry Glassner point out, provides 'us access to social worlds, as evidence both of "what happens" within them and of how individuals make sense of themselves, their experiences and their place within these social worlds' (2016: 52; see also Davidson, 2015: 18). This stance corresponds to Steven Talmy's description of 'research interview as social practice' in contrast to 'interview as research instrument': while the former is conceptualised as 'a site or topic for investigation itself', treating data as '"accounts" of truth, facts, attitudes, beliefs, interior, mental states, etc., co-constructed between interviewer and interviewee', the latter is seen as 'a tool or resource for "collecting" or "gathering" information', gathering data as 'reports' (2010: 132). The second model which treats the interview as a 'relatively straightforward data excavation procedure' has traditionally dominated qualitative studies (Holstein and Gubrium, 2016: 68). Yet more recent research has moved closer to the first approach. Instead of attempting to construct an identical, mirror reflection, of people's experiences, interviewing focuses on how through narratives people attribute meanings to their experiences. Following this line of practice, this research paid attention to not only 'what' was said but also 'how'.

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[52] Cafés are observed to become an integral part of the contemporary art museum (Mihalache, 2014; Prior, 2003, 2011a) and an integral part of the art museum experience (Joy and Sherry, 2003). The commercial director of an art gallery, Niru Ratnam, reflects that the museum café functions 'as the

To elicit information from interviewees, semi-structured, face-to-face interviewing was adopted. The advantage of semi-structured interviewing is that it does not require the researcher to test specific hypotheses but allows a group of themes and aspects to be addressed (David and Sutton, 2004; Kajornboon, 2005). Unlike structured interviewing which permit little room for 'probing' interviewees' viewpoints, and unstructured interviewing

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space to enable discourse around the exhibition to take place—conversations about the show' (2009: 122).

which might leave relevant questions unasked, semi-structured interviewing could, on the one hand, allow me to address my specific concerns about photographic mediation, and on the other hand, leave room for interviewees' to narrate their experiences. Small details which carried significant implications might emerge in the interactive, conversational, process. Moreover, face-to-face interviewing opened up opportunities of ‘sharing’ through multi-sensory modalities. Understanding the interview as a social event, Pink considers it ‘has material and sensorial components’: the ‘sensoriality’ of the interviewee’s experience can be communicated through verbal metaphor, gesture, touching, as well as the sharing of scents, sounds and images (2009: 74; see also Kres and van Leeuwen, 2001). This affordance is especially relevant in this research, which regards the sensory and the body as significant in carrying out and presenting experience.

Interviewees were comprised of two groups: the first consisted of visitors; the second was of museum professionals, including curators, educational professionals, visitor experience professional, and invigilators. In what follows, I discuss which aspects were particularly focused when interviewing different categories of interviewees. Appendices are provided to show the interview protocols for each group. Notes were taken during the interview and, with the interviewees’ consent, audio-recording was also employed.

**(A) Visitors**

Interviewing visitors provided an occasion to listen to their accounts of their experiences. While ethnographic study can reveal what visitors do when encountering artworks as well as how, interviewing served as a way to access to what sense they made out of their encounter and why they performed certain acts. The interview protocol was designed to cover four major concerns: firstly, whether and how the institution’s photography rules were consciously registered and perceived; secondly, how picture-taking itself was considered by the interviewee; thirdly, whether one visitor’s everyday picture-taking pattern and accustomed devices held an association with her/his performance of photographic activity inside art museums; and finally, how the resulting photographic images were regarded by the visitor in relation to the original artworks s/he had seen, and in turn the motivation for taking the pictures. Interviewees who had photographed artworks prior to the interview also shared their images with me, which was useful when discussing the last topic by allowing me to examine their focus and approach to photographic seeing [Interview protocol see Appendix A.]

### Sampling

Visitors were sampled in two ways: through snowball method and through chance encounters at observed exhibitions. Each allows different considerations to be addressed.

Firstly, snowball sampling began with friends known prior to the formal empirical study. This gave me the advantage of knowing their visit patterns—how they conducted themselves, and in relation to photography—during joint visits we had formerly made to some art exhibitions as companions—rather than as researcher and research subjects—before the conscious decision to invite them to interview was made. While whether their various degree of awareness of my research affected their manners when with me in art museums even before becoming actively involved is open to discussion, it can still be argued that, first of all, an ideal type of behaviour—one which is not shaped by any perceived ideas of others’ judgement—hardly exists; secondly, the version of visitor that people endeavour to perform when with me itself deserved attention; and thirdly, the difference in behavioural conduct prior to and after becoming an interviewee—if it existed—could be observed and have its implications analysed.

In the course of the snowball sampling, interviewees were selected based on the researcher's intention to interview six categories of visitor. It is essential to point out that this typology only served as an initial directory tool. It was designed based on three attributes: love for art, training in art, and use of a photographic device during the encounter with artworks. The decision to use the first two attributes is based on Bourdieu's claim that the art museum as an exclusive space can bear 'the inscription: Entry for art lovers only' (1993: 257). To him, the art lover is one with 'the aesthete's eye' and a belief in art's being sacred (1993)—both are developed in a person through schooling. Thus 'love for art' and 'training in art' were to be examined in terms of their relationship with each other, and to see whether there was a link between them and photo-taking as a way of engaging with artworks.

While whether the visitor can be labelled an art-lover is self-defined and whether s/he takes photos at exhibitions is self-reported, the criterion used for defining whether one is art-trained followed that of Locher and Dolese (2004) in their empirical study of participants' evaluation of postcard images of artworks and original artworks.[53] They define the art-trained participant as one who is a fine art major, having 'completed a minimum of 12 semester credits in art history and studio courses' (2004: 131-2). Undertanding that my interviewees might consist of different nationalities, training in various kinds of education system, Locher and Dolese's definition of art-trained participant was slightly altered into one who has a degree in fine art, visual art, art history, or art education. [See Diagram 3.2. Directory Typology of Visitors]

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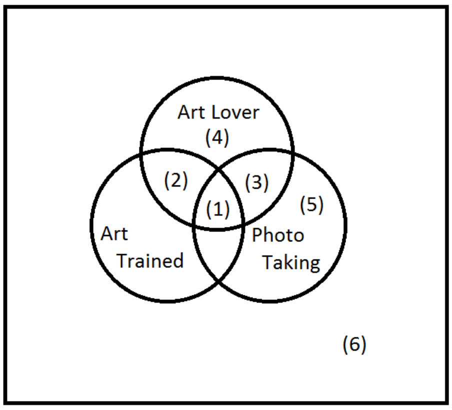
[53] For more about Locher and Dolese's research, see footnote 4.

**[Diagram 3.2 Directory Typology of Visitors]**



(1) Self-defined art-lover, art trained, photo-taking

(2) Self-defined art-lover, art trained, no photo-taking

(3) Self-defined art-lover, not art trained, photo-taking

(4) Self-defined art-lover, not art trained, no photo-taking

(5) Self-defined not art-lover, not art trained, photo-taking

(6) Self-defined not art-lover, not art trained, no photo-taking

It was assumed an art trained person would be an art-lover so I did not include the categories of 'self-defined not art-lover, art trained, photo-taking' and 'self-defined not art-lover, art trained, no photo-taking'. However, these two categories could be added if they emerged during my research. In total, I aimed to obtain twenty interviews with visitors – with the proviso that extra interviews could be added if the six types were not fully covered by the twenty interviews.

It has been stated previously but should be emphasised again that this research was based on qualitative methods and therefore does not claim representativeness and generalisability.

Moreover, it is believed that—instead of a mere compilation of traits: definable gender, sexuality, nationality, ethnicity, and age— each person should be treated as a complex formation of biological and social affordances which sociological observation and theorisation cannot fully discern and encompass. This is not to deny the necessity and significance of quantitative studies—Bourdieu's works are more than enough to illustrate the contribution of reduction and deduction. What is stressed here is that a different kind of approach is also indispensable. However, the Bourdieusian association between types of seeing and the visitor's sociodemographic background was still central and thus, as shown, used to orient the sampling process.

While the snowball sampling supported the comparatively controlled fulfilment of each of the six visitor categories, the chance-encounter at exhibitions was used as a sampling method to recruit interviewees whose behavioural pattern or photographic performance, not observed in participants sampled through snowballing, provoked interest. They were approached when their visits appeared to be over and they were preparing to leave, so that their time spent with the artworks and the spaces was not interrupted. Each interview, with recruits from either via snowball sampling or the chance-encounter, was conducted immediately after a visit. In this way, the interviewee and the researcher respectively had a relatively fresh memory of the experience and the observation. Interviews took place mainly in cafés inside or near the art museums or galleries, with the exception of Raven Row which provided its conference room. In total, twelve people received an audio-recorded interview. This was supplemented by unrecorded conversations with visitors. The latter was invaluable, for in some cases the conversation was initiated by the visitor and their story-telling form of narrating their experience offered organic details. There were also visitors who declined a sitting-down, recorded interview yet voluntarily continued the conversation. In these cases the informality appeared to enable relaxed and spontaneous reflection. Data collected through each of the conversational forms deepened my understanding of visitor photography.

In total, ten visitors were recruited for recorded interviews. Table 3.2 presents a summary of interviewees in relation to the four case studies. Visitor 5 (V5) visited the Courtauld Gallery, Zabludowicz, and Tate Modern—in this order—on different days and was interviewed on the day after her visit to Tate Modern. Visitor 6 (V6) went to the Courtauld and Zabludowicz on different days and was interviewed on the day of each visit. Visitor 9 (V9) visited the Courtauld and Zabludowicz on one day and Tate Modern on another. He was interviewed after the Tate Modern visit. The other seven interviewees each visited only one of the four selected galleries and were each interviewed on the day their visit.

**Table 3.2 Summary of Visitors Interviewed**

| \Sampling Institution | Snowball | Chance Encounter | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Courtauld** | V1, V2, V5, V6, V9 | - | 5 |
| **Raven Row** | - | V10 | 1 |
| **Tate Modern** | V5, V6, V9 | V8 | 4 |
| **Zabludowicz** | V3, V4, V5, V9 | V7 | 5 |
| **Total** | 7 | 3 | *repeated interviewees: V5, V6, V9 |

**(B) The Professionals**

While discussion of the elements involved in the production of the exhibition space can be extended interminably, this research focused on professionals from any of the four selected cases whose daily jobs centred either on the display of artworks or on interaction with visitors in the gallery space. Since, for instance, smells and sounds are more the by-products of activities which (though they support the daily operation of museums), are not initiated with the purpose of shaping the experience of art, those who undertake these duties remain outside this research scheme. The museum professionals I interviewed were thus limited to, first, curators whose views on art experience and visitors oriented the display of artworks. Secondly, they were educational professionals who offered a variety of paths for visitors to reach and engage with the displays. Thirdly, they were invigilators whose manner of being present contributed to widening or closing the distance between visitors and artworks, physically as well as psychologically. Finally, they were professionals who worked solely on the management of visitor experience.

### (B1) Curators

Interviews with institutionally-based curators from the Courtauld, Raven Row, and Zabludowicz were conducted and supplemented with findings from lectures and talks given by curators from Tate. In total, four interviews were recorded. Topics discussed covered their perception of visitor photography in relation to its governance and ideal of looking at artworks, how curatorial decisions about exhibiting artworks were made and whether visitors' photographic desire occupied a place in the process, and photography's role in their training, professional work and visits to art exhibitions. [Interview protocol see Appendix B1.]

Besides interviewing, understandings of curatorial work were also obtained through studying literature—journals, handbooks and blogs—generated by curatorial discourse. As Spillman recognises, meaning-making 'in the text' should be investigated in its own right: 'cultural repertoires, objects, and texts are analytically distinguished from their social contexts and treated as independent objects of inquiry' (2002: 8; see also Alexander and Smith, 2010). Paying analytical attention to curatorial texts enabled me to gain insight into the general modus operandi in which curators are educated, as well as their shifting habitus and strategies for exhibition planning.

### (B2) Educators

Professionals who worked in the educational department constituted the second group of interviewees. As discussed in Chapter 2.2.2., educational staff work closely with visitors and pay more attention to findings from visitor surveys and studies. The assumption was that they might be more likely to be aware of visitor photography and design programmes addressing this emergent issue. My main interest in the educators included three dimensions: firstly, why and how they integrated photo-taking into the creation of visitor activities. Secondly, whether there existed a hierarchy of professional work: that is, whether curatorial design was prioritised and if the visitor programme was developed on the former's completion, or if there was co-operation from the beginning of exhibition planning. Thirdly, I wanted to see if the educator communicates visitors' need to take pictures to the curator. [Interview protocol see Appendix B2.]. The total number of recorded interviews achieved amounted to three.

### (B3) Visitor Experience Professionals and Invigilators

There were two types of professional whose significance, as mentioned previously, emerged during the conduction of pilot study. Since the two types' obligations were often found to overlap and both are responsible for ensuring the possibility of smooth visitor experience, it is considered more appropriate to group them here to avoid over-dissection at the expense of a more holistic understanding. During the interviews discussion surrounded how they perceived their role in relation to visitors and institutions, how they presented themselves to visitors in the gallery space, their observation of photographic activity taking place in the gallery space, and how  the prohibition of visitor photography in installations, when violated by visitors, was enforced. Seven recorded interviews were completed. [Interview protocol see Appendix B3.]

In the case of the Courtauld, Raven Row, and Zabludowicz, the recruitment of museum professionals for interviews began and continued through communication with staff members who assumed a managerial role in the maintenance of the gallery space: the Visitor Service and Operations Manager (Courtauld), the Gallery Manager (Raven Row), and the Curator of Public Events (Zabludowicz). With their assistance, staff members responsible for curating, education, visitor experience, and invigilation were introduced. In the case of Tate Modern, however, access to staff members was less straightforward. On the one hand, it eventually came after more than a year, through an introduction, initiated by a retired staff member, to two managerial professionals belonging to the Visitor Experience Department, who were contacted and interviewed. On the other hand, by attending various courses, I managed to engage people in behind-the-scene talk about the daily running of gallery spaces or gain insight into exhibition making. Some after-class, unrecorded conversations were made possible and served as data for consequent analysis. The courses attended included an MA module in *Education, Interpretation and Communication* in the Art Museum, run by the Institute for Creative and Cultural Entrepreneurship at Goldsmiths, University of London; two MA modules co-run by King's College and Tate, including *Inside Today's Museum*, between 28 September and 12 December 2017,[54] and *Towards Tomorrow's Museum*, from 18 January to 29 March 2018.[55] In total, four curators, 2 educators, 4 visitor experience managers, and 3 invigilators took part in recorded interviews between 22 December 2017 – 26 Feb 2018 (see Table 3.3).

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[54] Course information: https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-britain/course/inside-todays-museum-2017

**Table 3.3 Summary of Professionals Interviewed**

| \Professions Institution | Curating | Educational | Visitor Experience | Invigilation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Courtauld** | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| **Raven Row** | 1 | - | - | -* |
| **Tate Modern** | -* | -* | 2 | - |
| **Zabludowicz** | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
|  | 4 | 2 | 4 | 3 |

*Professionals were approached through courses the researcher attended and conversations made were not recorded.

## Summary of the completed fieldwork

The structure of the fieldwork (see Diagram 3.3) began with 2 – 3 months ethnographic observation in the selected gallery spaces. Then, while observation continued, interviews with visitors started. After collecting five recorded interviews, which compromised half of the total completed interviews with visitors, interviews with museum professionals began. As shown in Diagram 3.3, first of all the interviewing process started later than the observation; second, interviewing the museum professionals took place in parallel with the middle period of interviewing visitors. This arrangement was designed firstly to enable me to form a personal impression of each gallery space in relation to its visitors and to enable the generation of queries before approaching people with questions. The second reason for doing things in this order was that interviewing visitors first raised further visitor-related questions that could then be discussed with museum professionals during their interview sessions. While interviewing museum professionals was in progress, interviewing visitors continued to take place. Switching between talking to the two sides enabled the gap between the professionals' and visitors' expectations and impressions of exhibitions to be revealed. When all the interviews with professionals had been completed, I carried out two more interviews with visitors, both of whom were recruited through chance encounter, as a result of their viewing practices in the gallery spaces, which provoked my curiosity.

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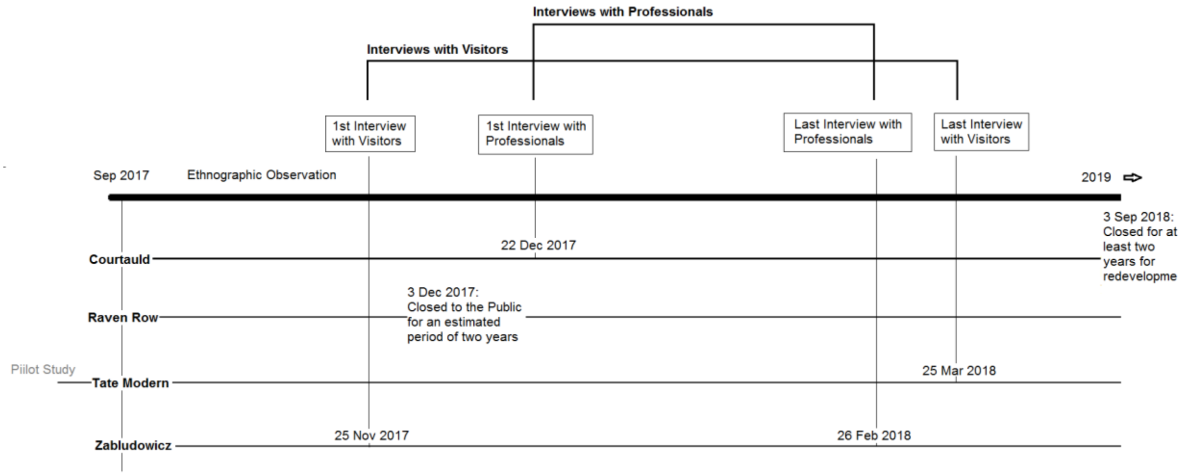
[55] Course information : https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/exhibition/ilya-and-emilia-kabakov/towards-tomorrows-museum-2018

**Diagram 3.3 Timeline of Fieldwork**


Interviews with Professionals
Interviews with Visitors
1st Interview with Visitors
1st Interview with Professionals
Last Interview with Professionals
Last Interview with Visitors
Sep 2017
Ethnographic Observation
2019 ⇨
3 Sep 2018: Closed for at least two years for redevelopme
22 Dec 2017
Courtauld
3 Dec 2017: Closed to the Public for an estimated period of two years
Raven Row
Piilot Study
Tate Modern
25 Mar 2018
25 Nov 2017
26 Feb 2018
Zabludowicz

Ethnographic observation conducted for this research did not have an official end. Admittedly, since Raven Row gallery was closed for an estimated period of two years on 3rd December 2017, ethnographic observation there had to stop at that moment. The same applied to the Courtauld Gallery, which was closed for redevelopment on 3rd September 2018. Yet my visits to both Tate Modern and Zabludowicz continued throughout this research. It should be noted that, as previously stated, my ethnographic observation was from a visitor's perspective. This approach resulted in a less rigid, less tightly controlled schedule. At the beginning of the fieldwork, it was envisaged that a fixed timetable consisted of regular and hours-long visits to each gallery would be realised. It was soon found that this style of working yielded few useful findings. That is, the formality of this style of working, with its assumption that the observation-visit had a purpose to be fulfilled, felt in sharp contrast with the ethos found in a less directed visit. As one who frequented art museums and galleries prior and during this research, I argue that museum-going could have been pre-planned but needed to be allowed room for alteration in accordance with my bodily and emotional condition; the length of time per visit could be limited by other daily events but should not be strictly allocated. Feeling compelled to stay and look in effect rendered my body-mind mechanical and numb. Thus, my style of ethnographic observation was re-designed as one that allowed greater spontaneity. Without an absolutely fixed schedule and with greater flexibility permitted, a more fluid way of seeing was made possible, during which surprises and discoveries emerged.

### 3.4.3 Analysing the Data

The resulting data included my ethnographic notes and diaries, interview notes and diaries, audio recordings of interviews with interviewees' permission, and literature generated in the curatorial discourse. Analysing the data involved:

Firstly, photography policies of a group of major art museums and galleries were mapped out. Examination focused on deciphering historical changes and reasons for which these institutions allowed or prohibited photography. Etiquette guides published by both art museums and individuals were compared. The aim was to reveal how visitor behaviour in relation to picture-taking was regulated.

Secondly, ethnographic notes of visitors' experiential bodily activities and movements—including photo-taking, walking speed and rhythm, stopping, note-taking, conversation, consulting of guiding materials—were coded and analysed. These were then examined with (1) each institution's photography policy, whether verbally advised, in written form, or understood tacitly; (2) ethnographic observation of each art museum's spatial arrangement, including the architectural design of the entrance, the hanging or display of artwork, lighting, the colour scheme of the exhibition room, the furniture, the route, and the position of the warden; (3) the provision of guiding materials, including introductory texts, information boards, labels, maps, and audio-visual guides.

On the one hand, the three organising principles— interiority, singularity, and outside—summarised by Hetherington was used to examine each institutions' spatial arrangement. This allowed understanding of how art museums and galleries offered to the public as experiential spaces. On the other hand, visitors' photographic activities were looked with Urry and Larsen's typology of tourist gaze. Through categorising, picture-taking's bodily lived process was unpacked and its features revealed. What visitor taking pictures in art museums might mean was then disclosed through examining the relationship between visitor photography and the three principles of the art museum.

Thirdly, recordings of each interview were transcribed and, together with interview notes and diaries, thematically coded and analysed. Analysis of the data resulting from interviewing professionals paid attention to key aspects including their vision of, design, and physical realisation of the exhibition of artworks and the art museum as a whole. Analysis of data collected from interviewing visitors focused on how they ‘see’ in exhibitions and why. The co-constructed nature of the situated interviews was taken into account. As sociologist David Silverman points out, ‘interview interactions are inherently spaces in which both speakers are constantly “doing analysis” – both speakers are engaged (and collaborating in) “making meaning” and “producing knowledge”’ (2007: 42). Both the spoken words of the interviewees and my own reflection were given equal attention.

Fourthly, photos of artworks taken by visitors and shared with me during the interviews were examined with (1) the original artworks as seen by myself (allowing the disjunction between the works and the photographs to be noted and the approaches adopted by each picture-taker to be understood); (2) photographically reproduced images included in exhibition catalogues and advertising materials including posters and information disseminated through websites and social media sites (this allowed me to examine whether there was a quotation effect, as discussed in Chapter 2.1.3).

Finally, texts—including journals, handbooks and blogs—produced by curators, which discussed curatorial practices and strategies as well as the merits and failings of particular exhibitions were examined. It was aimed at revealing the curatorial concerns in relation to the display of artworks and visitor experience as well as their proposed ways of achieving their goals.

### 3.5 Studying Visitor Photography without Illustrating with Photographs

For research which looks at the mediation of photography, the decision not to enlist photographs to convey to readers a visual idea of the studied gallery spaces and visitors in-situ demands careful explanation. This issue was considered from various angles, from the acquisition of photographs to their presentation, regarding both or either the spaces and the visitors. That visual recording was not adopted as my research method is discussed in 3.4.2, so as to minimise the researcher’s intrusion on the visitor experience and consequent impact on visitor behaviour. Photographing or filming spaces empty of visitors, however, would not have been complicated by this concern. Yet showing pictures as part of the dissertation risks reducing the three dimensional, multi-composition of the spaces to flat images. During the process of ethnographic work, photographs of the spaces were taken as an attempt to explore the affordance and limitation of photographic seeing. Seeing with and via the photographic device was indeed found to shape attentiveness in ways different from what direct seeing does. The images I produced, however, were the result of my collaborative impressions and work with the photographic device, which I often considered did not match my unmediated impression. While this is a subjective view of photographic capture, the next concern points more directly to the problem of including photographic images as part of research findings. Admittedly, photographs served me as a trigger for memories. However unsatisfactory the images were, upon seeing them, I was reminded of various sensory aspects of being in that space. Those aspects, nevertheless, could not be delivered to those who viewed the pictures. The connection between the lived spatial experience and the photographic capture of the space is solely for me. Providing only the picture without being able to convey the actual, multi-sensory experience was considered to undermine the presentation of the ethnographic work.

The other reason for not including photographs is related to the research focus on visitors. Since attention is paid to the process and the effect of visitor photography as a performative act, the images visitors took, while they were examined to further the understanding of their photographic looking, did not become the central subject and are thus not shown in the dissertation. In turn, photographs produced by myself should not be given more weight by occupying a space here. It would be worth investigating whose photographs are circulated and on which platforms: researching the dissemination of photos of artworks produced by various agents—from professional photographers hired to shoot installations, to museums' or galleries' own staff who are not professional but still responsible for picture taking, to art journalists and visitors— that are subsequently fabricated into the everyday lifeworld—via art museums' official websites, advertising, books, and souvenirs. This comparative study is beyond the scope of this doctoral research scheme, yet could be further pursued.

A final point concerns the very practice of using photographic images to illustrate reports. Unlike Visual Sociology which encourages the treatment of photographs as data (see Harper, 2012; Pink, 2013), essays of scholarly discussion, art criticism, and art reportage are often found to include photographs as a means of holding the readers' attention and to help build their imagination of the discussed situation. It should be emphasised that the usefulness and propriety of using photographic illustration is denied here. What is proposed is a cautious and theoretically considered employment. Photographic images, while being engaging and informing tools, at the same time skew the viewer's attention towards what is in the pictures and prevents a more multidimensional understanding of the texts, which indicate various possibilities of associating with the described. A critical study of visitor photography, of the prevalent use of photography during the art museum visit, needs to be careful not to fall in line with the too-easy use of photographic illustration and reinforce the culture of the spectacle.

In place of photography, commonly used as illustration in academic presentation, diagrams were constructed in order to demonstrate my impressions of each gallery space formed during the process of ethnographic observation. The strength of diagrams, as Bourdieu clearly summarises, is that '[t]he totalisation which the *diagram* effects by juxtaposing in the simultaneity of a single space the complete series of the temporal oppositions applied successively by different agents at different times, which can never all be mobilised together in practice…gives full rein to the *theoretical neutralisation* which the inquiry relationship itself produces (1977: 106-7). While a photograph is a captured visual moment, a diagram is a distilled result from a longer period of observation. While a photograph can be more visually detailed and arresting, a diagram opens up more room to imagine a more embodied experience. Furthermore, while the inclusion of floorplans was considered at an early stage of the research, it was later decided that the use of diagrams was more appropriate for two reasons. Firstly, while the maps provided to visitors could be acquired in the case of the Courtauld and Tate Modern, this was not so for Raven Row and Zabludowicz. That motivated me to do the mapping myself in the form of diagrams. Secondly, and significantly, those diagrams are felt to better reflect a visitor's impressions, which is the concern of this research, in contrast to officially provided directions.

### 3.6 Research Ethics and Researcher Positioning

Studying the public art museum presented a few ethical issues to be dealt with carefully. Ethnographic observation was conducted in spaces open to the public, focused on adult visitors only, and did not involve photographic or audio recording, therefore no informed consent was required (Spicker, 2007: 2; Social Research Association, 2003: 33). The observed subjects were not exposed to any kind of risk and the data collected remained confidential. Interviews, on the other hand, were conducted only with the participants' informed consent. An information letter [Appendix C.] and a consent form [Appendix D.] were presented to interviewees prior to the interview. All interviewees were clearly informed about the research topic and interview questions involved no sensitive issues. No physical or psychological harm was considered to be caused during the interviewing. Participants were given full liberty to withdraw at any time should they feel any kind of emotional discomfort—which did not happen. Some findings of this research regarding the art museums and galleries' curatorial approaches, educational and visitor schemes, as well as photographic policies might draw criticism of their practices. However, each institution's endeavours to create experiential environments and visitor programmes deemed appropriate to appreciating art were treated and described with respect in this research. Instead of making judgements, this research aimed to contribute to the understanding of visitor experience and future exhibition planning by delineating the photographic mediation of seeing art.

While it is relatively incontrovertible to claim no harm was inflicted in the course of this research and ethical approval was granted by the Department of Sociology, Goldsmiths, prior to the beginning of the empirical study, research ethics is a far more complex issue involving the relational roles occupied by the researcher. Researcher positioning was a concern that constantly surfaced for me during the processes of empirical work and writing. First of all, there was the conundrum of how to balance the uneven power relations between the researcher and the researched. While I am the one who not only collects the data but outlines and discusses the findings, it is recognised that this process involves two levels of action: the researched subjects' lived presence and narration on one level, and my observation interpretation, and delivering the findings on another. Thus the inevitable question: whose account of experience actually comes out?

My attempt at tackling this issue, from the beginning, had to take into consideration that what characterised my positioning in this study of art museums and galleries was that, while on the one hand, 'I' did the research and 'I' told about this research, on the other hand, I was also a visitor, albeit one who continuously observed other people and myself. Arguing against the 'fixed dichotomous entities' of insider and outsider—positions which sociological and anthropological researchers must traditionally choose between (Milligan, 2016: 235), there is an increasing recognition in scholarly discussion of ethnographic study that a researcher in effect assumes multiple or shifting identities (Crossley, Arthur, and McNess, 2015; Floyd and Arthur, 2012; Milligan, 2016). It was important not to—as well as impossible to—draw a line within myself to differentiate myself as a visitor from myself as a sociological researcher of art museums. Thus there exists, in the ethnographic work, an unavoidable element of Autoethnography. Practitioners of autoethnography recognise 'the innumerable ways personal experience influences the research process' (Ellis, Adams, and Bochner, 2011: 274). My own habitus directed my observational attention and enabled an understanding of both the museum spaces and other visitors.

Following the acknowledgement of my multiple roles came the recognition that each person encountered was a lived and layered agent in the world. Both the researched and the research are recognised as experts in each's own experience.[56] That is, visitors' telling of their activities and impressions, the professionals' introduction of their intentions and practices, and my narrative of my observational experience co-construct the data (see also Latour, 2005). This approach explains why in 3.4.2, data collected via talking with visitors is described as 'learning from conversations'. By asking questions and listening to the responses, I brought myself into others' perception and description of their lifeworld experience;

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[56] Pink urges researchers not to 'seek to "read", unveil, or decipher a per-exiting, static, or objective cultural "text" but, rather, to engage as co-creators in the world, sharing and empathising with other people's experiences and actions' (2011b: 270).

by asking questions and listening to the responses, my interviewees entered my perception and description of both their and my lifeworld experience.

I recognise, not without frustration, that reception of every aspect and detail of the researched is impossible. Nor could I always and absolutely remain compassionate and considerate: the researcher is herself an embodied and emotional subject. What I strove to achieve was to ground the research in sincerity and empathy (see Besteman, 2015; Bourdieu et al, 1999). During its course, what began as a conscientious belief has grown into a deeply felt commitment: being sociological is about being aware and empathetic.[57] The anthropologist John L. Jackson Jr. muses that 'our sincerities probably do us (and all of our many ethnographic *thems)* more harm than good, but the point is to ask what culling sociocultural knowledge through immersion-based participant observation might leave in its wake' (2010: 285). The progression of this research has been led by the hope that, with respect and a willingness to listen and understand, any knowledge can be acquired.

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[57] For example, as discussed before, the decision not to photograph or film visitors was, besides consideration of the validity of data, out of respect for visitors' feelings. It was a reflexive decision based on my personal unease about being visually recorded, an outcome of extended empathy.

# Chapter 4. The Governance of Visitor Photography

## Introduction

This chapter aims to respond to the question about the daily actualisation of the spatial principles of art museums – interiority, singularity, and the outside. In other words, the focus is on the boundary establishment and maintenance that was carried out on an everyday basis by the art museums and galleries, in order to create a space specifically for an experience different from that of the street or everyday life. Bearing in mind that art museums and galleries use a wide range of devices to realise as far as possible their desired exhibition of artworks and experiential conditions for visitors, I have paid particular attention to photography rules - both written and tacit. This chapter presents, firstly, the result of an effort made to trace the current state and trajectory of changes in the visitor photography policies of a group of major art museums and galleries. This shows that what was once a tacit understanding of the rules about when visitor photography is acceptable has been in recent decades put into written rules and enforced. Reviewing the largely obscure past of visitor photography policies and the available official explanations for adjusting rules, the relationship between the lifting of a prohibition and the technological advance of photographic devices is shown. Officially written rules express the essential requirements and the lowest expectations. In the case of photography, art museums' and galleries' official policies and guidelines, in general, request visitors not to violate copyright, not to cause damage to artwork, and not to intrude on fellow visitors. However, they do not say what might be tacitly expected or judged to be better connoisseurship. To probe this issue, individual opinions published as etiquette advice are examined and art museums' programmes designed to coordinate with visitors' visual engagement with artworks are studied.

### 4.1 Tracing the Trajectories of Photography Policies

Rules function to generate and maintain divisions between what can or should be done, and what cannot or should not in particular circumstances. Art museums and galleries are different from—if not opposite to— everyday situations, and a set of rules usually not observed in daily life is both the precondition and result of their singular existence. Studying the contents of written rules for the public enables an understanding of the minimum that art museums expect of their visitors and the maximum they will tolerate. In other words, it tells us about the basic standard of what are considered to be civilised manners. As Elias points out, the notion of civilisation is a Western product which has been used to build up and maintain a hierarchy of societies and cultures - comparison is made both within and between societies ([1939]2000). The art museum, as discussed in the literature review chapter, is originally a Western construct and has served as a civilising agent which simultaneously educates visitors about the performance of proper manners and exposes the difference between what is cultivated and what is not. We are, however, at a time far from the birth of the art museum. The spaces that house and institutionalise artworks have evolved through time in terms of how they perceive their roles in society and what society expects them to achieve, and consequently their rules have changed – including those that govern visitors' use of photography.

Inspection of photography policies has been conducted in this research both horizontally and vertically. First, a database was established to demonstrate each listed art museum or gallery's photography policy: whether visitor photography is allowed and, if so, what the accompanying conditions are. This was achieved via three methods: examining the official website of each museum or gallery;[58] correspondence with staff members including archivists, curators, media professionals and visitor service providers; and in some cases on-site ethnographic observation. Instead of aiming at a comprehensive database covering all the art museums and galleries in the world, my intention was, through inspecting a number of institutions, including those occupying leading places in the art world, to reveal the current trend of visitor regulations. Secondly, my personal communication with art museums and galleries also served as a pathway to trace the trajectories of visitor photography rules.[59] It should be noted that while an understanding of the history and current state of visitor photography policies is essential to unpacking the relationship between art museums and photography as a visitor practice, it is not the primary goal of this research. Nor did the time allocated to this doctoral scheme allow exhaustive study of this subject. Investigation went beyond the four selected museums and galleries to offer a fuller view of the art world. But the data and analysis presented here do not cover every major and minor player in the field.

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[58] It was discovered that while museums and galleries often publish their photography rules on their websites, this is not universal; nor is there a uniform format. In general, visitor photography policy is described in the visitor information section. However, while on some websites it is relatively easy to find the photography rules shown under the heading 'facilities' (the Courtauld Gallery), or 'visitor tips' (the Louvre, Metropolitan, MOMA) - on some websites a bit more navigation is required (for example at the Tate). Some institutions do not volunteer information regarding visitor photography (the Hayward Gallery, Institute of Contemporary Art, Whitechapel Gallery). More of those which allow the use of photographic devices may fail to list this information on their websites than those which prohibit visitor photography (one rare example being RA).

[59] Enquires made via email or on-line contact forms did not necessarily bring a response. Often, only a basic description of the photography rule could be obtained. This might be due to the number of staff - if they were short-staffed, they could not afford to answer questions not immediately related to a visit to the gallery (The Photographers' Gallery), or museum policy (MOMA). Replies obtained came from various departments, ranging from visitor service, image and rights, to curatorial. Admittedly, most of the museums and galleries that replied did not offer more than an explanation of what would be allowed and what would not, in terms of visitors' picture taking. In some cases, this was because the institutions did not keep records of their photograph policies (for example the Courtauld Gallery, National Gallery, Sir John Soane's Museum).

Further and more concentrated research is required for a comprehensive review of visitor photography.

### 4.1.1 The current State of Visitor Photography Policies [Table 4.1.]

Three major types of photography policy that exist in the current era are summarised below:

Type 1. Non-commercial photography is allowed without the use of flash.

It appears that when deciding whether picture-taking should be allowed, the precondition is that copyright of artworks is not violated. Once that legal problematic is cleared, the remainder of the photography policies concerned what types of photographic equipment are allowed. While the question of whether flash—especially digital flash—causes damage to artworks is debatable (see Schaeffer, 2001) (and the British Museum, as an exception which does not ban flash, appears to contradict the general opinion), invigilators in our interviews still cited the potentially harmful effects of flash as the reason for prohibition. Most art museums and galleries add a further ban on tripods, monopods, and selfie sticks. Again, this is primarily out of conservational concern for the exhibits. Moreover, consideration for visitor flow and safety management underlies this decision. At museums with relatively small exhibition rooms like the Courtauld, or with large visitor numbers, like the National Gallery and Tate, tripods - which occupy more space and present obstacles to visitor movement - are undesirable. It is also feared that when being carried, tripods - like selfie sticks when in use - could strike other visitors as easily as they might strike artworks on display. Notably, the Tate has so far not included selfie sticks in its list of prohibited items. The Visitor Experience department admitted that they had been considering whether to ban selfie sticks, but also emphasised that they had not yet experienced the sorts of accidents suffered by other institutions (for example, Deb, 2017).

The British Museum, while permitting photography, emphasises the importance of a visitor experience undisturbed by picture-takers by specifying it in their visitor regulations. Its Visitor Regulation 14.4 states that 'If a visitor complains that your photography is intrusive you may be asked to stop or leave the Museum'. To summarise, photography is permitted on the condition that its usage does not cause significant issues of copyright, conservation, visitor safety and experience. Other museums, including the Tate, National Gallery, and National Portrait Gallery, while not necessarily making this official policy, on their website often remind visitors not to disturb others when taking pictures.

Type 2. Photography is not permitted in temporary—often paying—exhibitions.

While temporary exhibitions do not necessarily mean 'no photography', they more often involve copyright issues. When art museums and galleries present works that are not part of their own collection, the power of policy making is held not by the hosting venues but the lender, loaners, or artists who might want to have control over how images of the artworks are used. It is common practice for art museums to have a blanket no-photography policy for exhibitions even when some of the displayed works can actually be photographed. This is so because it makes for less confusion among visitors and is less inconvenient for invigilators enforcing the rule.

Type 3. Photography is not permitted at all.

While an increasing number of art museums and galleries have moved to the side of 'photography welcome', there are museums which own their exhibits yet still rule out the use of photographic devices. Among them, Sir John Soane's Museum in London and the Van

Gogh Museum in Amsterdam both voice concern for photography's disturbing effect on visitor experience. The former cautions against picture-taking on its website: 'Photography is not permitted as this maintains the unique, magical atmosphere inside.' The latter briefly revised its photography rule before returning to restrictions. Its website states, and its Information Department confirms, that 'to avoid causing nuisance to other visitors, photography of artworks in the museum galleries and exhibition spaces is not permitted'.[60]

### 4.1.2 The Relatively Untraced and Unrecorded History

Studying the current state of photography policies reveals what is 'not' allowed and 'why not'. It does not show, however, 'when' visitor photography became permitted or 'why'. That there exist no copyright issues to prevent it constitutes only one part of the story behind the making of the regulations. Tracing the trajectories of photography policies offers more insight into this issue. Admittedly, the history of photography policies is an opaque one, since in many cases they were not diligently and clearly entered into records. This reveals a relatively indifferent attitude towards photography policies which can still be found among today's museum professionals. Staff members I interviewed, who in conversation revealed a great deal of awareness and knowledge about fellow institutions' collections and exhibitions, as well as showing great willingness to reach out to both existing visitors and a wider public, did not appear to know about the current state of other museums' photography rules.[61]

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[60] Yet visitors are encouraged to take photos in front of their selfie-walls and share the images on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. This shows that even for a museum that wishes its visitors to appreciate artworks through direct looking, there is pressure to engage with the public photographically.

Not until the last decade when art museums and galleries consciously drew up or reviewed their photography policies did the regulations generate animated discussion. The Courtauld Gallery, which possesses no archive relevant to photography policies and no staff member able to point out when official photography rules were established, had one now-retired curator who recalled a past incident which marked her—though transient—awareness of visitors taking pictures of artworks. The curator had worked for the Courtauld since its time in Woburn Square, Bloomsbury, in the 80s, before moving to its current Strand address. It was there she once came across a visitor taking photographs when she happened to enter the gallery space.  The curator described being 'shocked' by this activity and stated that on the spot she felt they must do something to stop it. However, she admitted, somehow she never did raise this issue. In other words, individual awareness did not then enter institutional discussions and result in policy.

Nevertheless, the lack of records, which can be read as institutional inattention to the issue of photography, can also be seen as an indicator of how picture-taking did not present as a concern to most art museums and galleries. While forbidding visitor photography was not an unusual practice, it was not serious enough to be put down on paper. In cases where photography has been permitted, it was not deliberately encouraged but simply appeared not to have been considered a problem. As one archivist at the Royal Academy of Arts reflected,

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[61] The National Gallery in London, which began to allow visitor photography in 2014, was considered by some as either still forbidding photography or only allowing it in recent years.

> *'I have never encountered documentation* [in the Academy's archive] *and suspect that if it ever was discussed at Council it was discussed once and in brief. To my knowledge there was no written policy. The prohibition on photography in our exhibitions is a result of standard loan agreements and not something that would have been debated by the Academy at an executive level.'*
>
> (Picture Library Manager of Royal Academy of Arts, personal communication, July 30, 2018)

It was also suggested by the archivist at the National Gallery in London that there might be no need to introduce the no-photography rule, as copying in general was only permitted in certain circumstances:

> *'I've taken a look through our archive, and it doesn't look like a no-photography rule was ever officially introduced. The earliest application to take photographs was in 1848, when someone requested to take daguerreotypes of some of the paintings…From the 1860s we find individual applications to the Gallery to take photographs of works (usually from commercial companies). There is a letter in 1886 to an E. Orezy…that explicitly informs her photography is not permitted in the Gallery.*'
>
> (Archives Assistant of National Gallery, personal communication, June 1, 2018)

What was revealed in the above words, moreover, was, firstly that a request to photograph artworks was made not long after the official announcement of the invention of photography (see Diagram 4.1) and secondly, art museums' authority in deciding the matter. Together with relevant archives—albeit scarce, this helps to build up an understanding of the past use of photography in art museums. The British Museum assigned the renowned photographer Roger Fenton as its first official photographer in 1856, initiating a 'photographic campaign' in the museum to produce images to be sold to the public (Troelenberg, 2017: 10; see also Born, 1998: 226).[62] On the other side of the Atlantic, the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, while stating that it had always permitted photography since its opening in 1931, and admitting the absence of a historical account, also had in its archives evidence of the relationship between artworks, photographic reproduction, and visitors:

> *'...no mention is given of museum's photography policy from 1931 --- 1967. They did post that photocopies of artwork made from black and white photographs were available for purchase @ 50 cents per work of art.'*
>
> (Manager of Rights and Reproduction at Whitney Museum, personal communication, May 17, 2018)

While visitors to the British Museum and the Whitney did not appear to be banned from taking pictures themselves,[63] those who went to other art museums were often not offered this choice. The aforementioned National Gallery, for example, did not relax its strictly-enforced no-photography rule until 2014. However, a wide range of souvenirs with reproduced images of artworks could be purchased at its gift shops—the shop's paper bags, as mentioned in 2.3, were themselves printed with images of van Gogh's Sunflowers. The public's need to own reproductions was, as shown, often satisfied by institutions' official editions. The gap between the desire for self-produced reproductions and art museums' willingness to concede has closed at speed —compared with the past—in the last decade.

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[62] The photographic historian and anthropologist Elizabeth Edwards, investigating the 'photographic ecosystem' of the V&A Museum, revealed in her presentation at the Conference, *Collecting Photography/Photography as Collecting* [16th and 17th Oct 2018, the V&A Museum] that soon after the British Museum's publication of postcards, the V&A entered the competition, endeavouring to produce quality postcards in large numbers. Edwards also demonstrated that there was a debate surrounding the launch of colour postcards, which, despite their general popularity, were not welcomed by scholars who considered black and white reproductions superior for allowing studies of aesthetic form.
**Conference: Collecting Photography/Photography as Collecting**
https://www.vam.ac.uk/event/BGnX1K7a/collecting-photography-photography-as-collecting-nov-2018
**VARI Professor Elizabeth Edwards: a photograph of a photographic historian**
https://www.vam.ac.uk/blog/news/vari-professor-elizabeth-edwards-a-photograph-of-a-photographic-historian

[63] During my first visit in 1998, I accidentally walked into the space between two visitors standing at a distance from one another—where one was about to take a photograph of the other, resulting in deeply felt embarrassment on my part for the disruption. There was also much confusion since,

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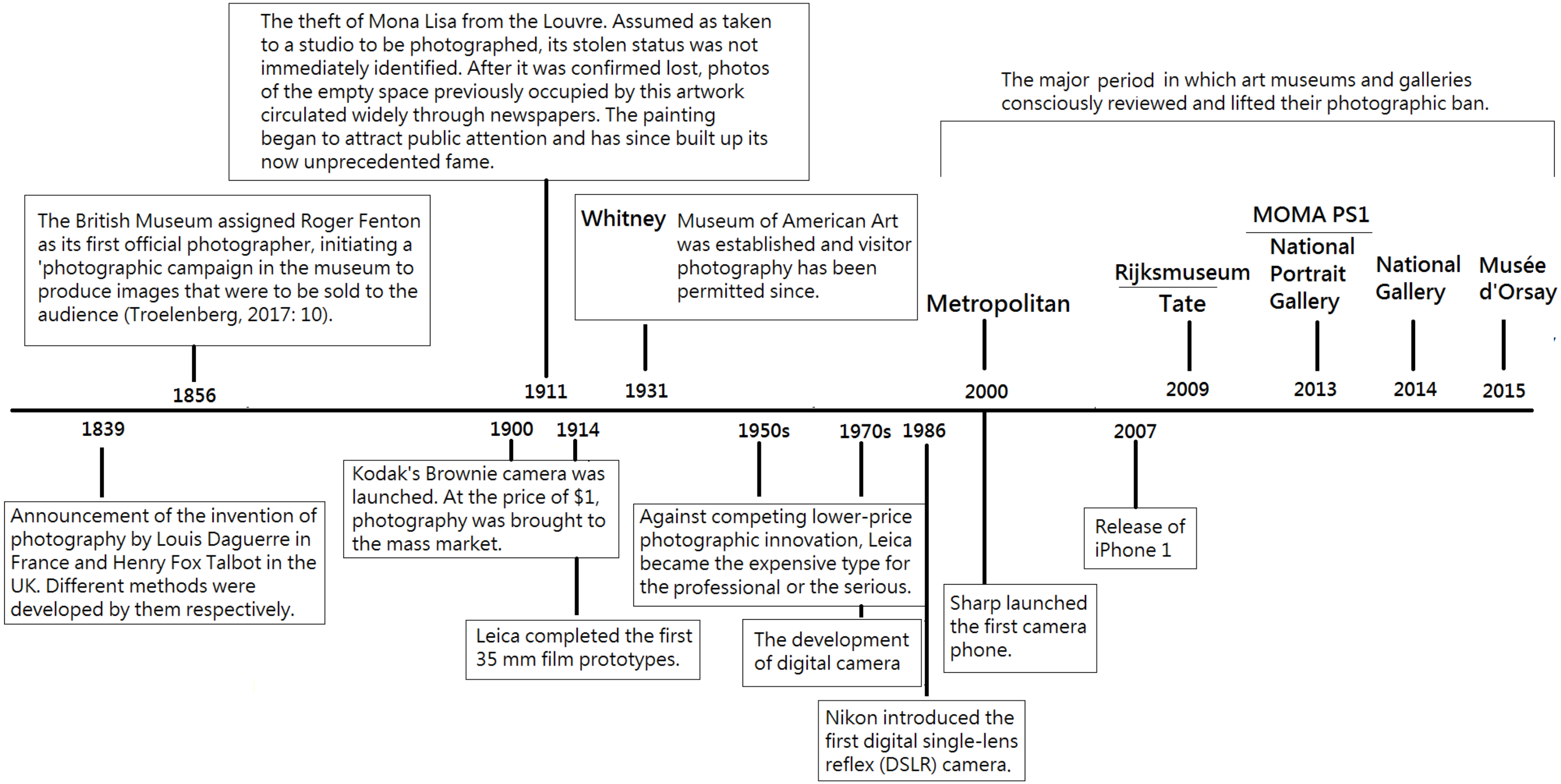
growing up in Taipei, Taiwan, I was accustomed to museums—for example, the National Palace Museum—prohibiting visitor photography.

**Diagram 4.1 Timeline of Photographic Usage and Regulation**


1839
1856
1900
1911
1914
1931
1950s
1970s
1986
2000
2007
2009
2013
2014
2015
Whitney
Metropolitan
Rijksmuseum
Tate
MOMA PS1
National Portrait Gallery
National Gallery
Musée d'Orsay

Announcement of the invention of photography by Louis Daguerre in France and Henry Fox Talbot in the UK. Different methods were developed by them respectively.

The British Museum assigned Roger Fenton as its first official photographer, initiating a 'photographic campaign in the museum to produce images that were to be sold to the audience (Troelenberg, 2017: 10).

Kodak's Brownie camera was launched. At the price of $1, photography was brought to the mass market.

The theft of Mona Lisa from the Louvre. Assumed as taken to a studio to be photographed, its stolen status was not immediately identified. After it was confirmed lost, photos of the empty space previously occupied by this artwork circulated widely through newspapers. The painting began to attract public attention and has since built up its now unprecedented fame.

Leica completed the first 35 mm film prototypes.

Whitney Museum of American Art was established and visitor photography has been permitted since.

Against competing lower-price photographic innovation, Leica became the expensive type for the professional or the serious.

The development of digital camera

Nikon introduced the first digital single-lens reflex (DSLR) camera.

Sharp launched the first camera phone.

Release of iPhone 1

The major period in which art museums and galleries consciously reviewed and lifted their photographic ban.

### 4.1.3 Participation in the Culture of Visitor Photography

As can be seen in Diagram 4.1, the twenty-first century saw the leading art museums and galleries change their position regarding visitor photography policy: the previously banned practice became legitimate. This shift should be understood in line with the development of photographic devices. From the small number of art museums whose relaxation of the ban on photography can be traced to certain years, we can see that especially after the first generation of iPhone was released in 2007, official permission for visitor photography became more common. The fast appearance, and popularity, of various kinds of smartphone leads to a closer relationship between people and photography. With the ownership of photographic devices becoming common, and picture-taking becoming quickly integrated into everyday life as well as out-of-the-ordinary experiences, a question arises about what can be photographed and what cannot. In turn, discussion is needed and answers demanded on the issue of 'who has the right and responsibility to draw the line' and 'whether art museums and galleries should be one of them'.

Confronted with the unstoppable trend of photographing possibly everything, the loosening of photography policies as a reaction was adopted by art museums and galleries either proactively or in resignation. On the one hand, art museums and galleries re-examined what they meant by access, giving people the right to engage and use artworks in ways they liked, instead of telling them what to do—though suggestions might be made via labels, tours, talks, and events. On the other hand, these institutions faced the possibility of losing either visitor numbers or visitor connection—or both. To attract people and stay up-to-date with popular ways of cultural spectatorship, they could not insist on continuing with their customary practices.

On a spectrum from voluntariness to involuntariness, Tate claimed to be reforming willingly, stating that the relaxation of its photography policy was to 'open up possibilities of dialogue and engagement' (Bailey, 2014; Shardlow, 2014). This declaration was echoed during my communication with one experienced staff member who was introduced to me as the person who most possibly knew about the past and details of Tate's photography policy:

> *'It was very much an active decision from Tate wanting to open up the collection to visitors and improve their general experience when visiting the galleries…It was felt that visitors shouldn't experience a restrictive atmosphere as they entered Tate that they should be free to interact with the works and if they wanted to take a photo of the artworks as a record of their visit or to further their interest in the art then this should be allowed.'*
>
> (Filming Manager of Tate, personal communication, September 23, 2015)

Similarly, MOMA PS1 in New York, which began to welcome photography about four years later, declared that 'Cameras are ubiquitous in daily life because of cell phones and other devices. More pictures are taken than are on display. Today, taking pictures is a participatory way of visiting exhibitions, and we embrace this creative and proactive viewing practice' (Steinhauer, 2013). These two leading museums of modern art both stressed photography's role in meaningful engagement and claimed to welcome the change.

Moving towards the other end of the voluntariness spectrum, enthusiasm in official statements is gradually replaced by practical relinquishment. Until at least early 2013, the Whitechapel Gallery in London did not permit photography and, when it lifted the ban, did not make it publicly known. When I asked about it, the switch was explained as not only supported by concern for visitor freedom but in terms of the beneficial effect of visitor photography combined with social media,

> *'We found in recent years this action provided exhibiting artists more exposure through social media. As such our visitor numbers have increased as well as providing more freedom to our visitors.'*
>
> (Information Desk, personal communication, April 26, 2017)

While this statement still points to expected positive effects of visitor photography, there is still the difficulty of policing the increased use of camera phones, of differentiating between visitors using their devices as phones from those using them as cameras.[64] For management reasons, the National Gallery submitted that

> *'In 2014 we changed our policy regarding photography, in conjunction with the introduction of free Wi-Fi capability throughout the public areas…Wi-Fi enables our visitors to access additional information about the collection and our exhibitions whilst actually here in the Gallery, and also to interact with us more via social media. Many people use mobile devices such as smart phones to access the Internet…The decision to relax the rule on photography was taken so that we are able to accommodate the new ways in which our visitors wish to interact with the collection. This*

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[64] The evolution of photographic devices led to the relocation of difficulty in practice: in the past, picture-taking required the manoeuvre of bulky hardware on the part of the visitor, while policing photography in the present demands skilful supervision by invigilators. As revealed in my communication with the Whitney Museum of American Art, the infrequent occurrence of visitors taking pictures in earlier periods was reckoned to be a consequence of the difficulty of managing heavy photographic equipment:

> In the 1930s, photography by visitors I believe wasn't a common phenomenon because the photographic equipment was cumbersome – and our old galleries were very small and tightly proportioned. We have in our archives cameras that were used by the curatorial staff as well as Glass plate slides… they were heavy and required tripods for their use. The staff who could have answered that question are no longer alive.
>
> (Manager of Rights and Reproduction at Whitney Museum, personal communication, May 17, 2018]

> *makes it harder for our Gallery Assistants to judge if someone is accessing online content on their phone or taking photographs of the collection.'*
>
> (Visitor Engagement Assistant, personal communication, May 28, 2018)

The integration of a camera function into mobile phones results in the indistinguishability of users' activities. In view of the large number of daily visitors to the gallery, relinquishing the right to refuse permission for photography became necessary for the overall supervision of the space.[65]

In press releases, art museums and galleries often cited one particular reason for relaxing photography rules and thus their position on the spectrum of voluntariness can be clearly identified. However, in reality a complex set of factors might be involved. One internal news email from the National Portrait Gallery's Director Sandy Nairne, dated 12th Aug 2013, read:

> *'We have recently reviewed our rule of having 'no photography' in the Gallery. The review was prompted by visitor feedback, recent discussion in our sector and the media, the growth of camera technology in mobile devices and social media channels, and the move by other museums and galleries to allow photography….the decision has now been taken to allow photography for personal, non-commercial use for a six-month trial from 1 September 2013.'*
>
> (Provided by Records and Freedom of Information Manager, personal communication, June 8, 2018)

To summarise, the reasons underlying each institution's decision to loosen its visitor photography regulations might range from gallery management to visitor engagement, marketing effects, and public demand. Art museums' and galleries' positions in relation to visitor photography can be a mixture of concessions to and active participation in the popular culture of photography. In any case, when visiting art museums, people are now less likely to be officially expected to put the photographic device away and look at artworks with their eyes only.

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[65] The difficulty in enforcing the no-photography policy resulted in the lifting of the ban happened not only in the National Gallery. In Brooklyn Museum, for example, the senior brand manager and visitor services reflected that 'Guards are spending so much time focusing on someone holding a device that they might not see the person next to them touching the art…As the devices get smaller, it gets harder to manage. We have to ask ourselves, are we using our guards appropriately?' (Miranda, 2013).

**Major Reference Indicators**

While, as listed above, each institution had different reasons for adjusting its rules and allowing picture-taking, there appeared to be some major art museums that others referenced when making the decision. The National Portrait Gallery in London, prior to the adjustment of its policy on 1st Sep 2013, conducted a brief survey of photography policy in other galleries in the UK and Ireland. In total, they reviewed eight other art museums and galleries, including the Tate, National Gallery, and V&A. It should be noted that in 2013, the National Gallery still forbade photography. However, the fact that the gallery was included in the survey demonstrates its leading role in the field of art museums and the importance of knowing its photography policy for the National Portrait Gallery when the latter was considering how to adjust its own. The Whitney Museum of American Art, which always allows photography as long as copyright is not violated, pointed to both MOMA and the Metropolitan Museum of Art when it reviewed its photography policy in 2013:

> *'By 2013, with the advent of iPhone capability to photograph easily and the rapid growth of social media, the museum reviewed our policy with Curatorial, Legal, Visitor Services and Marketing/Communications Department. In a sense this was pressured by the success of MOMA and Metropolitan Museum of Art's campaign to permit photography in their*

> *gallery and post it on social media. This practice was used in their advertising campaigns and received wide media coverage.'*
>
> (Manager of Rights and Reproduction at Whitney Museum, personal communication, May 17, 2018)

What is suggested is that, when deciding on a change of photography policy, art museums and galleries that are most resourceful and influential were referenced; their strategies—or lack of them—served as a model for fellow institutions. The degree to which these leading institutions contribute to shaping others' policy-making awaits further investigation, which lies outside the scope of this research. Yet the fact that a large number of museums all began to review or allow visitors to take pictures in the twenty-first century indicates that the museum is not an isolated site: firstly, each decision might influence another; and secondly, each receives and contributes to the ongoing social and cultural trend.

### 4.2 After Permission: the Proprieties of Visitor Photography

As demonstrated in the first half of this chapter, taking pictures of artworks—either by institutionally assigned photographers or visitors—is not a recent activity in art museums. Yet policies that regulate this practice are predominantly contemporary. It is only in recent years that official photography rules have been written down and introduced to visitors—often reaching the public's attention through news articles with provocative headlines and photographs of crowds snapping famed artworks. Those images bring into mind Baudrillard's criticism of the devouring of the Pompidou Centre by an oversized flood of visitors in the late 1970s: 'Beaubourg could have or should have disappeared the day after the inauguration, dismantled and kidnapped by the crowd…The people come to *touch*, they look as if they were touching, their gaze is only an aspect of tactile manipulation' ([1981]1994:70). This can also be paralleled with nineteenth century caricatures which mocked the disorderly museum visitors who neglected the wardens' cautions and pushed one another for a better view of the artworks.[66] It should be acknowledged that these observations (revealed in news articles and online forums) did not target visitor photography without reason. However, when making the accusation that picture-taking brings chaos or results in visitor gulping down the sight of artworks without comprehension, careful detailing of how and why is necessary. The very first question is: what are considered to be proper manners for visitors? Answers were acquired through examining the official visitor guidelines provided by art museums and galleries as well as advice and debates published on online culture sites. The following section discusses the findings.

### 4.2.1 Art Museums' Official Etiquette Guidelines

While visitor photography regulations have been gradually put into words and become official policies, they are not always offered—for example, via websites or printed visitor information guides—to the public. Even more scarce are museum requests for visitor photography etiquette. Both the Courtauld and Tate Modern have listed on their websites and gallery maps places where photography is permitted and where it is prohibited, what type of photography is allowed (flash-off) and what equipment is forbidden (see Table 4.1). Neither Raven Row nor the Zabludowicz Collection mentioned on their websites and information sheets their general permission for photography. None prescribed the etiquette deemed suitable when taking pictures. A few other museums were more specific. The British Museum, while permitting photography, emphasised the importance of the visitor experience remaining undisturbed by picture-takers by specifying it in their visitor regulations: Visitor Regulation 14.4 states that ‘If a visitor complains that your photography is intrusive you may be asked to stop or leave the Museum’.[67] This request for unobtrusive photographic conduct was echoed by some art museums in the form of appeal: The National Gallery requested its visitors to ‘Please respect the wishes of all visitors by not obstructing the view of the paintings or taking pictures of anyone without their permission’;[68] the National Portrait Gallery urged ‘Please show consideration for the privacy and experience of other visitors when taking photographs or filming’.[69] It appears that respect and consideration for other visitors constitute the official guidelines on visitor photography. What constitutes violation of respect and consideration, however, remains in the hands of picture-taking visitors themselves, other potentially affected visitors, and museum staff to decide.

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[66] Illustrated in Hellen Rees Leahy's discussion of museums' packed with crowds, two caricatures show inchoate groups of people filling the gallery space from wall to wall (2016: 37, 40). Both caricatures were dated 1821, prior to the time of the official announcement of the invention of photography. Thus neither disorderly visitors nor the condemnation of their behaviours are recent phenomena.

### 4.2.2 Unofficial Debates and Advice

While art museums and galleries offer policies and guidelines which serve as the most basic standard for visitor photography, research attention turns to other etiquette advice—data were acquired through reviewing individual opinions shared by bloggers or news article writers.[70] The starting point was to ask: does picture-taking conflict with ‘good museum manners’? In general, two lines of accusation could be summarised from the reading. Firstly, picture-taking is a danger to the works. Responding to what it called 'glaring slip-ups', which included an incident in which a child was found sleeping on a Donald Judd sculpture at Tate Modern,[71] Huffpost published an article in 2017[72] that suggested appropriate museum manners to its readers. Among the fifteen items of advice, 'crazy' selfie-taking was cautioned against. Blogger Geraldine DeRuiter recalled a personal experience at MOMA—which nearly caused her 'a panic attack'—that 'With flash photography one girl literally got so close to Monet's *Water Lilies* that I'm pretty sure her lens was touching the canvas'.[73] DeRuiter came out strongly against photographing artworks in art museums, but also admitted having snapped a few pictures on occasions when the art museums did not allow photography. Secondly, picture-taking is considered inappropriate, for those who do so are not seeing the artworks. Here, often in the same article which made the first type of charge, the direction of criticism slightly changes and there is a confusion between being respectful and being tasteful.[74] Picture-taking is positioned against tasteful contemplation or meaningful looking.

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[67] Full Visitor Guidelines – British Museum https://www.britishmuseum.org/pdf/visitor_regulations_may_2018.pdf

[68] Visitor photography at the National Gallery | Visiting | The National Gallery https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/visiting/visitor-photography

[69] Gallery Guidelines - National Portrait Gallery https://www.npg.org.uk/about/gallery-planning-and-policies/gallery-guidelines

[70] It should be pointed out that this study of museum etiquette advice in regard to visitor photography did not examine exhaustively every article published, nor did it identify each author and her/his readership. Comprehensive research which traced the background of advice makers, ranking the popularity of articles, and conducting content analysis and discourse analysis of each advice item would aid further understanding of the formation and possible influence of etiquette guides. The focus here in this PhD study, however, aimed to find out whether there existed more specific or detailed visitor photography etiquette advice, which art museums and galleries did not provide.

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[71] 'Kid Crawls On Million-Dollar Artwork, Internet Lets Out Collective WTF?', 4th Feb 2014, retried from https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/01/28/kids-at-museums_n_4681741.html?guccounter=1

[72] '15 Ways to Ruin Museum Experience for Everybody', 6th Dec 2017, Huffpost, retrieved from https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/museum-etiquette_n_4782212?guccounter=2

[73] DeRuiter, G. 'Ten Reasons Why you shouldn't Take Photos in Museums', 20 January 2010, *The* Everywhereist, retrieved from http://www.everywhereist.com/ten-reasons-why-you-shouldnt-take-photos-in-museums/

[74] It is worth mentioning an example of an art museum unusually providing specific guidance, urging against—while not forbidding—the use of photography, while not differentiating clearly between not causing damage and looking properly. The Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento in its teaching resource Curriculum Enrichment Guides 'Walk the Walk' includes a series of multiple questions about how to be 'a respectful guest'. Among them, Question 2 asks:
'You want to remember everything about this day, so you…
A. bring a camera to take lots of pictures.
B. bring colored markers to make sketches and notes.
C. use your eyes and ears to look and listen carefully.'
The correct answer was C, because 'Cameras that flash can damage the artworks, so be sure you don't use them. And pens can cause damage too, to the art and to the walls and furnishings in the museums. If writing or drawing is a part of your tour, you'll need to use a pencil. But do keep your eyes and ears open throughout your visit'. Crocker's website stated that 'The Crocker loves photography' and reassured visitors that they were welcome to take pictures, and there was no rule against sketching with coloured markers, but the teaching toolkit revealed disapproval. Urging visitors to use their eyes and ears put picture-taking at a lower level in the hierarchy of good manners'.
Teacher Resources & Lesson Plans, Crocker Art museum, retrieved from http://www.crockerart.org/school-educator-programs/educator-guides

As mentioned previously, visitors considered bad-mannered were observed even before the invention of photography. These two accusations—bringing disruption and ignoring artworks—are not uniquely caused by visitor photography. In other words, taking photographs is just a different way of being inconsiderate to other visitors and not paying attention to artworks. These comments and advice reveal that good museum manners are generally defined as being quiet and looking at art.

Many bloggers and writers acknowledged the existence of visitor photography and attempted to advise suitable ways of practicing it so that good picture-taking manners would be in accordance with good museum manners. In her article titled 'Art Debate: What's the Etiquette on Taking Photos in a Gallery?' Kay Stephens, after studying an online debate regarding permission for visitor photography on the art marketing news site Red Dot Blog, offered a single piece of advice at the end of the post: 'Bottom line, it appears from both sides of the lens: before you whip out that phone and click on the camera function—ask first'.75 Another example is the January 2018 issue of Etiquetteer—a journal about modern etiquette published by US American Robert B. Dimmick—which included in its nine items of advice three on picture-taking: 'Obey photo rules', 'Your need to photograph the art is less important than the need of others to view the art. Be aware of where you (and your camera) are in relation to others', and 'Watch out with that selfie, whether you're using a selfie stick or not'.76 In short, observe photography rules and give space to other visitors. The difference between art museums and galleries' official guidelines and individual advice on etiquette is that while the former remained concise, the latter adopted an eloquent style and explicitly linked good manners with connoisseurship.

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[75] Stephens, K. 'Art Debate: What's the Etiquette on Taking Photos in a Gallery?', 22 January 2018, *Penobscot Bat Pilot*, retrieved from https://www.penbaypilot.com/article/art-debate-what-s-etiquette-taking-photos-gallery/92611

[76] 'Museum Manners', *Etiquetteer, Vol 17(3)*, retrieved from http://www.etiquetteer.com/columns/2018/1/17/museum-manners-vol-17-issue-3

### 4.2.3 Wanted Photographs and Undesirable Photo-taking

During my ethnography, it was revealed that art museums and galleries consist of a wide range of professionals. For example, one staff member, during our interview, divided internal opinions regarding experience of art into the old school and the young: the former considered quiet contemplation the most appropriate way of seeing art while the latter objected to valuing one way over another. That was a binary opposition which was later rejected by another former staff member who would have been categorised as belonging to the old school. On another occasion at another gallery, a curator pointed out the disjunction between the concerns of the curatorial department and those of marketing. While curators prioritised visitors' chances of having a relatively quiet or undisturbed experience, the marketing professionals stressed the importance of allowing visitor photography and encouraging picture-sharing to increase the visibility of the gallery. This showed, first of all, that art museums and galleries are constituted by different generational values and habits. Secondly, as art museums and galleries have begun to face pressure to generate revenue, marketing professionals have been brought in and their ideas about visitor engagement might come from a position unthought of in the not-too-far-away past. While photography policies and visitor guidelines present the basic requirements for doing photography, visitor programmes show two (distinct) attempts in practice: encouragement to circulate photographic images77 versus persuasion to return or learning to looking without pursuing photography.

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[77] This is often conducted through inviting visitors to 'share your photos with us' on various art museums' social media platforms or participating in a social media campaign like #MuseumSelfie which requests selfies taken at museums to be shared on the annual Museum Selfie Day (for instance, in 2018, the day fell on 17th January) and the #empty museum movement (for example, #emptyTate sees pictures of Tate galleries empty of crowds). One example of particular interest is the Museum of Everything exhibitions, which focused on works by outsider artists. The first and third exhibitions (2009/2010, 2010/2011) were held in an inconspicuous building in London's Primrose Hill and photography was strictly forbidden and strongly cautioned against on several signs saying 'No Photography, Penalty = Death'. When Exhibition#6 was housed in the Kunsthal in Rotterdam in the

This is not to claim that all art museums that encourage picture-taking are concerned only with the resulting photographic images and their dissemination, while disregarding the process of photographing. Yet there can be often observed a subtle difference in objective between museums inviting visitor photography and the promotion of direct seeing. Parallel with the relaxation of photography regulations, the invitation to visitor photography is in part a way to democratise experience: just as visitors are permitted to choose between taking pictures and not, no particular types of picture-taking are advocated. Whether mindfully searching for photographic opportunities or quickly snapping away, it is a visitor's responsibility to judge. The promotion of direct seeing, however, focuses on a specific kind of visual engagement: time-invested seeing.

While, as demonstrated in the literature review, the peculiar slower-paced walk is pointed out by some scholars, it is important to differentiate this aspect of bodily movement within art museums from 'slow looking'. Visitors might walk in the museum space in more slowly than they would in the street, yet that does not, to art museum professionals or art critics, mean that they are slow enough or stay long enough with each artwork to appreciate it (see,

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Netherlands, however, the ban was lifted and the decision was announced on posters interspersed around the gallery space, headlined 'PHOTOGRAPHY AMNESTY'. A competition was created 'inviting all visitors to upload their favourite photograph onto Instagram using #musevery or email it to musevery@gmail.com'. This case especially caught my attention for, having visited both the London site and the Rotterdam museum space, layered conflict was deeply felt. Firstly, an exhibition displaying outsider artworks and artefacts, enacted in an institutional space where visitors followed regular museum rules, gave a sense of contradiction. This contrasted with the exhibitions in London: the inclusion of the word 'museum' in the exhibition title stood against the partly residential and partly circus-tent-like space. The visitor, when viewing works that questioned the boundaries between art and non-art, artists and outsider artists, was at the same time negotiating the division between museum and non-museum and consequently her/his behaviour in each. Secondly, the Rotterdam presentation not only saw the formal institutionalisation of artworks but participation in the trend of museum visitor photography. Photographic images of those outsider artworks were encouraged to be a visible activity. Without intending to denounce the achievement of the Museum of Everything exhibitions, it is stressed again that art museums and the exhibition of artworks are practices often constituted by colliding measurements.

for example, Cascone, 2019; Quito, 2018). Two points should be made clear: first, the measure of the average amount of time visitors spend looking at each artwork can be contentious: studies focusing on this issue often involve a relatively small number of visitors.[78] Secondly, some types of artworks do not demand long contemplation just as some visitors might be able to elicit a profound connection with artworks of any type within a fairly short period. However, it is significant that the accusation that visitors do not look at art slowly enough is identified as a problem by art museums—and by scandalised critics—and actions have been taken—albeit still experimentally—to alter the situation.

An increasing number of art museums have attempted to probe the possibility of promoting concentrated seeing. The Slow Art Day, for instance, has become an occasion for relevant events to be created around it. Art critic and founder of The Slow Art Workshop79 Susan Moore criticised the 'unspoken museum etiquette…everybody stands in a reverential arc about six feet away from a painting so nobody looks at it properly and I think you need the time and space to see one or two paintings and to really look and shut out all the noise' (Bailey, 2019). The validity of this statement about 'unspoken museum etiquette' is debatable. In many—if not most—exhibitions, interested visitors were observed attempting to stand as close as possible to the artworks. However, it shows the demand for intimate looking by one art critic, as well as those organisations and individuals who joined in this campaign, who do not see that reverential manners necessarily equate with aesthetic appreciation. Tate Modern's movement workshop, part of the slow looking campaign that accompanied its Pierre Bonnard: The Colour of Memory exhibition (23rd January – 6th May

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[78] For example, in Jeffrey K. Smith and Lisa F. Smith's 2001 study, a total of 150 visitors to the Metropolitan Museum looking at six paintings comprised the sample (2001). It found that the mean time spent viewing a work of art was 27.2 seconds, with a median time of 17.0 seconds. This result was then quoted in criticism of visitors' transient focus by, for instance, design reporter Anne Quito (2018).

[79] The Slow Art Workshop: http://www.slowartworkshop.com/

2019),[80] served as an example (see also Brown, 2019; McGivern, 2019). Led by dance artist and dramaturg Charlie Ashwell, this workshop—which I also attended—took place after hours. In the absence of the general public, the exhibition space appeared more personal. Given licence to swing their bodies in front of Bonnard' paintings or across the gallery's rooms, or to be totally still with arms raised at odd angles and eyes focusing on a chosen work, participants were not instructed to slow down but to experiment with different walking speeds and rhythms, different standing poses. The term 'slow' in effect indicated spending time with the artworks and spending time finding relations with the artworks. [81] [82]

The mixed messages sent out by art museums and galleries to their visitors via various kinds of campaigns say: take and share photographs of our museums and artworks but also look at the artworks without taking photographs. These two urges might not essentially exclude each other. Yet whether one visitor can both take pictures and concentrate on direct looking within a certain timeframe, and whether visitors who do either or both can be all accommodated within a fixed space is questionable—these issues will be further explored in the following chapters through the empirical findings.

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[80] The Slow Looking campaign included a guide to slow-looking at art (in which 10 minutes for each work is suggested, though it also says 'It's up to you'), via a tour given by psychologist Rebecca Chamberlain and a movement workshop, which is discussed in this section.
https://www.tate.org.uk/art/guide-slow-looking
https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/exhibition/cc-land-exhibition-pierre-bonnard-colour-memory/slow-looking-tour

[81] I was aware that the aesthetic joy discovered came partially from the emancipation from rules, from the realisation that some behaviours in the workshop's time slot were previously impossible or prohibited. It is debateable whether the enjoyment would have been less intense had art museums never tried to regulate manners. Intimate engagement is not just about being personal but perhaps also about being given more options within a relatively fixed framework.

[82] How many people were affected by the slow looking programmed remains questionable. In the case of the movement workshop, it may be suspected that the few dozens of participants were people who already looked at art closely.

## Conclusion

Art Museum practice and the establishment of photography policy did not start at the same time. Prior to the early nineteenth century, photography had not been fully invented and neither the notion nor the problematic of taking pictures in art museums existed. Hence none of the photography policies that control the exposure of artworks to the camera existed either. Even with the maturation and dissemination of photographic technology, art museums did not necessarily make conscious decisions to regulate its use. Tracing the trajectories of photography policies revealed the twenty-first century—especially after the public introduction of smartphones—to be the chief period in which art museums felt the need to review and adjust their regulations for visitor photography. Museums and galleries may view photography as a form of creative engagement and choose to embrace it or admit that it is unstoppable and be pressured into accommodating it. While art museums and galleries have not explicitly condemned visitor photography as a way of engaging with art,[83] attempts have been made to design programmes aimed at inculcating visitors into ways of non-photographic and close seeing.

As Constance Classen points out, Elias correctly reflects that it can be 'misleading…to characterise the corporeal practices of earlier eras as simply…"bad manners"' and that they should be, instead, investigated as something 'meaningful and necessary' at that specific time (Classen, 2007: 897). Following this line of thinking, we should ask whether picture-taking in art museums, which used to be and is still—though perhaps less so—frowned upon, has become an act which does not indicate the performer's lack of etiquette knowledge but one that is essential to build up a meaningful encounter with the displayed artworks. Another equally important question is: why blame photography for inattention and disorder when people before or without it can be observed causing the same effects?[84] The singular way in which the performance of visitor photography generates commotion and causes distraction will be discussed in later chapters with the findings from ethnographic studies, following by exploration of how photographing artworks can be 'meaningful and necessary'.

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[83] During our interview, one visitor experience professional revealed: 'I've heard staff say to one another "but the gallery experience should be about seeing the work first hand. You know, that kind of intimate encounter with the artwork. And taking photos takes away that from the experience…there are still people working here who see the gallery experience as a solitary experience, and a quiet experience, and the artwork as something you should look up to it…But I don't think anybody would necessarily make that known to visitors' (personal communication, February 20, 2018)

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[84] To find out if there existed a difference in the time visitors spent viewing art, Jeffrey Smith, Lisa Smith, and Pablo Tinio in 2017 conducted a larger scale of study at The Art Institute of Chicago to compare with the one mentioned previously that was completed 15 years ago (Smith and Smith, 2001). The results demonstrate that the time people spend viewing artworks had not changed significantly. Yet how they spent their time varied—selfies taken with artworks had become more common.

**Table 4.1 Database of Art Museum Photography Policies**

| Museum | Latest Update/Since (Year) | Photography Policy | Additional Prohibition | Provided Reason for Allowing Visitor Photography | Reference |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Barbican Art Gallery (UK)** | -- | Usually not but allowed in some exhibitions | -- | -- | The researcher's ethnographic study |
| **Berlinische Galerie, Museum of Modern Art** | -- | Allowed | -- | -- | The researcher's ethnographic study |
| **British Museum (UK)** | -- | Allowed except where otherwise stated | Selfie sticks; stands which support photographic equipment | -- | http://www.britishmuseum.org/visiting.aspx (Full Visitor Regulations can be downloaded here) |
| **C/O Berlin (DE)** | -- | Allowed | -- | A combination of considerations including copyright and social media marketing. | The researcher's ethnographic study<br>Personal communication with Felix Hoffmann, Chief Curator (2018)<br>*no information provided on the institute's website |

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Courtauld Gallery** | -- | Allowed in the permanent collection | Flash; tripods; monopods; selfie sticks; filming | According to the gallery director, it is believed that visitors should feel free to experience the artworks in their preferred ways. Courtauld endeavours to create a welcoming space for the public and adding restrictions does not contribute to that aim. | The researcher's ethnographic interviewing<br>https://courtauld.ac.uk/gallery/about/gallery-policies |
| **Dulwich Picture Gallery (UK)** | -- | Allowed and encouraged in the permanent collection<br>*On its website, visitors are also invited to share their photo via Facebook or Twitter | -- | -- | The researcher's ethnographic study<br>https://www.dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk/planning-your-visit/accessibility-and-facilities/ |
| **Guggenheim Bilbao (ES)** | -- | Not allowed | -- | -- | https://www.guggenheim-bilbao.eus/en/useful-information/tips/ |
| **Hayward Gallery (UK)** | -- | Allowed | -- | -- | The researcher's ethnographic study<br>*no information provided on the institute's website |
| **Institute of Contemporary Art (UK)** | -- | Allowed | -- | -- | The researcher's ethnographic study<br>*no information provided on the institute's website |
| **Kunsthal Rotterdam (NL)** | -- | Allowed unless otherwise stated | Flash; tripods | -- | https://www.kunsthal.nl/en/home/plan-your-visit/practical-information/policies-and-photography/ |

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| **Louvre (FR)** | -- | Allowed in the permanent collection | Flash | -- | http://www.louvre.fr/en/how-use-louvre/visitor-regulations<br>https://www.louvre.fr/en/how-use-louvre/showing-respect-collections#tabs |
| **LWL-Landesmuseum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte (DE)** | -- | Allowed in the permanent collection | Flash; tripods | -- | http://www.lwl.org/LWL/Kultur/museumkunstkultur/besuch/besucherservice?lang=en |
| **Metropolitan Museum of Art (US)** | 2000 | Allowed in parts of the permanent collection that are not designated as 'no photography' areas | Flash; video camera; tripods (allowed from Mon through Fri with permission) | -- | http://www.metmuseum.org/visit/met-fifth-avenue |
| **MOMA (US)** | -- | Allowed in some galleries | Flash; tripods; camera extension poles; filming | -- | https://www.moma.org/visit/index |

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| **MOMA PS1 (US)** | 2013 | Allowed in some galleries | Flash;<br>tripods;<br>camera extension poles;<br>filming | ‘Cameras are ubiquitous in daily life because of cell phones and other devices. More pictures are taken than are on display. Today, taking pictures is a participatory way of visiting exhibitions, and we embrace this creative and proactive viewing practice’ (Steinhauer, 2013) | https://www.moma.org/visit/index |
| **Musée d’Orsay (FR)** | 2015 | Allowed in the permanent collection | Flash;<br>tripods or other support | -- | http://www.musee-orsay.fr/en/visit/groups/copying-filming-photography.html |
| **Museo del Prado (ES)** | -- | Not allowed | -- | -- | https://www.museodelprado.es/en/visit-the-museum |
| **Museum Boijmans (NL)** | -- | Allowed | Flash;<br>lights;<br>tripods;<br>selfie sticks | -- | General Visiting Conditions can be downloaded here: https://www.boijmans.nl/en/visitor-information |
| **Museum der Bildenden Künste (DE)** | -- | Allowed | -- | -- | The researcher’s ethnographic study |
| **Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei (TW)** | -- | Allowed | Flash;<br>tripods;<br>filming | -- | http://www.mocataipei.org.tw/index.php/2012-01-12-01-58-19/visitor-information |

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| **National Gallery (UK)** | 2014<br>(Until 2014 there was a strict no-photography rule) | Allowed in the permanent collection | Flash; tripods; selfie sticks | Practical management concern (see also Grosvenor, 2014) | Personal communication with Malgorzata Pniewska, Visitor Engagement Assistant (2018)<br>https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/visiting/visitor-photography |
| **National Palace Museum (TW)** | 2013<br>(Before 1th Sep 2013, Photography was not permitted) | Allowed unless otherwise stated | Flash; lighting equipment; tripods; selfie sticks | -- | Personal communication with Ruth Kusionowicz, Records and Freedom of Information Manager (2018)<br>https://www.npm.gov.tw/en/Article.aspx?sNo=02007005 |
| **National Portrait Gallery (UK)** | 2013 | Allowed in permanent collection | Flash; tripods; monopods | -- | https://www.npg.org.uk/about/gallery-planning-and-policies/photography-policy.php [85] |
| **National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts (TW)** | -- | Not allowed | -- | -- | http://english.ntmofa.gov.tw/English/CP.aspx?s=100&n=10159<br>(see also Bailey, 2014) |

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[85] The website of the National Portrait Gallery shows a detailed description of its photography rule. Unlike other major art museums, it demonstrates concern for how photo-taking might affect other visitors' experience: 'Please show consideration for the privacy and experience of other visitors when taking photographs'. (Similar cautions are voiced by a few others, including the National Palace Museum in Taipei and The Hermitage Museum & Gardens). It also reminds visitors that access to the images of its exhibits can be obtained via methods other than personal picture-taking:
'Much of the Gallery's Collection is reproduced as postcards, slides or prints, available from the Portrait Printer in the Gallery Shop, the Digital Space and online at www.npg.org.uk/shop.'
https://www.npg.org.uk/about/gallery-planning-and-policies/photography-policy.php

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| **Peggy Guggenheim Collection (IT)** | -- | Allowed | Flash<br>*Tripods and monopods might not be permitted | -- | http://www.guggenheim-venice.it/inglese/museum/info.html |
| **Pompidou (Fr)** | -- | Allowed | Flash; tripods; selfie sticks | -- | (see Bailey, 2014; Shardlow, 2014)<br>*no information provided on the institute's website<br>https://www.centrepompidou.fr/en/Visit/Practical-information |
| **Raven Row (UK)** | Since opening (photography has always been permitted since it opened) | Allowed<br>(*There was one exception where the artist was specific about not wanting his film work being recorded) | -- | -- | The researcher's ethnographic study<br>*no information provided on the institute's website |

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| **Rijksmuseum (NL)** | 2009<br>(prior to 2009, ‘Photography, no flash, by visitors in the Rijksmuseum has always been tolerated or turned a blind eye to, although there was no specific policy concerning photography in the gallery.’) | Allowed | Flash;<br>tripods;<br>selfie sticks | -- | Personal communication Image Department and Press Office (2018)<br>https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/en/organisation/frequently-asked-questions/visiting |
| **Royal Academy of Arts (UK)** | --<br>*The Summer Exhibition in 2015 was reported as the first exhibition at RA where restrictions on photography were lifted (Esapathi, 2015) | Not allowed in exhibitions of on-loan artworks; relaxation of photography policy has been experimented with in spaces where works belonging to RA are displayed | -- | -- | Personal Communication with Picture Library<br>*no information provided on the institute’s website |
| **Saatchi Gallery (UK)** | -- | Allowed | -- | -- | The researcher’s ethnographic study<br>*no information provided on the institute’s website |

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| **Sir John Soane's Museum (UK)** | -- | Not allowed | -- | 'Photography is not permitted as this maintains the unique, magical atmosphere inside.' | https://www.soane.org/your-visit |
| **Smithsonian American Art Museum (US)** | Since opening | Allowed in the permanent collection unless otherwise stated | Flash;<br>tripods;<br>selfie sticks | -- | Personal communication with the Registration Assistant<br>https://americanart.si.edu/visit/guidelines |
| **Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (US)** | 2015 (started from the Alberto Burri exhibition) | Allowed | Tripods;<br>camera extension poles | -- | Personal communication with the Visitor Experience Department (2018)<br>https://www.guggenheim.org/plan-your-visit |
| **South London Gallery (UK)** | -- | Allowed | -- | -- | The researcher's ethnographic study<br>*no information provided on the institute's website |
| **Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (DE)** | -- | Allowed in all the museums belonging to Staatliche Museen zu Berlin with exceptional cases like Nefertiti or exhibits on loan | Tripods;<br>monopods;<br>selfie sticks | -- | Personal communication with the Press, Communication and Sponsoring department<br>Museum Regulations (Chapter VI)<br>https://www.smb.museum/fileadmin/website/Bildung_Vermittlung/pdf/Benutzungsordnungdeutsch_engl.pdf |
| **Taipei Fine Arts Museum (TW)** | -- | Allowed except when otherwise stated | Flash;<br>tripods | -- | https://tfam.gov.taipei/cp.aspx?n=3FE94CE28EE2276E |

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Tate (UK)** | 2009 | Allowed in the permanent collection | Flash; tripods; selfie sticks | ‘It was very much an active decision from Tate wanting to open up the collection to visitors and improve their general experience when visiting the galleries…It was felt that visitors shouldn’t experience a restrictive atmosphere as they entered Tate that they should be free to interact with the works and if they wanted to take a photo of the artworks as a record of their visit or to further their interest in the art then this should be allowed.’<br>To ‘open up possibilities of dialogue and engagement’ (Bailey, 2014; Shardlow, 2014). | Personal Communication with Filming Manager<br>http://www.tate.org.uk/about/who-we-are/policies-and-procedures/gallery-rules |
| **The Hermitage Museum & Gardens (RU)** | -- | Allowed unless otherwise stated | Flash | -- | http://thehermitagemuseum.org/photography-policies/ |
| **The Photographers’ Gallery (UK)** | -- | Allowed | Flash; tripods; selfie sticks | -- | Personal communication with Visitor Relations Co-Ordinator (2018)<br>*no information provided on the institute’s website |

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Van Gogh Museum (NL)** | 2014 | Not allowed | -- | Sees the photo-taking crowd as a critical concern and picture-taking as 'causing nuisance to other visitors' (see also Bailey, 2014; Shardlow, 2014) | Personal communication with gallery staff<br>https://www.vangoghmuseum.nl/en/plan-your-visit/house-rules |
| **Uffizi (IT)** | -- | Allowed | Flash; tripods; lightstands; selfie sticks; any kind of professional equipment | -- | https://www.uffizi.it/en/pages/rules-to-visit-the-uffizi-galleries<br>https://www.uffizi.it/en/pages/faq |
| **Victoria & Albert Museum (UK)** | -- | Allowed except in the Raphael Gallery, The William and Judith Bollinger Jewellery Gallery, special exhibitions or where an object's label indicates a private loan. Also not permitted in the shop for commercial reasons. | Tripods; monopods; supplementary video lighting | -- | https://www.vam.ac.uk/info/guidelines-for-using-the-galleries<br>http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/p/photography-in-the-galleries/ |

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Wallace Collection (UK)** | -- | Allowed in the permanent collection | Flash;<br>tripods;<br>filming | -- | https://www.wallacecollection.org/visiting/whenyouarrive<br>https://www.wallacecollection.org/thecollection/imagesandphotography/photographyforpersonaluse<br>https://www.wallacecollection.org/ms/learn/faqs/can-we-take-photos-during-our-visit/ [86] |
| **Whitechapel (UK)** | --<br>(At least until early 2013 photography was forbidden)[87] | Allowed | Flash; (the use tripods or selfie sticks requires special permission) | Visitors' picture-taking gives 'exhibiting artists more exposure through social media' | The researcher's personal visits and Personal communication with the Information Desk (2017)<br>*no information provided on the institute's website |

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[86] Details of the Wallace Collection's photography policy are scattered over different parts of its official website. On one page it states that a photography pass should be picked up at reception by visitors who wish to take pictures, and on another that visitor photography is permitted without the use of flash. On another page, the use of tripods is prohibited. The first practice, though still on Wallace's webpage, might not be enforced at present. During my visit to the museum, visitors who took photos did not and were not requested to obtain a pass. One of them was heard to enquire whether picture-taking would be allowed and was given an affirmative reply.

[87] According to a brief survey of photography policy of eight art museums and galleries in the UK conducted by National Portrait Gallery, London. The document was accessed under the Freedom of Information Act, 8th Jun 2018.

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Whitney Museum of American Art (US)** | 2015 (The gallery has permitted photography since its opening in 1931. The revision of its photography policy in 2005 concerned the added probation of selfie sticks) | Allowed unless otherwise stated | Flash; tripods; selfie sticks | -- | Personal communication with Anita Duquette, Manager, Rights & Reproductions (2018)<br>https://whitney.org/Visit/Policies |
| **Zabludowicz Collection (UK)** | Since its opening (Photography has always been permitted since its opening) | Allowed | -- | -- | The researcher's personal visits and ethnographic study<br>*no information provided on the institute's website |

# Chapter 5. Going inside the Art Museums: Looking at the Case Studies

## Introduction

This chapter continues the work of chapter 4 in response to the research question concerning ways of realising out-of-the-ordinary museum space through boundary-creation by looking at four cases: the Courtauld Gallery, Tate Modern, Raven Row, and Zabludowicz. Art museums are unique for offering experiential spaces dedicating to art which cannot be found in everyday life or other types of art-related institutions. As Hetherington points out and demonstrated in Chapter 2.3.3, these extraordinary space are organised according to three principle: interiority, singularity, and outside. However, though belonging to the same group, each art museum or gallery can differ from one another since each is a complex composition of architectural space, objects, and people—museum professionals and visitors. Moreover, Hetherington's discussion is based on critiques of art museums made in earlier eras. What demands exploration now is how art museums and galleries of our time realise the organising principles through architectural arrangement88 and with a set of written and tacit rules regulating visitor behaviours. The first half of this chapter looks closely at each of the four cases as a container of experience. Careful attention is given to how each builds up and maintains a combination of boundaries so the space becomes one which is individual and separated from the outside. How the boundaries—of architecture, economics, culture, invigilation, and photography restriction—were lived is discussed alongside each case's museum-visitor characteristics. Atmosphere becomes a key concept to understand both the shared qualities and dissimilarities between each art museum and gallery. Comparative studies at other non-profit art museums and galleries as well as commercial art exhibitionary

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[88] The art historian Charlotte Klonk (2000, 2005, and 2009) offers an insightful account of the interior of modern art museums and galleries, tracing a history of architectural and exhibitionary design for the experiential space of art. For a more recent study, see Tzortzi (2016).

sites are brought in to supplement the discussion so as to reach a sharper comprehension. The second half focuses on four types of museum professionals as significant mediators in framing the art museum experience: curators, educators, visitor experience professionals, and invigilators. Each type's task are examined in relation to artworks and visitors. Whether and where visitor photography occupies a place in their work is also revealed. Findings discussed in this chapter prepares as ground for further understanding of visitor photography's effect in the interiors of art museums and galleries.

### 5.1 The Experiential Environments of Art Museum and Galleries

Two questions which constantly surfaced during each of my visits to various art museums and galleries and which consequently oriented the course of this research are: 'why does this place feel like an art museum/gallery?'89 and 'why does it feel differently from others art

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[89] This question became especially sharp and persistent each time when, curiously, I visited one particular, actually non-museum exhibition space: the Frieze Masters, an annual art fair taking place in London's Regent's Park. Functioning as an occasion for not only exhibiting but selling, Frieze Masters, however, acquired a feeling of the art museum. Running alongside Frieze London which focused primarily on artworks produced post-2000, Frieze Masters showcased works created before 2000. Yet the period in which exhibits are made is not the only difference between these two parallel fairs. First of all, while the entrance—the transition from outside to inside—to Frieze London was more obvious, with a long queue and therefore much delay at the ticket check and security examination, it did not mean one was released into an antithesis of metropolitan streets. Once stepping inside, visitors were immediately confronted by a commotion of human voices and movements amplified by the closeness of the space. The sense of commerce and festivity was strong. People might feel as if they were turning onto the streets from the comparatively less congested park outside rather than going into a hushed indoor space from the busy city of London. The constant sighting of conspicuously and uniquely dressed people strengthened the impression of jamboree. Frieze Masters, in contrast, attracted a far smaller number of visitors and entry was more transient. Yet once inside, one was enwrapped by a 'museum atmosphere': one might feel like moving slowly and talking quietly *and* feel that moving slowly and talking quietly would be appropriate. This was because the interior design resembled that of a more classically modelled museum with more muted lighting and sombre coloured compartment walls, with artworks which impressed with a familiarity for they—or their similarly styled fellows—were commonly seen in art history books—all these linked this exhibition space to those established art museums like the National Gallery in London and the Met in New York. It was also because visitors here were more likely to conduct themselves in a quieter manner and mirror the reverential behaviour of museum visitors. This is not to claim that one could not sense the exchange of money and art, but because even when that exchange was known and noticed the art museum atmosphere still diffused, the question of 'why does this space feels like an art museum' becomes yet more significant.

museums and galleries?'. The first question puzzles over the commonalities of all the places that can be considered art museums or galleries, while the second asks about the peculiarities of each of these institutions. The term 'feel' is an ambiguous one, as is the associated idea often used to capture—in relation to space and spatial characteristics—what is felt: atmosphere. To whom, or to which act, the origin of atmosphere should be attributed is equally inconclusive. As philosopher Gernot Bohme reflects, atmosphere is 'indeterminate…We are not sure whether we should attribute [it] to objects or environments from which they proceed or to the subjects who experience them' (1993: 114; see also la Fuente, 2019: 560). From a different angle, Simmel, using the term 'stimmung'—often translated in English as mood—to describe what is felt about the perceived landscape, points out that 'the question has been posed wrongly were we to ask whether our unitary perception of an object or the feeling arising together with it comes first or second...We relate to a landscape whether in a nature or in art, as whole beings. The act that generates it for us is immediately one of perception and feeling' (2007: 27, 29). It can be said that for atmosphere to be described, it has to be felt by the subject situated in space, and at the same time, since the subject becomes part of the environment, her/his bodily reactions contributes to the generation of atmosphere.90

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[90] The relationship between atmosphere and the body which acts and reacts is also understood by scholars using the of idea affect. As summarised by Cameron Duff, affect 'ought to be understood as a specific manifestation of a body's "power of acting"…for every affect is experienced both as a particular feeling state and as a *distinctive variation in one's willingness or capacity to act* in response to that state' (2010: 882). Thus, to be affected by the spatial atmosphere is to both feel and act upon. As scholar of Geography Ben Anderson reckons, atmospheres 'are impersonal in that they belong to collective situations and yet can be felt as intensely personal' and 'to attend to affective atmosphere is to learn to be affected by the ambiguities of affect/emotion' (2009:80). Therefore, when situated in a space, one is involved in a complex interplay between the self and the social. Yet the extent of her/his involvement could vary.

An attempt at understanding each art museum or gallery's unique atmosphere was made via ethnographic study in the interplay between the spatial characteristics and visitor bodies.91 In other words, atmosphere is regarded as the dual performance of visitor and museum, instead of either of them alone. Diagram 5.1 demonstrates the overall impression of each case study in regard to its interior style and atmosphere: the former is marked along the horizontal axis, judged according to its relationship with the classical and white cube models; the latter is represented by the vertical axis, measured between the reverential and the street casual. Both the Courtauld Gallery and Raven Row are oriented towards the reverential end, appearing as spaces for the purpose of art and blocking out the street life on the outside. Their interior design, however, is very different. The former has in general a grand, aristocratic domestic style, although its second floor comes closer to a modern white cube gallery, a category that Raven Row falls into. Tate Modern and Zabludowicz have more the casualness of the street. Both these latter galleries display their works in exhibition spaces more resembling the white cube model, stripped of objects not relevant to art. However, they include, especially in the case of Zabludowicz, more non-white elements—darkness and coloured paint on the walls—and thus less a pure white cube than Raven Row. That visitors feel an art museum to be reverential or street casual and behave accordingly, and that an art museum becomes reverential or street casual because it attracts those visitors who are inclined to behave as such, can happen simultaneously.

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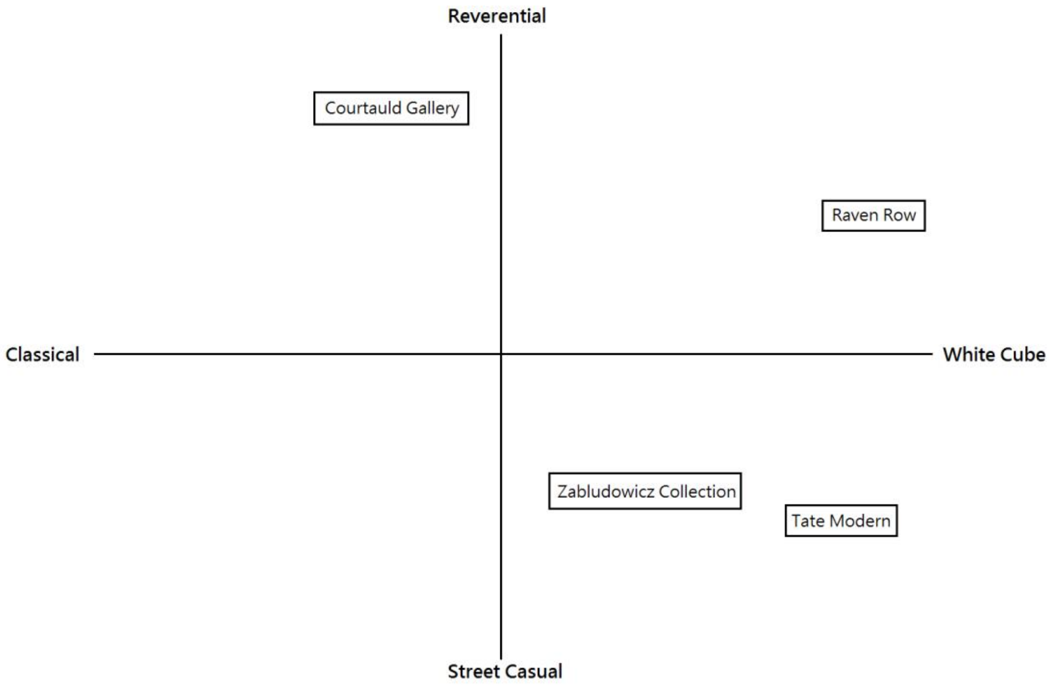
[91] The scholar of visitor experience Regan Forrest suggests the potential of using 'atmospherics' as an analytical model to examine 'the interplay between visitors and the exhibition environment in informal learning settings such as museums' (Forrest, 2013: 201). Just as her discussion focuses largely on insights from consumer studies, the term atmospherics borrows from The U.S. marketing consultant Philip Kotler. The latter claims 'atmospherics' should be used to 'describe the conscious designing of space…to produce specific emotional effects in the buyer that enhance his purchase probability' (Kotler, 1973: 50; see also Forrest 2013: 202). Forrest's approach brings back to mind, firstly, the closeness between museum practice and retailing as demonstrated in 2.2.1. Secondly, the rising currency of experience as a visitor strategy in the museum field, as 2.3.3 discusses. Thirdly, Sloterdijk's analysis of the controlled interior of the Crystal Palace (2013; see also 2.3.3): the enormous glasshouse functions as 'a protective shell' that separates the organised inside from the unruly outside and immerses visitors in the atmosphere of 'departure to comfort' (2013: 171).

**[Diagram 5.1 Locating Art Museums and Galleries]**


Reverential
Courtauld Gallery
Raven Row
Classical
White Cube
Zabludowicz Collection
Tate Modern
Street Casual

In order to further explore the difference in the felt atmosphere between each case, attention is firstly turned to the boundaries around and within the museum space. That is, discussion focuses on how, through a set of boundaries, the gallery space is maintained as ‘the inside’ separated from ‘the outside’, intentionally or unintentionally.[92] They include the entrance and interior (architectural boundaries), admission fees (economic boundaries), photography policy and its signage, surveillance measures (behaviour regulations), guiding materials and labelling, artworks, and means of display (cultural boundaries). All these features are viewed as mediators which contribute to the fabrication of the visitor experience (see Roppola, 2012: 11). They can function as 'constructions to facilitate experience' (Prentice, 1996: 166), produced to allow or invite visitor experiences to be lived and performed. They can also, however, become barriers that prevent people from getting inside the space or the artwork. The relationship between atmosphere and the number as well as the type of boundaries is probed. Secondly, significantly, these institutional spaces were not studied as pre-use models, awaiting visitors. Instead, during the ethnographic study, they were lived by visitors who were simultaneously affected by and contributed to the atmospheric properties. Visitor sound, visitor rhythm, visitor flow, visitor photographic movements mingled and interacted with museum sound (the quietness, the sound of audio/video artworks, and often the humming of ventilation), the presence of invigilators, and the effect of interior style. These were recorded and, again, examined in relation to atmosphere. A set of diagrams has been created to accompany each case study: the first shows the boundaries created by and within each institution; the second demonstrates spatial and visitor characteristics. It should be pointed out that the focus in this chapter is chiefly on the impression of each art museum or gallery. Characteristics of visitor movements are discussed in detail in the next chapter. The four sets are compared at the end in order to understand why between these art museums and galleries a difference in atmosphere exists.

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[92] Andreas Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos suggests that the engineering of atmosphere is carried out in four steps and the first is to build up partitioning between outside and inside. The other three are: ‘inclusion of the outside; illusion of synthesis; and dissimulation’ (2016: 150).

### 5.1.1 Walking into the Galleries

### Courtauld Gallery

**Institutional Data**

**Opening hours**: Monday – Sunday [seven days per week]

**Admission**: free for students and members; free for everyone on Monday mornings; entry fee for the general public

**Visitors received**: 181,742 in 2017/18 (1 August to 31 July) [personal communication]

**Gallery staff**: 19 permanent staff members and a team of invigilators from a contracted security company

**History and institutional goal**: The Courtauld Institute was founded in 1932, with a collection presented by Samuel Courtauld. The Courtauld Gallery, together with the Institute, which is a self-governing college of the University of London, was relocated to its current site, the north end of Somerset House, in 1989. The space now used by the Courtauld had historically been used for summer exhibitions of the Royal Academy of Arts, before it transferred to its current Piccadilly site. Closed for an estimated two-year redevelopment project named Courtauld Connects, it aims at improved accessibility. Visitor reception appears to be at the core of this project: not only will the physical space available for visitors to engage with art be doubled—with expanded exhibition rooms, a new learning centre and renewed library, but its collection will be extensively digitised and made available online.[93] As part of the Courtauld Institute of Art, the Courtauld Gallery shares its mission and vision, which is 'to open minds to the power of art as central to human experience'. [94]

**Funding status**: private.

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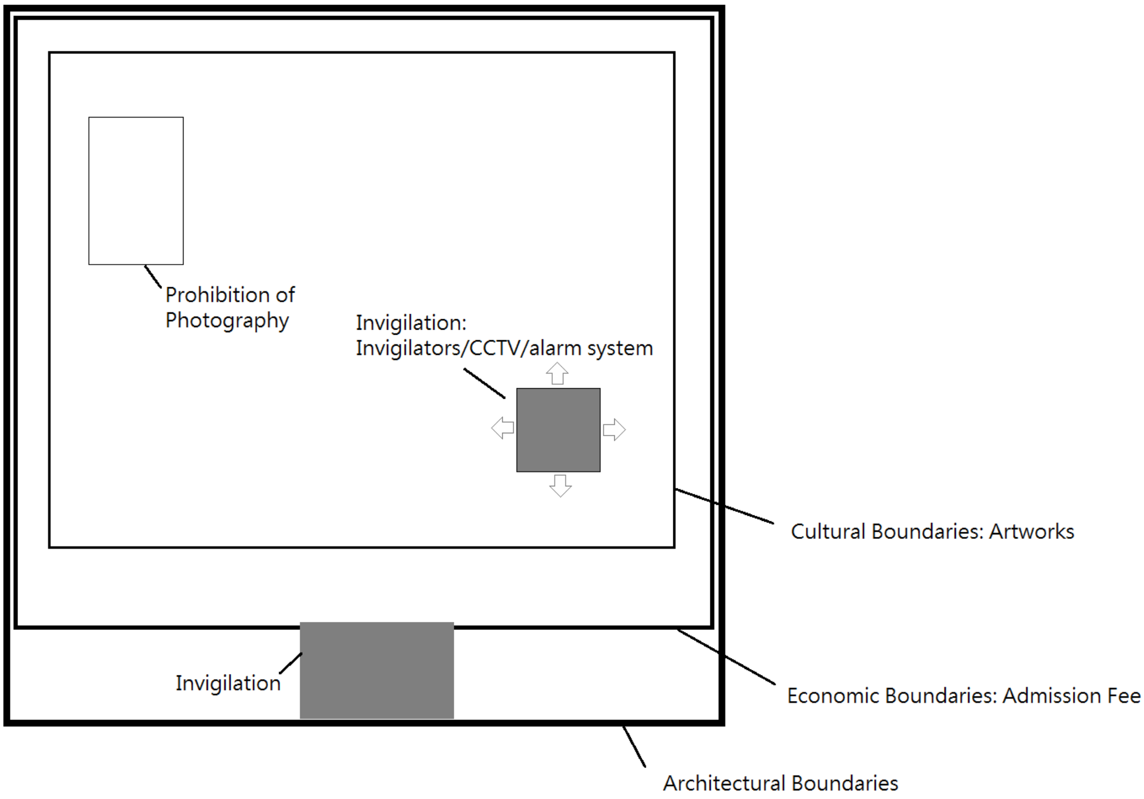
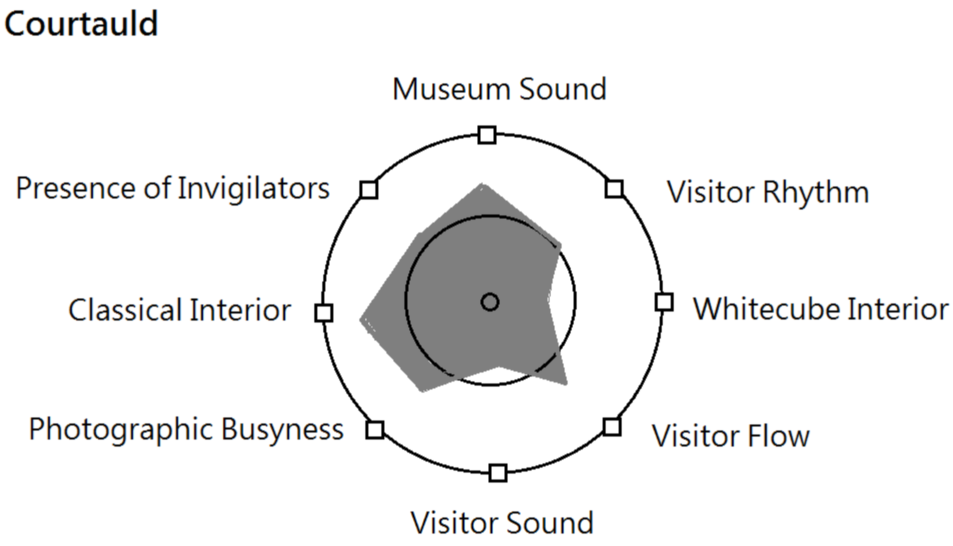
[93] See Courtauld Connects https://connects.courtauld.ac.uk/?_ga=2.200748270.1904464186.1576079599-1136046985.1502713482

[94] Annual Report and Financial Statements for 2017-2018, retrieved from https://courtauld.ac.uk/about/governance

**[Diagram 5.1.1 Boundaries: Courtauld]**


Prohibition of Photography
Invigilation: Invigilators/CCTV/alarm system
Cultural Boundaries: Artworks
Invigilation
Economic Boundaries: Admission Fee
Architectural Boundaries

**[Diagram 5.1.2 Museum-Visitor Characteristics: Courtauld]**[95]



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[95] This diagram was originally inspired by flavour wheels designed for coffee or chocolate tasters which aimed to represent sensory impression – often consisting of not just one single but multiple elements – of a product in one visual image. As an art gallery is experienced as a whole situation instead of separate aspects, it is considered appropriate to endeavour to show all the aspects simultaneously, by combining them in a single diagram. In contrast to tasting coffee or chocolate, the experience of a

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visit is shaped by not only sensory impressions such as sound and rhythm, but by cognitively understood information such as interior style, and the presence of gallery staff—who can be perceived either as a regulating force or assistance. Eight aspects are selected as arguably significant in impacting on one's art museum visit: the volume of museum sound, the volume of visitor sound, the degree of white cube interior style, the degree of classical interior style, the presence of invigilators, the pace of visitor rhythm, the volume of visitor flow, and the volume of visitor photography busyness. The strength of each aspect is represented by the distance of the point marked on the diagram from the centre. The larger the area coloured in grey shade, the more likely the gallery space as a whole is felt by the visitor – and the greater impact the former has on the latter.

Of the four cases, geographically the Courtauld occupies the most central location in London. To its north and west lies the West End, which is frequented by a great number of tourists as well as Londoners and where there are many commercial theatres. To its east are King's College, London School of Economics and Political Science, and the Inns of Court – thus scholars, students, and legal professionals are a familiar sight. To the South runs Waterloo Bridge which connects, across the Thames River, the Southbank Centre which houses the Hayward Gallery, the National Theatre which holds its theatre-relevant exhibitions, and the British Film Institute. People travel here to partake in art and cultural events or to enjoy the facilities—balconies, bars, restaurants, market stalls, shops—provided by this mixture of institutions. It is uncertain which is the better description: that because of the fame of these institutions and attractions, the Courtauld is relatively overlooked, or, that in spite of the crowds surrounding it, remains inconspicuous. Even with banners and posters hanging at the front of the building, its entrance, located on one side of the gateway leading to the grand courtyard of the spectacular Somerset House, is not always noticeable. Notwithstanding a sign, printed with the gallery name and a brief description, signalling to passers-by that this space is open to the public, the heavy double glass doors separating the walkway and the gallery might daunt a first-time visitor into hesitation. This feeling of intimidation, however, is compensated for by the suited security guard standing behind the second door, who often opens the door for visitors with a smile or greeting.

Once across the first boundary—architectural separation—and almost immediately the second boundary—security, one is inside the space and can feel the transition from the hardly ever ceasing streets sounds to the indoor acoustic—visitors' hushed conversations and movements as well the quietness hanging in the air. One is then directed toward the ticket desk, located on the left-hand side of the reception area, to meet the third boundary: the economic (admission is always free for students and for everyone else on Monday mornings). On the wall next to the queuing area, a screen clearly explains the museum's photography rule. Under the headline 'WELCOME', there is an illustration of a camera with barred-flash that announced 'Photography without flash permitted throughout the Gallery except where otherwise stated'.

Upon receiving a ticket, visitors are handed a copy of the Courtauld Plan, which provides information about the facilities and educational programmes as well as a floor plan. Folded into three, the photography rules are listed on the first page: 'Do not use flash, a tripod, or a selfie stick' and 'Do not film'. These prohibitions, together with no touching, are described as 'to help us [Courtauld] care for and protect the artworks on display', while the cautions against eating, drinking, smoking, and talking on mobile phones are 'to ensure all visitors enjoy their visit'. The only area photography is prohibited— separated from the rest of the space by a no-photography boundary—is the special exhibition area on the second floor. The no-photography rule is displayed inconspicuously at one corner of the panel introducing the current exhibition. Not requiring a separate ticket, this area blends into the permanent collection spaces and the difference in its photography policy often goes unacknowledged by visitors.

Before reaching the no-photography boundary, however, visitors first encounter the Courtauld's permanent collection of artworks and negotiated cultural boundaries. The first gallery room, which exhibits medieval and Renaissance works, is located only a few meters away from reception. Many visitors were observed choosing to start from the first floor, where Manet's *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère* is displayed, a photograph of which features on the gallery map received with a ticket. Ascending the spiral staircase located behind reception and itself constantly the focus of photographic activity, has parallels with a pilgrimage. Wandering through the gallery rooms feels like re-visiting a standard art history textbook, with a focus on the European tradition. Famous works by Cézanne, Manet, Gaugin, and Renoir, to name just a few, are adjacent to one another. It appears that the map offered to visitors was designed, while providing information to help visitors locate the position of artworks and to familiarise them with what they saw, so as to not consume large amounts of visitors' time. Labels accompanying each artwork and panels in each room are printed with text which reads like an attempt to initiate viewers' appreciation of artwork from just one or two points. In this way, the Courtauld differs from the Tate's relatively large amount of background information and the compact introductions offered by both Raven Row and the Zabludowicz Collection.

Invigilation in the Courtauld is a visible yet quiet affair. Each of the first and second floors are assigned two invigilators, who either patrol through the rooms or stand in one corner, surveying the space, while both the ground floor and one of the staircase landings have one invigilator each. Dressed formally in suits and ties, their presence is unmissable and their purpose unmistakable. Yet when cautioning visitors against picture-taking in the special exhibitions, rucksacks, or other prohibited behaviours, the invigilators conduct these tasks in a hushed manner, attracting little attention from the other people present. Heavily secured, each work of art is connected to the central alarm system. Peering into the space between a picture frame and the wall, one can see wires of multiple colours. However, like the presence of invigilators, this is also a quiet measure. If triggered, the alarm sounds only in security's head office and CCTC images are consulted. From the outside, visitors see no trace of these alarms. There are no wires preventing visitors from getting close to the artworks, as in the Tate and National galleries. In this way, the Courtauld has been constructed as a space which, while security measures were taken, appears unthreatening.

Of the four case studies, the Courtauld is the farthest from the pure white cube model, especially in the case of the spaces on the ground and first floor. The ceilings are decorated with paintings and reliefs. Theoretically the eye could be occupied or even drawn into contemplation by every corner. However, most visitors were observed to focus their attention mainly—if not solely—on the paintings hanging on the walls and the less frequently appearing sculptures. The grand interior reflects an aristocratic origin. It simultaneously personalises the space and awes visitors. On the one hand, the domestic theme made it possible to imagine personal life taking place here, besides being a place for the untouchable exhibition of art. Moreover, the non-white colours of the walls which subtly changed from one room to another contribute to a feeling of relaxation, unlike the sense of being under a spotlight when entering a pure white space. On the other hand, the grandeur, which most people in society are unable to afford, evokes a sense of alienation. It is also culture-specific, in contrast to the white cube which could feel more international and neutral. Compared with the residential sense given off by the lower levels, the second floor is designed so that the further visitors advance into the space the closer it comes to resembling a white cube gallery. Nonetheless, the ceiling is deliberately not boarded so the original dome, under which, historically, paintings were hung in clusters (when the Royal Academy of Arts occupied the space), can be seen. With this and the view of the decorative spiral staircase, the sense of history and heritage is strong and the atmosphere of the space beneath continues.

## Tate Modern

### Institutional Data

**Opening hours**: Monday – Sunday [seven days per week]

**Admission**: Permanent collection – free; temporary exhibition – free for Tate members, admission fee for the general public.

**Visitors received**: 5,708,646 people in 2017-8 (15,837 people per day)[96]

**Gallery staff**: 'The average number of full-time equivalent (FTE) staff during the year was 1,306'.[97]

**History and institutional goal**: Opened to the public in 2000, shortly before the Millennium Bridge, which enabled pedestrians to cross the River Thames, Tate Modern was the Tate's project for the twenty-first century. As Tate claims, with the other three Tate sites, its 'mission is to increase the public's enjoyment and understanding of British art from the 16th century to the present day and of international modern and contemporary art'.[98] With a ten-storey building added in 2016, spaces are created specifically for performance art, collaboration, and events. It promotes not only different styles of art but also different types of visitor engagement.

**Funding status**: public and private.[99]

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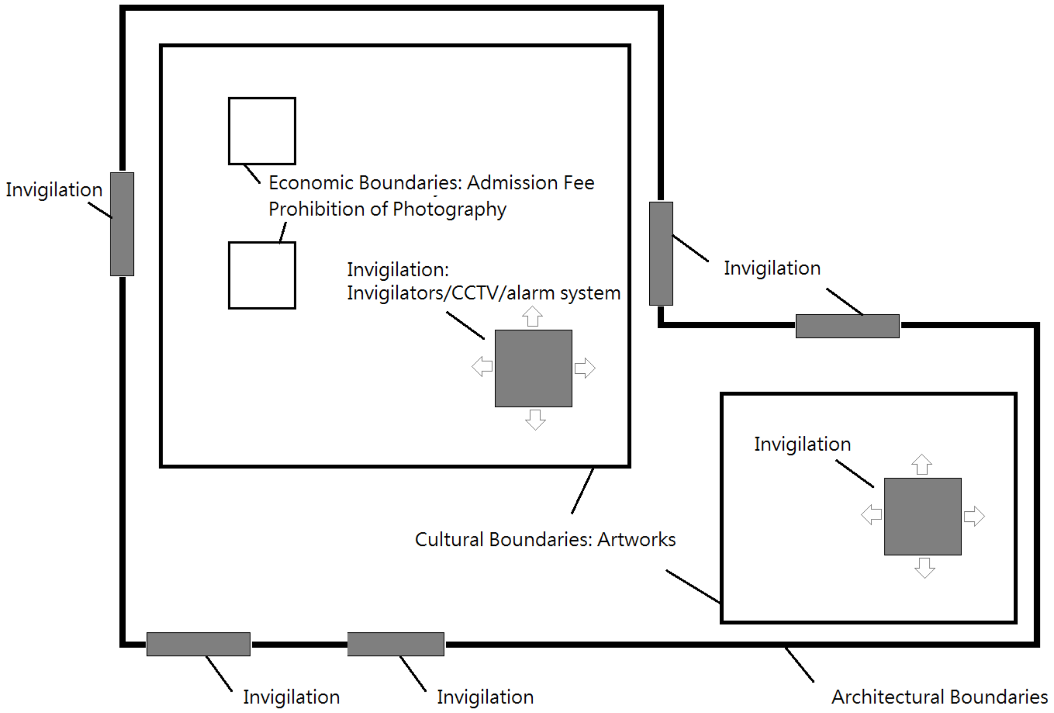
[96] Tate Annual Report 2017-2018: 138-9, retrieved from https://www.tate.org.uk/about-us/tate-reports

[97] The Board of Trustees of the Tate Gallery Annual Accounts 2017-2018: 56
Retrieved from https://www.tate.org.uk › file › tate-annual-accounts-2017-2018

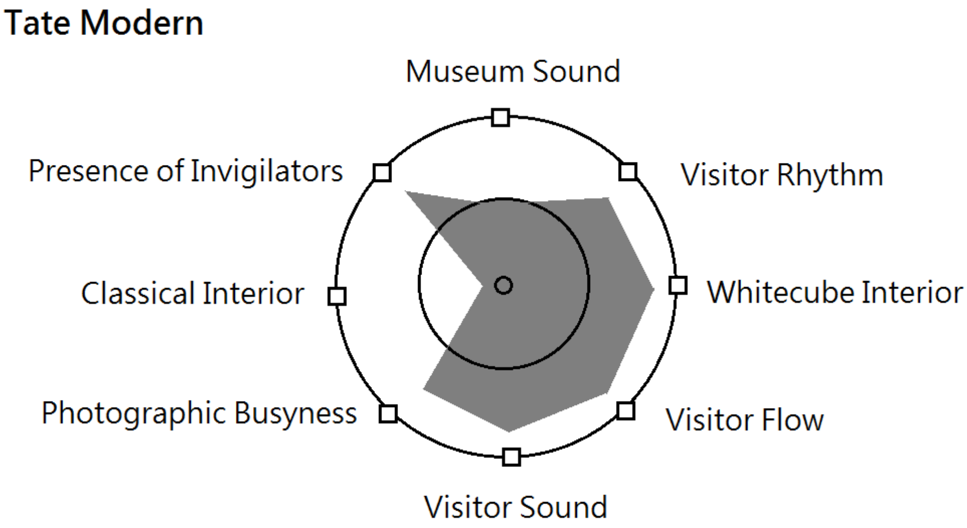
[98] About Tate, retrieved from https://www.tate.org.uk/about-us, see also The Board of Trustees of the Tate Gallery Annual Accounts 2017-2018: 3

[99] About Us, Governance, Tate https://www.tate.org.uk/about-us/governance. See also The Board of Trustees of the Tate Gallery Annual Accounts 2017-2018: 4, 9; Tate Annual Report 2017-2018: 122-123). See also Dewdney et al (2013: 2).

**[Diagram 5.1.3 Boundaries: Tate Modern]**


Invigilation
Economic Boundaries: Admission Fee
Prohibition of Photography
Invigilation:
Invigilators/CCTV/alarm system
Invigilation
Invigilation
Cultural Boundaries: Artworks
Invigilation
Invigilation
Architectural Boundaries

**[Diagram 5.1.4 Museum-Visitor Characteristics: Tate Modern]**



Tate Modern, like many art museums whose physical existence serves as a landmark, announces its location at a volume much louder than the other three cases, architecturally. In contrast to its existence as a disused power station in a relatively humble and unvisited area before its inauguration as an art museum in 2000, the building that became Tate Modern has since been one of the most visible items both along the south bank of the River Thames and on the list of London tourist attractions. The newly added Blavatnik Building, opened to the public in 2016, has raised Tate Modern to another level of spectacle. Approaching it from the Millennium Bridge, which connects it to St Paul's Cathedral on the north side of the Thames, or from either side of the south bank—linking the Southbank Centre to the west and Shakespeare's Globe to the east, visitors can keep Tate Modern within their line of sight without deliberately looking for it. Visitors travelling from the south side can follow the orange-painted lamp-posts, which mark the way from Southwark Underground Station to the gallery. Unlike the Courtauld and Raven Row where entry is a straightforward act of door opening, going inside Tate Modern feels like more a prolonged process: a graduated change of distance and scale. This is because surrounding the building were lawns, snack stalls, and, since October 2017, publicly accessible swings[100]—all the property of the Tate. In other words, before visitors are even inside the building, they are already in the territory of the institution.

The architectural boundaries overlap with the security boundaries: similar to the National Gallery, bag check is conducted upon arrival by security guards wearing suits and fluorescent yellow vests at the five entrance doors. Once situated inside the space, except for the Turbine Hall installation which is not always programmed, visitors are not immediately faced with artworks. Instead, one often becomes part of the crowd lingering around the information desks and gift shops, and sitting or lying around the Turbine Hall. In this way, despite the formality of the security check, the casualness and busy-ness of street life is not blocked out of the space but continues to exist inside.

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[100] These swings were originally part of Hyundai Commission: Superflex One Two Three Swing, located in the Turbine Hall from 3rd October 2018 to 2nd April 2018.

Visitors have to navigate their way to the gallery rooms. Compared with the other three galleries, it is more common to find visitors consulting a copy of the map of Tate Modern. Due to the relatively larger body of information contained, the map–which has £1.00 printed on its cover as a suggested donation—is in fact a booklet, which contains a number of photographs of artworks to illustrate the content of each floor. 'Gallery Guidelines' are introduced on the back cover. Following the no touching, no eating and no drinking rules, the photography regulations state that it is allowed in the main galleries yet 'not permitted at any time' in paying exhibitions.[101] The gallery spaces are largely white cube with—as mentioned previously in the discussion of the pilot study— a distinctly Tate odour.[102] Rarely lacking the sounds of human movement and conversation, the white cube model, whose original purpose was to reduce the body to the eye and emphasise the sole existence of art, feels compromised. Labels often provide background stories while panels introduce artists' biographies or relevant art movements. Besides written materials, the Tate Modern is the only one of the four cases which provides audio-visual guides. Multimedia guides for either the permanent collection or one of the ticketed exhibitions can also be hired. These digital audio-visual guides, which introduce knowledge and information relevant to the displayed artworks, include photographic images, videos, music, commentaries, and interactive games. Visitors often appeared to spend more time reading the introductory text or consulting the multimedia guides than looking at the artworks. This raised a question as to whether, when attempting to assist visitors to find their way in the galleries and to cross the cultural boundaries set up by the artworks, adding more images and sounds to the space distracts visitors from seeing them.

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[101] However, for example, the ticketed exhibition of *Ilya and Emilia Kabakov* (2017-18) saw many visitors freely take pictures without being stopped, even though the no-photography rule was advised at the entrance both verbally and by a sign printed on the door. The same was observed at the *Rachel Whiteread* (2017-18) exhibition at Tate Britain. On its website, relevant advice regarding picture-taking can be found: 'Please respect the rights of other visitors to quiet contemplation and study' (http://www.tate.org.uk/visit/tate-gallery-rules). However, this did not appear in the physical gallery but was passed verbally to visitors.

[102] See also Chapter 3. Odours, which with other spatial characteristics shape experience, might be a result, not of museum professionals' deliberate choices but of decisions made by cleaning companies or interior designers. A number of Tate staff members from the visitor experience department I spoke to invariably appeared puzzled by the mention of the smell, admitting to having never thought about it and suggesting it might be a consequence of applying the same ventilation system, wooden floorboards, or detergents. Professionals from the other three case studies, when asked about the museum smell, expressed similar surprise and acknowledged that this was not included into their planning for exhibitions.

The most exclusive part of the gallery space—the temporary exhibitions—are separated from the rest of the display rooms not only by architectural partitioning, entrance charges, and a ban on photography but by a feeling that the invigilators have a greater presence. Visitor assistants—the institution's preferred title–who either patrolled across the space, stood or sat still at a corner, were dressed in t-shirts of bright colours. This sense of casualness contrasts with the formality of the suits chosen by the Courtauld as uniforms for its security guards. However, the style in which people are cautioned at Tate Modern, compared with the quiet manner favoured by the Courtauld, is more conspicuous. When stopping visitors who violate the no-photograph rule, though some invigilators do it in a hushed manner closer to that practiced at the Courtauld, they more often announce themselves at a volume clearly audible to other people around. Similarly, when alarm wires—set up in front of many of the paintings—are triggered by the proximity of visitors, the sounds pierce the gallery rooms. Even in the less visited rooms or during less busy times, the sound of the alarm is not a rare phenomenon. That visitors are not behaving as they should and that regulation is enforced is therefore made explicit.

**Raven Row**

**Institutional DataOpening hours**: Friday – Sunday [three days per week]

**Admission**: free

**Visitors received**: -*official data remains unavailable due to a change of managerial staff, during which the thread of communication became broken. Data was gathered through unrecorded conversations with gallery staff. There was one time when the number visiting daily was only three. On another day, towards closing time staff claimed that twenty-five visitors had been received, and this was seen by an invigilator to be a relatively good performance.

**Gallery staff**: a team comprised of fewer than ten people.

**History and institutional goal**: The establishment and development of Raven Row is entwined with the personal venture into the art world of the founder, Alex Sainsbury. This venture has involved various art projects, and organised exhibitions since the 90s, but Raven Row is a larger scale commitment to the contemporary art scene. Having a specific preference for contemporary art, the gallery does not aim to promote its exhibitions to the general public but to a relatively small, interested audience. As Sainsbury(2016) remarked: '[t]he kind of art Raven Row exhibits is inevitably of interest to a fairly specialist audience. It's much easier to accept and accommodate that situation here than for publicly funded institutions. Although I try to avoid art speak wherever possible, I can address an audience assuming they are already interested. Raven Row doesn't have a marketing strategy, so people know about it mostly through word of mouth.'[103] **Funding status**: private.[104]

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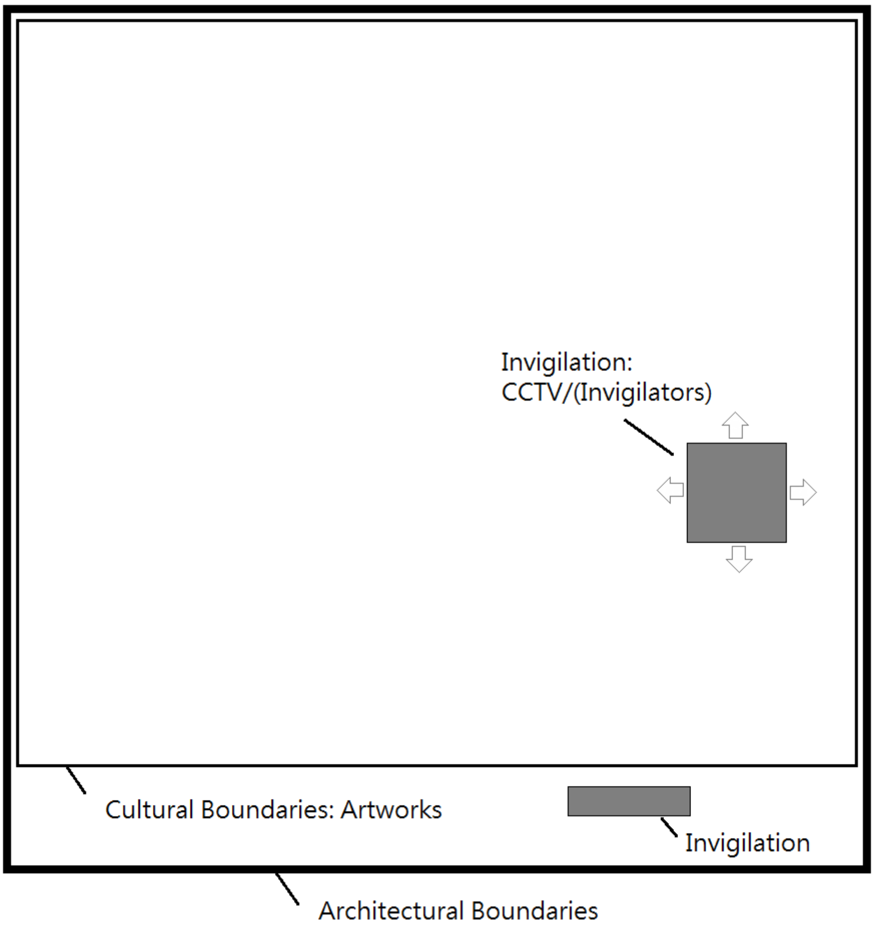
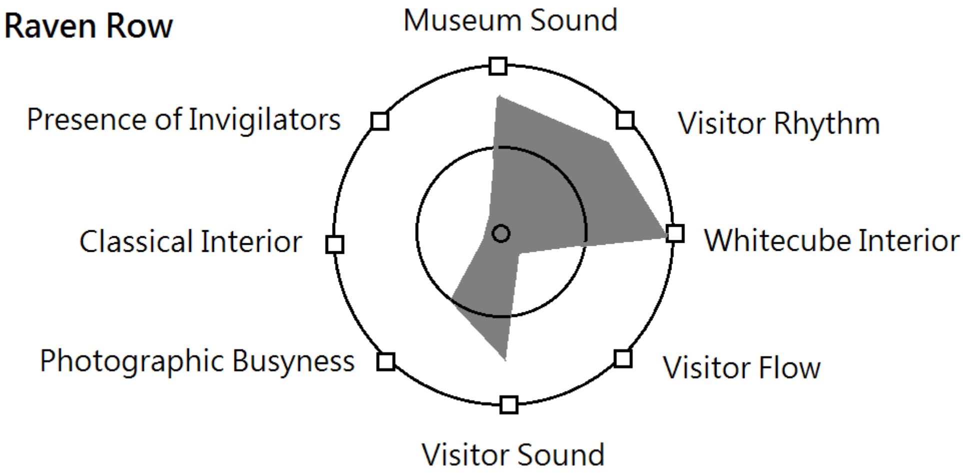
[103] Art Map, 'Interview with Raven Row's Alex Sainsbury (Founder and Director)', 15 September 2016, *FAD Magazine*. Retrieved from https://fadmagazine.com/2016/09/15/interview-raven-rows-alex-sainsbury-founder-director/

[104] 'Raven Row is programmed and funded by its founding director Alex Sainsbury. It is a charitable company with a board currently comprising Alex Farquharson, Director, Tate Britain; Jenni Lomax, former Director of Camden Arts Centre; as well as Alex Sainsbury.'
Retrieved from About, Raven Row http://www.ravenrow.org/about/

**[Diagram 5.1.5 Boundaries: Raven Row]**


Invigilation:
CCTV/(Invigilators)
Cultural Boundaries: Artworks
Invigilation
Architectural Boundaries

**[Diagram 5.1.6 Museum-Visitor Characteristics: Raven Row]**



Situated in a comparatively quiet and low-profile area of Spitalfields, in the north-eastern corner of the financial district of the City of London, Raven Row is the most reclusive of the four. It can be approached from three directions: through a narrow yet increasingly commercially developed alley opposite to the transport hub Liverpool Street Station, or from either direction in a street with fewer tourists than others nearby. The busy-ness of the high street is filtered by the lanes one has to pass before reaching Raven Row. Unlike the Courtauld whose quiet existence is announced by a signpost, Tate Modern, which can be identified from afar, or Zabludowicz whose front fences, glued with bright-coloured posters, distinguish it from neighbouring residential buildings, Raven Row has a muted front and no sign announcing itself to searching visitors. Neither do the closed latticed doors and windows allow much clue about what is inside to be glimpsed from outside. Only a few narrow steps separate the gallery from the pavement. The moment of recognition is immediately followed by the moment of entry. While the architectural boundaries of Courtauld and Tate Modern are marked by the ceremony of security, in the case of Raven Row they are fortified by an ambiguity over its public or private nature. First-time visitors might delay entry due to uncertainty. The obscurity of its exterior, the very opposite of spectacular, in effect adds to the excluding power of the architectural boundaries.

Admission is free, hence there are no economic boundaries. Recognition of the visitor by the invigilator staffing the reception desk is given via a brief hello, a nod, a smile, or a combination of the above. Once past the reception desk, visitors are faced with three options in terms of direction: moving forwards into the most spacious room in the gallery, turning right and ascending the staircase—with artworks hung on its walls—to the first floor, or turning left and entering a gallery room which includes windows facing the street and connected to another staircase leading to the upper floors. Whichever is chosen, visitors encounter the artworks soon after entering.

The gallery space is a white cube model built upon a previously domestic interior. Mantelpieces and bookshelves are still visible but painted white, forming, together with the walls, a background of whiteness. From the ground floor to the top level, Raven Row has many doorframes which connect one room to another and windows which let in views of the outside. One large single-pane window in the gallery room at the rear of the ground floor, especially, introduces into the space the colours of street life: the view is dominated by the bright pink colour scheme of the awning and decoration of a cupcake shop across the tiny street. This, together with a sense of domesticity, reduces the impersonality characterising the laboratory quality of the white cube while the distinct white-cube-ness proclaimed this space one for art and for art only.

Artworks featured at Raven Row are predominantly contemporary. As often practiced in commercial galleries, the label for each artwork is printed with only title, year, and medium used. Further help with understanding is usually in the form of an information sheet or booklet, available free of charge from the reception desk. In the case of Gianfranco Baruchello: Incidents of Lesser Account (29th September – 3rd December 2017)—the last exhibition held before the gallery's temporary closure of unspecified length, the booklet contained a lengthy discussion of the artist's practice by the curator Luca Cerizza and a timeline of the artist's past works and exhibitions. Introduction to individual works on display, however, was absent, leaving visitors to their own devices.

Photography is allowed throughout the gallery. This policy is not particularly mentioned to visitors. Neither are there signs that picture taking and sharing is encouraged, unlike that which can be seen in an increasing number of museums and galleries. While invigilators are often absent from the gallery space except for the reception desk, CCTV is installed in each room and the footage is screened for the invigilator at the reception desk. Each work is encased by either a frame and glazing or a glass case. No further security boundaries are set up between exhibits and viewers. While visitors here might enjoy least convenience in terms of obtaining immediate assistance, they enjoy least supervision as well. The result is a higher possibility of contemplation or alone-time with the works. Nonetheless, the wooden floorboards creak with each step. The sounds seem to reverberate in the gallery spaces emptied of non-art objects and make walkers conscious of their own movements—as well as others'. Visitors' motion can be heard from other rooms and even other floors. Moreover, that attendance remains constantly low means that museum quietness is often 'lounder' than visitor sound. Consequently, when visitor photography is carried out, the shutter sound can be transmitted through the rooms at a clearly audible volume. Arguably, this formed an informal system of self-surveillance, of which the impact depended on the personality and the degree of self-consciousness of each visitor.

## Zabludowicz Collection

### Institutional Data

**Opening Hours**: Thursday – Sunday [four days per week]

**Admission**: free

**Visitors Received**: 3,384 during the 48 days of the *Haroon Mirza/HRM199: for a Partnership Society* exhibition (28th Sep – 17th Dec 2017)[105] (70.5 people per day)

**Gallery Staff**: compromised 15 permanent

**History and institutional goal**: Opened to the public from 2007, Zabludowicz was created by Anita and Poju Zabludowicz, who were listed by the Art News in 2016 as among the world's top 100 art collectors.[106] It often focuses on work by emerging artists (frequently those under 30). The gallery states that its 'programme features initiatives supporting emerging artists and curators including the Invites series, which offers emerging artists without UK commercial gallery representation the opportunity to produce a solo exhibition and event, and Testing Ground, an annual season exploring art and education working with London's premier universities'.[107]

**Funding status**: private.

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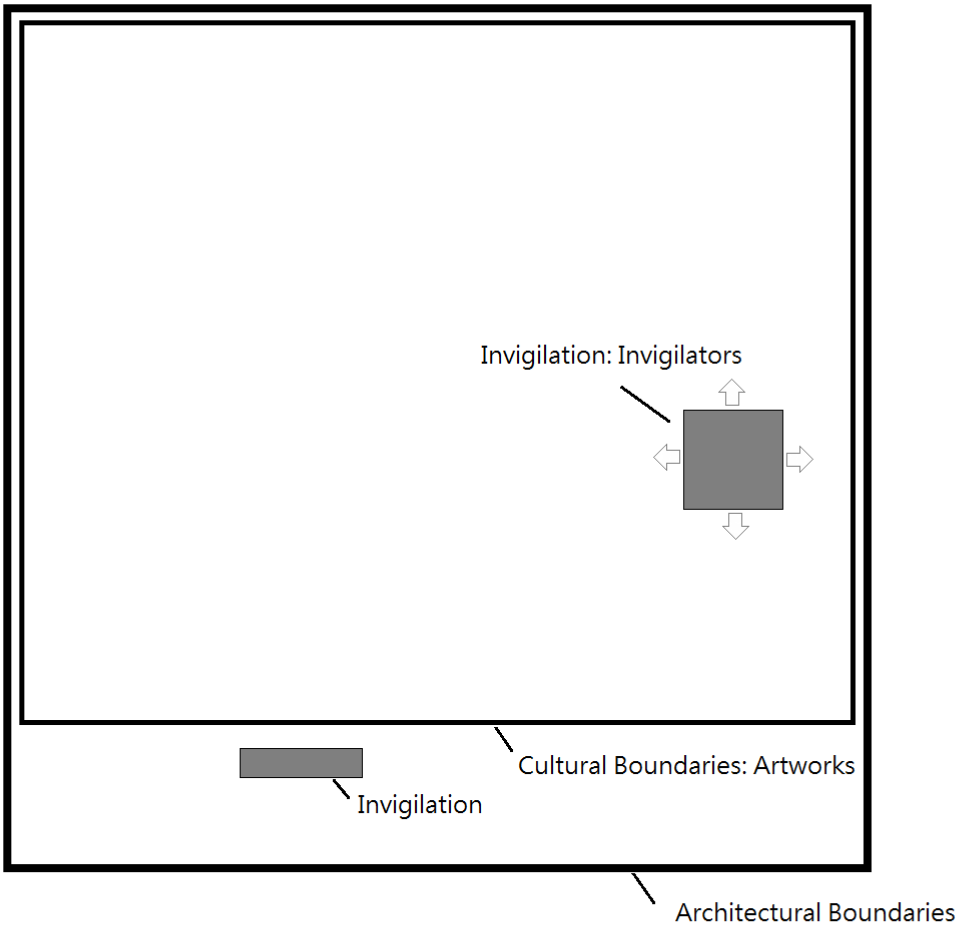
[105] While my ethnographic observation stretched beyond the period of this exhibition, this Haroon Mirza show was especially of interest to me for its use of sounds and videos. Hence there is a focused look at this period.

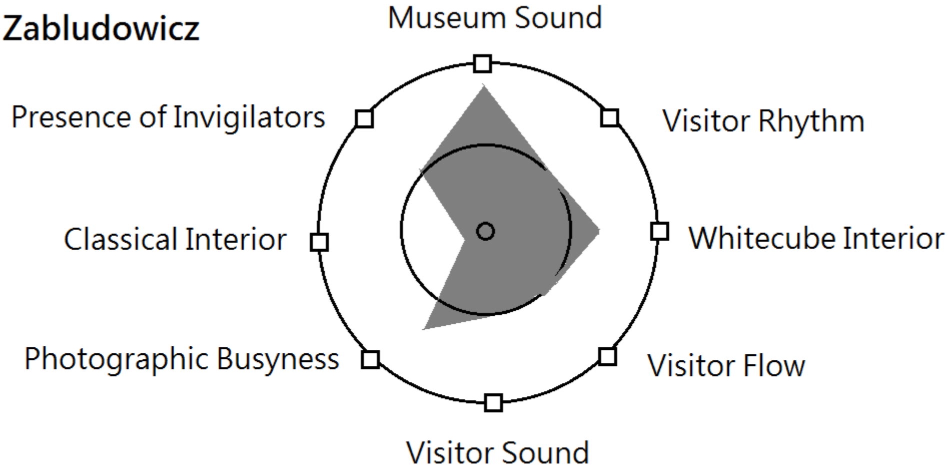
[106] The artnet News Index: The World's Top 100 Art Collectors for 2016, Part Two | artnet News
Retrieved from https://news.artnet.com/market/worlds-top-100-art-collectors-part-two-513953

[107] About, Zabludowicz
Retrieved from https://www.zabludowiczcollection.com/about

**[Diagram 5.1.7 Boundaries: Zabludowicz Collection]**


Invigilation: Invigilators
Cultural Boundaries: Artworks
Invigilation
Architectural Boundaries

**[Diagram 5.1.8 Museum-Visitor Characteristics: Zabludowicz Collection]**



The Zabludowicz Collection is located in a predominantly residential street, where the tourists who frequent neighbouring Camden Town to the South are not seen. Like the Courtauld and Tate Modern, streets signs give directions to the Zabludowicz Collection. Its gate, situated between two fences, is kept wide open during its public hours. Posters of exhibitions and events are glued to the railings in front, which separate the gallery area from the pavement. Yet a yellow noticeboard on which the word 'ART', and an arrow pointing towards the building, are painted in black – linking the street on the one side with the gallery on the other side.  These arrangements announce to people firstly that it is a gallery of art and secondly, that it welcomes visitors. Across the little front yard, café, reception, and gift shop behind a glass wall can be seen clearly. Finding the Zabludowicz is in a way similar to finding the Courtauld because the temporal and physical gaps between the moment of recognition and the moment of entrance are neither as long as in the case of Tate Modern nor as abrupt as in the case of Raven Row. However, as at the Tate Modern, albeit on a much smaller scale, entering Zabludowicz happens gradually. When passing through the gate and crossing the yard, visitors are already in the sphere of the gallery but not yet inside the building.

Entering through one of the glass doors at either end of the glass wall, the sense of surveillance remains faint. Gallery invigilators do not always pay attention to visitors. When there are events—mostly family workshops—taking place or other visitors lingering around reception, the café, or the shop, one might feel even less noticed. Admission is always free of charge, yet the entrances to the exhibitions are not necessarily obvious. In contrast to its front gate which attempts to reassure visitors they have reached their destination and that it is open, gallery rooms are guarded behind closed doors or drawn curtains. Visitors can often be seen hesitating before they push through.

The Zabludowicz maintains a distance from a pure white-cube model. First, housed in and building upon a former Methodist chapel, not only the exterior but the structure of the interior has largely kept its original design. Secondly, its exhibitions are focused on contemporary art and media, and art that requires a dimly lit space is common. Therefore, the gallery rooms often felt more like a black box than a white cube. The *Haroon Mirza/HRM199: For a Partnership Society* exhibition, on which my ethnographic study was largely based, played high volume sound and screened visual media at large scale. Visitors, moving inside the space claimed by sounds and colourful lights, were absorbed by the artwork-architecture complex when taking in the display.

Often including artists in their twenties, artworks on display here require a kind of looking rather different from that of the Courtauld or even Tate Modern collections. Appreciation of the works at the Courtauld has been well established and disseminated through the formal or informal schooling system, and the fame and prestige possessed by some of the pieces invite visitors to look and consider the reasons for their renown—the same could be said of Tate Modern, albeit perhaps to a lesser degree. Yet at Zabludowicz, viewers had a lesser cultural compass to steer through the experience. Like Raven Row, minimalist labels were compensated for by information sheets available from reception.

Photography is usually permitted, though there are occasional cases where artists decide against it. Like Raven Row, the photography-welcome rule was not publicised in written words. Each room had one invigilator, often concentrating on her/his books or mobiles. In the dark space containing the exhibitions, invigilators have a less conspicuous existence.

There appears to be no CCTV and no alarm system connected to or surrounding each exhibit. As the bodies of both visitors and invigilators constantly remained less visible, a sense of relaxation was allowed in the gallery space.

### 5.1.2 Atmosphere Determinants: Threshold and Quietitude

Returning to the first question raised at the beginning of the last section—about what makes an art museum 'feel' like one, it was observed that a sense that the space serves the sole purpose of exhibiting artworks is significant, regardless whether admission was free or charged for. That selling is not on the agenda differentiates non-profit art museums and galleries from commercial galleries not only nominally, but also infuses the space with a unique atmosphere. This is so because the space is situated on the periphery of the unavoidable commerce of the everyday. Artworks, many of which appear ambiguous in terms of their role and purpose in the world, remain objects to be seen rather than to be purchased and thus whose utility is left open to question and interpretation. This is possibly how Bourdieu's idea of the pure, disinterested gaze can happen. Arguably, visitors know that the space they enter is non-profit not necessarily simply because they 'feel' it but because they are told so. Moreover, as a staff member of a Mayfair based commercial gallery pointed out during our conversation regarding the said gallery's resemblance to an art museum, increasingly some commercial galleries organise their spaces and exhibitions in line with the latter.[108] Yet 'knowing' itself is one factor in visitor behavioural modes which in turn contributes to the formation of a museum atmosphere. At the same time, that commercial galleries might have been blurring the line between them and non-profit museums in terms of spatial arrangements in effect shows that the latter originally forms a distinct category.

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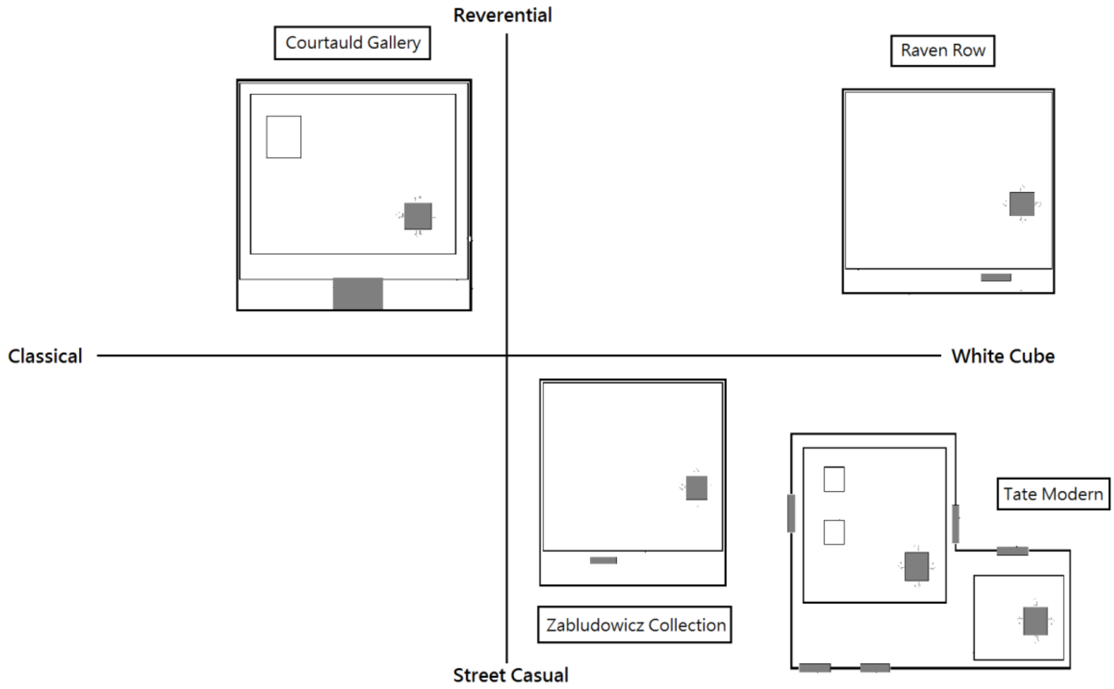
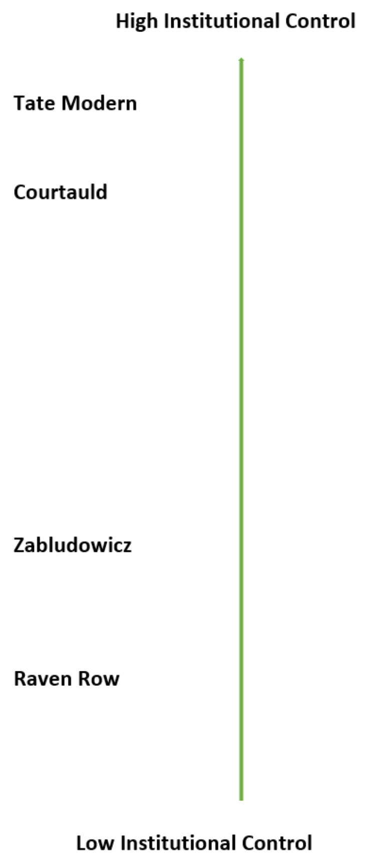
[108] He did not disclose, however, in what way this change was achieved.

**[Diagram 5.2.1 Locating Art Museums and Galleries (II)]**


Reverential
Courtauld Gallery
Raven Row
Classical
White Cube
Tate Modern
Zabludowicz Collection
Street Casual

**[Diagram 5.2.2 Institutional Control]**



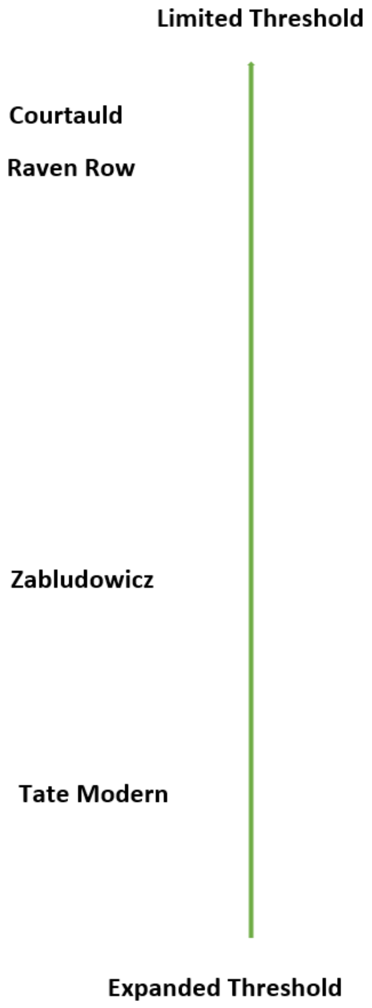
As to the second question, concerning the difference 'felt' in each art museum and gallery, an answer has been reached through comparing findings from the four case studies. Firstly, placing the diagrams of boundaries set up in each case onto the interior-atmosphere grid, reveals no correlation between the quantity of boundaries and atmospheric characteristics [see Diagram 5.2.1]. Both Tate Modern and the Courtauld impose more formal control measures on their spaces and visitors [see Diagram 5.2.2]. However, while the latter appears like a reverential museum, the former gives an impression closer to that of street life. At the same time, Raven Row, which had minimalist regulations, resembles far more closely the conventional type of gallery that invites quiet viewing. This is so not because Tate Modern deliberately encourages its visitors to talk at street volume or walk at street speed. Nor did Raven Row intimidate its visitors into tiptoeing.  The reason lies elsewhere. The idea of threshold is useful for investigating this issue. Quentin Stevens, a scholar of urban design, states that 'A threshold is a point where the boundary between inside and outside can be opened: space loosens up, and a wide range of perceptions, movements and social encounters become possible' (2007: 73). This can be linked to Goffman's theorisation of spaces concerning the tightness and looseness of behavioural regulations:

> '…there may be one over-all continuum or axis along which the social life in situations varies, depending on how disciplined the individual is obliged

> to be in connection with the several ways in which respect for the gathering and its social occasion can be expressed.[…] The terms “tight” and “loose” might be more descriptive and give more equal weight to each of the several ways in which devotion to a social occasion may be exhibited’ (1963:199-200).

**[Diagram 5.2.3]**

**Threshold versus Atmosphere**



Acting as a blurred line between outside and inside, threshold is an area where there is less demand for respect or carefully checked behaviour. It is possible that the more space the threshold is allowed to occupy, the stronger the casual atmosphere caused by behavioural looseness becomes and the more likely it is to spread into the rest of the gallery space. Both Courtauld and Raven Row have their cultural boundaries set close to the architectural boundaries. That is, once visitors cross the latter, they are soon met with artworks. Thresholds in these cases occupy limited space. This differs from Tate Modern and Zabludowicz where visitors enter communal and commercial spaces before reaching gallery rooms: the entrance hall, cafes, and gift shops.[109] Diagram 5.2.3 shows that the Courtauld and Raven Row, both located high up along the threshold continuum, also occupy the zone of reverential space [see Diagram 5.2.1]. The relation between the size of the threshold and the atmosphere of the space is thus clear.

Secondly, museum-visitor characteristics do not appear to be particularly relevant to the type of atmosphere [see Diagram 5.2.4]. However, what is not displayed on the diagrams but was found significant in the formation of atmosphere is the degree of quietness. As shown on the diagrams of museum-visitor characteristics, I position the idea of museum sound against visitor sound, to show which exerted a greater influence in the gallery space. In general, all but Tate Modern had museum sound greater than visitor sound. In other words, when walking in the Courtauld, Raven Row, or Zabludowicz, one was more likely to feel being enwrapped by the museum or gallery instead of having an impression of visitors taking over the space. However, since I consider sounds generated by artworks part of museum sound, the diagram of Zabludowicz [Diagram 5.1.8] does not show that its overpowering museum sound came from audio and video works. While in the case of the Courtauld and Raven Row, museum sound meant relative quietness, in the case of Zabludowicz it was loud beats. Adding this factor to the examination of spatial atmosphere, quietness was found to contribute to a reverential atmosphere[110] [111]. What makes quietness possible includes both a relatively low ratio of spatial size to visitor numbers and people's hushed behaviour—both museum staff and visitors—which itself is simultaneously affected by the atmosphere. That is, the fewer people present in the gallery space to make sounds and the fewer people in the gallery space who actually make sounds, the more likely it is that people in the gallery check their behaviours and avoid being conspicuous. Either one wishes not to attract attention to oneself or to reduce disturbance to others, and this effort to keep quiet contributes to the atmosphere of reverence, which is in contrast to the casualness of the street.

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[109] This is also the case at the Pompidou and the Louvre, for example. This kind of trend also seems to be welcomed by newly built museums. For instance, the Design Museum which moved to Holland Park in London in late 2016, and V & A's Dundee branch, opened in 2018.

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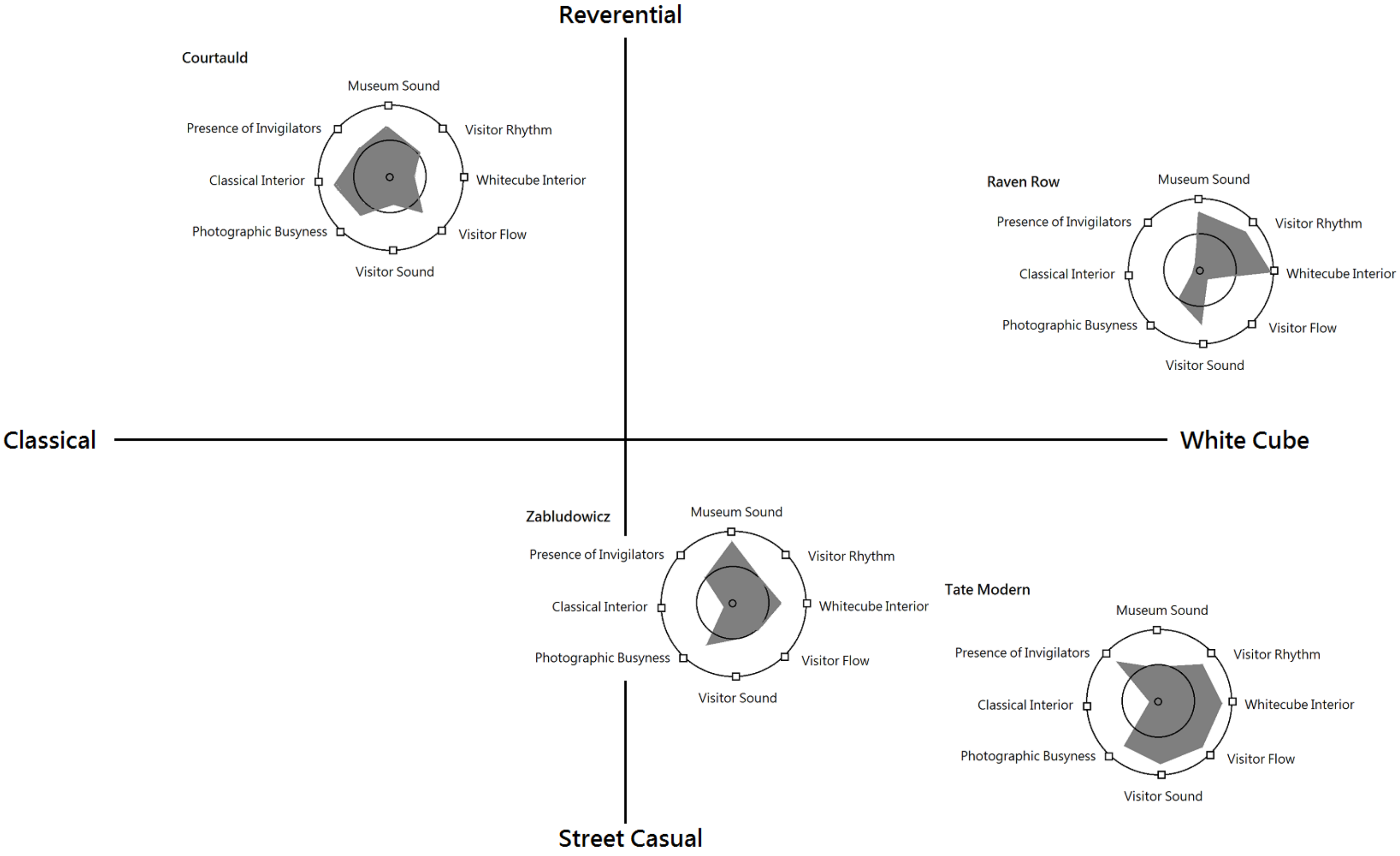
[110] The quiet box of the art museum is closer to a library and further from a department store and shopping mall. The first group assembles and displays collections and allows short-term engagement; the second, while also showcasing objects, endeavours to encourage possession. Admittedly, there are differences between libraries and art museums. Firstly, in libraries, browsing books which allows tactile contact is a legitimate activity and taking books out of libraries is possible, albeit temporarily. In art museums and galleries, however, the usual no-touching rule keeps visitors at distance from artworks. Secondly, while searching for books and browsing bookshelves might induce slowness of bodily movements, in libraries we do not see the slow lingering performed by visitors in art museums. However, they both, through the existence of quietness, maintain an atmosphere of reverence.

[111] Taking photographs of books in libraries, nonetheless, does not seem a common phenomenon. It is worth exploring in future research whether this might be because books, in contrast to artworks, are perceived as non-extraordinary objects, that touching is permitted, which renders the encounter less remarkable—less photographic-recording-worthy, or that books are not considered to bear the one-of-a-kind-ness that original artworks do (though first or rare editions might draw photographic interest).

**Diagram 5.2.4 Locating Art Museums and Galleries (III)**



### 5.2 Professional Mediation

While the art museum or gallery, as a whole, serves as an experiential environment in which numerous properties co-shape visitor experience, the supposed main purpose of the institution as well as the visit is the art. On the one hand, curators arrange the display of artworks so that visitors are oriented towards or allowed to see art from particular angles. On the other hand, a group of professionals including educators, visitor experience experts, and invigilators direct visitors' contact with the curatorial theses. The work of these mediators is examined in the following two sections, through which the relationship of each with visitor experience and visitor photography is revealed.

#### 5.2.1 Presenting Artworks to the Public: Curatorial Framing

Curators, compared with educators, visitor experience professionals, and invigilators, are the least physically visible to the public yet the most powerful decision makers in the exhibition of artworks. Their chief objective is to decide how the artworks will be seen by visitors. While usually not directly telling visitors how to conduct their visual appreciation, curators' arrangement of artworks in the gallery space encourages some types of intelligent and physical approach towards them. For example, some sculptures are deliberately not encased so as to invite a visitor experience which is 'intimate'. Or (as at the Soutine exhibition at Courtauld), paintings may be hung lower than usual, so they are at the visitor's eye level and a 'very personal relationship' can be established. It is thus important to understand where visitor photography stands in the curatorial plan. This section focuses on how photography plays a role in curatorial work and how visitor photography is regarded by curators.

### Curators and Photography

First of all, curators themselves are not unfamiliar with photographic images of artworks. Despite the establishment and increasing fame of degree courses in curating in recent decades—the Courtauld Institute has an MA course in Curating the Art Museum, curators at major institutions are still largely trained in the discipline of art history. The use of photographic copies of artworks for the purposes of teaching, learning, and researching art history is common practice. That might explain why curators do not appear particularly alarmed by the changed colours, sizes, and textures of photographically reproduced images. They admit that reproduced images skewed understandings and expectations of artworks, yet this has to be accepted as there are no alternatives. Dr Karen Serres, Courtauld's Schroder Foundation Curator of Paintings, reflected that,

> *'… photographs in art history…we mostly used slides [in the past], seeing this work in really big [scale] and in really bright [shade]. Even now with PowerPoint it's usually very bright screen and very big. I find it really problematic because it gives you a completely false sense of scale, everything is in the same size and super bright… such a different experience from the museum itself. So the problem is when you see the original you feel it's not it at all. You just have to adjust the whole expectation...But how else are you going to learn?'*
>
> (Dr Karen Serres, personal communication, April 30, 2018)

Since neither works nor viewers travel as easily and instantly as wished, photography remains an indispensable tool for documentation and information. It continues to occupy a role in the professional process of curation. London based curator Omar Kholeif, in his book, even stated that *'As a curator, I have come to depend on these reproductions in order to consider what original works to include in an exhibition. Sometimes, an image prompts me to visit a work in person; other times, a reproduced image is all I need to request having it sent to my museum'* (2018: 102). One curator, who showed a deep distain for photographic seeing during our interview, also revealed his own use of photographic recording when visiting the studios of artists whose works he planned to exhibit.

### Curation of Artworks and Visitor Photography

Curatorial work can be seen as creating the situation in which artworks are approached by visitors. The precondition, as Dr Alexander Gerstein and Dr Karen Serres pointed out, is that the safety of artworks can be guaranteed. At the same time, research was considered by one curator to be his primary task,

> *'[The curator] has to research the particular knowledge about the artistic practice. For most serious curators, an exhibition is much more importantly understood in terms of its preparation instead of installation. After all, the installation is a very small part of the exhibition making. There's a lot of research going into it.'*
>
> (personal communication, January 24, 2018)

This is followed by the transmission of the curator's understanding of the artworks through their presentation to the public within a range of constraints. The goal is, to borrow Dr Karen Serres' words, 'having the collection seen properly, making it accessible'. The idea of experience was found central to curators' reflection on this process. One curator of contemporary art considered that,

> *'The art in the context of this space, on this site, is what I'm very conscious of. The idea of trigger of beauty…art functions as a trigger of aesthetic,*

> *intellectual, emotional experiences…the idea of exhibition as a trigger of those visitor experiences is very important to me'*
>
> (personal communication, January 24, 2018)

Echoing this, Paul Luckraft, curator of the Zabludowicz Collection and trained in Fine Art, detailed his objectives as,

> *'To divide the space, to have the physical experience you want for visitors…to show the works at their best. How to convey the sensation you want the work to convey…I think allowing, inviting people to this space and experience things is the key. Despite my worries about the word experience itself which can sound a bit didactic and educational, I would say it's important…You want your space to be activated by people…People taking the time to step out of the street and into the gallery space is definitely something you want to encourage…Not to say we should divide art from the everyday, but…a slight switch from daily routine, daily experience, daily looking into taking a bit more time or looking something differently in a gallery space, I think it's crucial. So experience is something we think about, although we don't use that word so much here.'*
>
> (Paul Luckraft, personal communication, February 16, 2018)

In this process of designing the physical relationship between the artwork and the space, visitor photography did not appear to be taken into consideration. However, whether the construction of imaginary images of exhibition during the curatorial planning has been affected by the ubiquity of photographic seeing remains a question.

> *'Probably in my mind I think of a still image [of the exhibition]…I think increasingly we…certainly me…when going to an exhibition, take quite a lot of photographs, almost as research, to remember things that caught*

> *my eye. I think having that in mind does probably inform how you set up a space, like a frame…framing a space. But certainly I wasn't thinking…certainly isn't led by the idea of documentation'.*
>
> (Paul Luckraft, personal communication, February 16, 2018)

**Curators and Visitor Photography**

While not actively participating in the formation of photography policy, curators I interviewed, unanimously, had no objection to an open photography policy. That visitors should not be regulated in terms of ways of experience was a shared opinion:

> '*You want the gallery space to be quite an open space where hopefully people would be intrigued and want to spend some time looking…you can't tell people how to look at something or spend time with something'.*
>
> (Paul Luckraft, personal communication, February 16, 2018)

Moreover, Paul Luckraft continued to reflect that each act of seeing would differ from others, with or without picture-taking:

> *'I'm not necessarily concerned. It's very hard to assert the artwork exists in only one form anyway. Because everyone sees it through different eyes. For a colour painting, it's determined by the viewer of the painting…If you're very much into the idea that art is all about the one-to-one experience of space and time, and that engagement, I would say it's an interesting position but perhaps a bit romanticised. More realistic is that*

> *a work is put into a physical space and it's really a quite open field. People will bring different things to it.'*
>
> (Paul Luckraft, personal communication, February 16, 2018)

However, it was also pointed out that the freedom to take pictures could be allowed only when certain preconditions were met. Firstly, in line with the priority when arranging an art exhibition, the safety of works should not be compromised. Secondly, the artist's wish should be respected, and copyright should be observed. Thirdly, someone's picture-taking activity 'should not ruin others' experience' (Dr Karen Serres, personal communication, April 30th, 2018). The last requirement, nonetheless, could be fulfilled less through regulation than with visitors' voluntary corporation:

> *'It can become quite difficult if a visitor is trying to spend some time walking in different ways and is distracted by people taking lots of photos or blocking the viewpoint or…I think it's kind of an etiquette of behaviours you hope people will follow.'*
>
> (Paul Luckraft, personal communication, February 16, 2018)

Respecting—or tolerating—the need to take pictures, however, does not necessarily mean curators consider photographic seeing equal to direct looking. It was observed that each curator's attitude towards photographic seeing as a way of experiencing artworks was related to her/his own use of photography both when visiting art exhibitions and in everyday life. It appeared that the more likely one was to take pictures, the less s/he was likely to see visitor photography as problematic. The strongest objection came from one curator who limited his use of a photographic device to documentation of either possible exhibits for his shows or his children. Photography as a way of seeing or a form of memory was viewed as inferior and insufficient.

> *'I find photography very limiting to memory...I use photography as aide-memoire. I use photography for my children… when I visit [artists] to document what I've seen. But I don't photograph exhibitions to remember them…I think it an inadequate way to store information…You can't experience when you're looking at your camera. You can only look with your own eyes which have a much more expansive view than the camera. They understand space…and proximity. They are much better judges than the lens, which is a very two-dimensional, very narrow gaze[s]…I think the real problem with photography…well there are lots of problems with it…but one of the problems is that it impacts negatively on the viewer's experience. It's a fake experience…The privilege should overwhelmingly be the looking, not taking photographs.'*
>
> (personal communication, January 24, 2018)

This view that direct looking should take first place was echoed by others who had less strong objection towards experiencing the artwork through the lens. Each visit being a limited temporal period was recognised and how the time should be allocated between direct seeing and picture-taking became an issue:

> *'I do [take photographs] sometimes if I want to remember something specifically. But…if I have a limited amount of time, I'd rather spend it looking closely than thinking what photos I should take.'*
>
> (Dr Karen Serres, personal communication, April 30, 2018)

> *'…the negative connotation is spending a shorter time taking photographs instead of spending five minutes looking at the work. One probably won't look at the photos again.'*
>
> (Paul Luckraft, personal communication, February 16, 2018)

At the same time, however, that picture-taking could contribute to a personal relationship between the viewer and the work was also considered. If one is actively involved in choosing subjects and deciding framing,

> '*You do look closely, through the frame, the lens, or the screen, you do spend more time composing the shot. That can make things stay longer perhaps. So I think taking photographs isn't necessarily an aberration of the duty of looking. It could be an additional process.'*
>
> (Paul Luckraft, personal communication, February 16, 2018)

> *'I think it does force you to look in a different way. When you take photos, you have to think about what you're going to take, how close you're going to come in…it just makes you think that much more. Also because it's you who takes the images instead of having a photocopy of an image taken by someone else. It has a different sense of appropriation. And when you*

> *come back to look at it, you just have this kind of personal, intimate connection with it.*’
>
> (Dr Karen Serres, personal communication, April 30, 2018)

While both positive and negative impacts of visitor photography were identified and contemplated by curators during the interviews, it was observed that these issues did not yet really exist at a conscious level in their daily work. Nonetheless, as Dr Karen Serres pointed out, a new moment appeared to be occurring. Whether curators will have a more active relationship with visitor photography in the future requires further and extensive observation.

### 5.2.2 Delivering the Exhibition of Art

Once the curatorial work has been realised and the exhibition spaces are open for visitors to enter, curators, who like Dr Alexander Gerstein might from time to time come into the gallery rooms and observed how visitors engage with the display, most often would not be at the exhibition to oversee the visitor experience. On the one hand, as Paul Luckraft expressed previously, curators might wish or expect the curated gallery space to be ‘an open field’. On the other hand, an exhibition is rarely left unsupervised, unmanned, or unassisted. There are, instead of curators, professionals who are present and responsible for visitor orientation and regulation, both physical and intellectual. These professional works are the means adopted to maintain the curatorial intention and the order of the exhibition’s interior. This section uncovers the professional work surrounding the completed curatorial project, its functions for and impact on visitor experience, and their relations—or lack of relations—with visitor photography.

**Bridging through Educational Programmes**

In the past decade there has seen a conscious call for and an increasing focus on accessibility and inclusivity (see Lahav, 2011; Nomikou, 2011; Simon, 2010). That understanding and appreciating artworks should be an experience friendly to a wider audience appeared in conferences, news platforms, and scholarly publications. The objective is to initiate the visitor into both the art museum's space and into the artworks as understood by curators. In other words, efforts have been made to invite new visitors and assist existing visitors to enter curated situations. The Courtauld and Tate Modern have departments dedicated to education; the Zabludowicz Collection has a Public Programme which includes, besides performances, education-based events like talks, tours, and family workshops; Raven Row has no education sector in its organisation yet sometimes holds artist's talks to accompany its ongoing exhibitions. The professionals responsible might go under various titles, yet the delivery of educational programmes could be observed at each institution. The purpose of educational work, to use words of Stephanie Christodoulou, Programme Manager of Gallery Learning at the Courtauld, is to 'help visitors see the collection and exhibitions' (personal communication, February 12, 2018).

The work relationship between the educational and the curatorial was one which was not distant yet often one-way. As Christodoulou explained,

> *'…so in conjunction with them [the curatorial department]. So we plan the curator's talk and they deliver the talk. We negotiate and plan the dates with them. There're teacher's packs and we interview them…And we have*

> *to keep a good eye on the movement of artworks in gallery [changed by curators] because of our tours for the general public and school groups.'*
>
> (Stephanie Christodoulou, personal communication, February 12, 2018)

It appeared that most of the time—if not always—it would be the educational professionals who designed programmes based on the curated display instead of the curators who incorporated the former's works into their designs.

That photography was of interest to visitors received a greater—though still limited—response from educational programme designers than from curators. As an answer to visitors' photographic desire for both the artworks and the self, Tate offered a one-off event #TateSelfie School at Tate Britain in 2014[112] and a course in mobile photography of artworks and museum space at its newly opened Switchhouse in 2016,[113] both taught by photographer Oliver Lang.[114] However, these remain two exceptions at Tate Modern among its wide ranging programme. At the same time, the Courtauld and Zabludowicz both incorporated photography as material and a source of inspiration into their events, yet the photographic seeing did not focus on artworks. For example, at Courtauld,

> *'We do have photography projects as well with our learning groups. But not taking photographs of the collection. We work with photographers and artists and we look at self-portraiture. We look at themes of identity*

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[112] #TateSelfie School
http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-britain/performance-and-music/late-tate-britain-april-2014

[113] Re-framing Tate Modern through Mobile Photography
http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/courses-and-workshops/re-framing-tate-modern-through-mobile-photography

[114] Other instances of activities based on selfie-taking can see the creation of a social media wall on its website for visitors to post selfies taken at its opening exhibition *Wonder* by the Renwick Gallery, belonging to the prominent Smithsonian Institute (Adam, 2016). Its curator Nicholas R. Bell was reported to say personally (thinking of this show), which included nine immersive installation works, as a 'selfie-heaven' (Bowley, 2015). There is also the Museum Selfie Day, announced for the first time on a museum professionals supported website Culture Themes, urges the sharing of selfies taken in museums on social media platforms by using #MuseumSelfie (Daniel, 2015)[114]. It began in 2014 and has continued till today. Since this research focuses primarily on the photographing of the artwork instead of the self, discussion will concentrate on the former.

> *in the collection and from that we take portraits of young people…but it's not in our normal programme.'*
>
> (Stephanie Christodoulou, personal communication, February 12, 2018)

While at the Zabludowicz Collection,

> *'…loads and loads of photography-based things. So for example…we've done animation workshops. We took photos and turned them into flipbooks. Or taking photos and printing them out, and collaging on top. We've also done some video-based workshops.'*
>
> (Shirley McNeil, personal communication, February 15, 2018)

That is, seeing artworks through picture-taking had not yet come to be treated as a subject around which educational events could be developed, although there were exception to this such as the Photo Hunt event at Columbus Museums of Art, as mentioned in Chapter 2.2.1, which had the curatorial and education departments collaborate and made visitor photography activities an indispensable part of the exhibition.

**Mediation by Visitor Experience Services**

At the same time, there is an increasing emphasis on caring for visitor comfort, physically and psychologically. While this mission was often already part of the responsibility of invigilators, it was given growing focus and museums like the Courtauld and Tate Modern had created special positions. In the case of the Courtauld, the installation of the Visitors Services and Operation Manager in 2013 allowed the museum to have a more direct connection with visitors and a tighter control over visitor experience,

> *'I'm the first person to do this role in this gallery…Before I started, part of the role I do now was done by the retail manage* [who] *worked for the trading company instead for the Courtauld directly. So there was very little control from the gallery team over visitor experience… the final push to*

> *recruit* [me] *came around because we had an extremely busy exhibition back to 2013 which was the Picasso exhibition…They felt the staffing they had in place - and how the structure - it was what the retail manager was doing, not being able to spend much time on visitors in the gallery…So it was very much shifted to the visitor, customer experience rather than just having a quiet gallery with people sometimes coming into, very informal, which has its place, but we've seen such huge increase of visitors and felt the need of being professionalised and somebody takes care of visitors coming in… focusing on any sort of visitor services strategies.'*
>
> (Caireen McGinn, personal communication, February 2, 2018)

Also consciously making visitor services a profession, Tate Modern initiated a far bigger scheme to tackle its concern with visitor experience: a whole department called Visitor Experience came into existence. Annie Bedford and Dickon Moore, Information Manager and Visitor Experience Manager—both of the Visitor Experience Department, explained that,

> *'The Visitor Experience Department is made of four teams: Ticketing Assistants, Visitor Assistants who talk to visitors in the gallery, Information Assistants who are at the information desk in the gallery, and also take switchboard calls, respond to every single feedback Tate gets, and they also have internal communication roles – about 700 people working at the front of house at Tate talking to visitors and promoting Tate's programmes and the Information Team supplies them with relevant information, and Volunteer Team who provide guided tours every*

> *single day at both sites [Tate Modern and Tate Britain] and welcome visitors at the entrances.'*
>
> (Annie Bedford and Dickon Moore, personal communication, February 20, 2018)

What also distinguished Tate's Visitor Experience Team was that it had steered towards a collaborative relationship with the curatorial department, although the curatorial planning was still a relatively individual process:

> *'We used not to work with them at all. But now it's kind of recognised that consideration of the way people experience artworks is a vital part of the decision making process of how that artwork is going to be hung, which artwork is chosen…We haven't quite got to the stage where the perspective of the visitor experience is fundamental to the initiation of a project or the decision making process surrounding the exhibition say with the curatorial team. But I think that's probably where we're going. In the end it would be integral and decisions and ideas would be made on whether they work on the visitor perspective…I hope that would come. At the moment…The curatorial team are thinking about that more and more. We're embedding the idea of the prioritisation of the visitor.'*
>
> (Dickon Moore, personal communication, February 20, 2018)

All four art museums and galleries expressed their objective concerning visitors as providing an experiential environment which would be more inviting and less restricted. Yet their definitions of this ideal and their means of achieving it differed. At Raven Row, it meant minimisation of invigilation and therefore less supervision by gallery assistants. In the case of Zabludowicz, the wish was to send out welcoming messages and actively offer visitors information,

> *'A friendly one…We try to greet every visitor who comes into the gallery. This is not your average white cube space. It's quite a difficult space to navigate…So it's just kind of making sure people are as informed as possible when they come in. So it'll be a comfortable experience. Not a lot of people like to…have to approach people to ask for directions. So it's like giving as much information you can at the beginning. We also like to have staff present at all the rooms so if people do need any further information…So yeah, as approachable as possible, basically.'*
>
> (Shirley McNeil, personal communication, February 15, 2018)

What the Courtauld valued in visitor experience and endeavoured to achieve was manifest in its renovation plan starting from September 2018. The idea of the personal and the intimate were emphasised alongside spatial comfort:

> *'The gallery isn't presented necessarily in a way we want. For example, the flooring, the lighting, the comfort of the room…So we look at all of that and we are going to significantly change everything, adding more flexibility to the gallery space, more gallery space to hang more works. We're also transforming the visitor welcome area. That would be doubled in the size to welcome all these visitors we're supposed to be getting…At the moment, visitors love the intimacy of it [the gallery space], they love the small focus of display rather than really broad [display]… We don't want our visitors to lose that personal, intimate connection they have with*

> *the works. We just want to make it more comfortable for them and have a better experience…better visitor flow, visitor welcome.'*
>
> (Caireen McGinn, personal communication, February 2, 2018)

While the other three focused on creating an environment where engagement with artworks could happen without discomfort and disturbance, Tate Modern endeavoured to, on the one hand, broaden its inclusivity by attracting the public through both art and non-art resources:

> *'Even if in your first visit at Tate you don't see any artworks at all, the fact is you've been to Tate and you've made a connection. In the end you might get to see some artwork and that might start to affect your life…start to think about the questions artworks bring up...Some people might get there straight away but that lends itself to people who already confident about their relationships with artworks. And those people tend to be better educated, wealthier. They tend to be of certain socio-economic groups. Whereas people who feel a bit intimidated by artworks and by their own level of knowledge might prefer to be able to have different types of experiences at first.'*
>
> (Dickon Moore, personal communication, February 20, 2018)

On the other hand, attempts were made to enable meaningful experience through—depending on visitors' observed characters—initiating conversations with visitors or leaving them undisturbed:

> *'It's more and more about helping people engage with the artworks, talking to people in the gallery spaces. We're looking into how we can engage with visitors with artworks in a way which is kind of democratic. People could be scared by the artworks, feeling they're not getting it, and*

> *we're trying to break that difficulty by discussing the artworks with visitors quite openly.'*
>
> (Dickon Moore, personal communication, February 20, 2018)

Working towards this democratisation of visitor engagement, at least some of the professional members of staff at Tate Modern[115] were distinct from those at the other three in that they valued visitor photography as a technology through which expression of creativity could be possible:

> *'The most successful use of technology is when it helps somebody with his creativity…And that could be someone taking photos. Imagine someone comes into the Turbine Hall and sees the huge pendulum thing, takes a cool picture and puts in onto social media. That's their creativity… Allowing and enabling people to do that is a powerful tool, recognising their creativity and therefore seeing art in general is more about your own creative process and your own perspective on art rather than a body of information you can occasionally get something from. That's a quite different way of seeing artworks.'*
>
> (Dickon Moore, personal communication, February 20, 2018)

Ranging from leaving visitors to their own devices to making sure information is readily available, allowing visitors quality physical space and hence intimate mental relationship with artworks, to attempts at personalising individuals' need for assistance and acting accordingly, visitor experience was in effect mediated into different shapes at each gallery.

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[115] That there might exist different views of ideal visitor experience - an 'old school' which valued quiet contemplation and the other which embraced diversity can be seen in Chapter 4.2.3.

### Supervision: Mediation by Invigilators

Unlike the educational and visitor experience mission, which is to bring visitors and artworks closer, the purpose of invigilation is to keep visitors at a distance from artworks largely for the safety of the latter. While the two jobs are often taken by the same professional— now often bearing an official name such as gallery assistant, though still constantly referred in conversations as security, guard, or warden, they essentially worked in the opposite direction. Enforcing visitor regulations is to ensure visitors understand what they 'cannot do' rather than encouraging them to explore what they 'can do'. Compared with touching, eating, and drinking, picture-taking was the most constant behavioural violation. At both the Courtauld and Tate Modern, where temporary exhibitions had a no-photography rule imposed, the approach to invigilation—as revealed in 5.1.1—was different. At both it was a manifestation of institutional authority and served as a reminder that the gallery space was separated from the outside. Yet, the inconspicuous cautioning at Courtauld was consistent with—if not strengthening—the reverential ambience. In contrast, the relatively audible and visible warning at Tate Modern contributed to its street-like atmosphere.

### Conclusion

The more immediately the visitor meets the exhibition of artworks and the less disturbance s/he receives from others, the more likely the museum or gallery is to feel like a space for art, distinct from the street outside. While an atmosphere of reverence infuses this space, it does not, however, necessarily mean restriction being imposed on visitors.  The 'pure gaze', which requires mastery of certain artistic codes, is to Bourdieu traditionally privileged over popular forms of perception—that is, more literal or emotional (1984, 1987; also Acord, 2016: 221) This is not always the case in today's art museums. On the one hand, when talking about the works to which they paid a high degree of daily professional attention, curators revealed—though not always obviously—a wish that what they sensed and valued in the artworks could be discerned and appreciated by their visitors. Yet on the other hand, in most cases they emphasised that there was not only one way of seeing art and they did not consider it a problem that visitors find connection with the exhibits with a 'non-pure' gaze. In effect, as shown in previous chapters as well as this one, a number of art museums have been encouraging visitors to discover emotional and personal connection with artworks, often through trails, multi-sensory events, and labels on which questions are raised. Nonetheless, few considered the possibility of picture-taking as a way of engagement. They seemed to be puzzled by the suggestion of seeing picture-taking in this light. Taking photographs was seen as a complementary activity: something on the side, something one does alongside the main event – which is experiencing art via direct seeing. In contrast, visitor experience professionals like those at Tate Modern were more likely to be aware of the possibility of picture-taking as a way of engagement as well as its potential to develop personal creativity. However, each instance of personal conduct has an effect on the shared space. The following chapter discusses types of photographic seeing in detail, and how picture-taking forms a force which shapes the gallery space.

# Chapter 6. Visitors with Photographic Devices

## Introduction

In this chapter the aim is to respond to the research question asking how visitor photography is performed bodily in the context of art museums and galleries. Following the detailed discussion of the four art museums and galleries in Chapter 5, the lived embodiment of visitor photography in these spaces, each characteristically different from the others, become the central focus of this chapter. Firstly, drawing on Urry and Larsen’s typology of the tourist gaze, a typology of picture-taking in the art museum is built. As shown in Chapter 2, seeing in art museums and galleries, seeing in our times, and seeing through a photographic lens are all entwined with the figure of the tourist as a relational position to the world and a strategy for dealing with the ever-shifting environment. Thus, their classification offers a starting point for displaying in a clear way the properties of each kind of photo-taking and, through revealing what cannot be captured by Urry and Larsen’s typology, demonstrating the distinct features of photographic-seeing. Having established the uniqueness of visitor photography, its live effects are examined. While picture-taking is a personal act through which a certain relationship between the taker and the artwork is built, its effect is not limited to individual experience, but includes the general public simultaneously present in the gallery space. The second part of this chapter deals with how visitor photography activities construct the exhibition space and affect the experience of other visitors. Attention is paid to the relatively uniform process of picture-taking, which not only breaks down the inside-outside boundaries which set art museums apart from the everyday but flattens the division between each type of art museums and galleries. Following this, how the performance of photography affects the formation of visitor flow, rhythm, and the spatial acoustic is discussed. In the third part, findings from interviews with visitors are examined. Their emphasis on the importance of memory, which they claimed was the major purpose of photographing artworks is compared with the fact that the resulting images were often soon neglected, never to be looked at again. The idea of on-site engagement, which was stressed by Dickon Moore, the Visitor Experience Manager of Tate, as mentioned in Chapter 5, is brought back to explore the role that picture-taking plays in the experience of artworks. Finally, the idea of the unphotographable (Garlick, 2002, see Chapter 2) is used to examine the focus of visitors' photographic lenses and in turn demonstrates how in our age of everyday photography, every sight has become photographable.

## 6.1 The Performance of Picture-taking

Various types of visitor photography observed on the sites of the Courtauld, Raven Row, Tate Modern, and the Zabludowicz Collection are examined in this section through Urry and Larsen's typology of the tourist gaze. It should be pointed out that picture-taking is usually—if not always—mingled with direct seeing unless one 'wears' the photographic devices as eye-glasses. Therefore, instead of the sole activity of picture-taking, what is categorised in Urry and Larsen's typology is a combination of photographic seeing and direct looking: how they are performed and how time is allocated between the two activities are described. What is revealed is, firstly, how their typology captures the features of each kind of viewing that do not belong to the realm of mundane everyday life, and secondly, without differentiating between direct gazing and photographic seeing, how Urry and Larsen's categorisation misses the latter's distinct characteristic: its being a discrete, non-continuous, activity. Discussion then turns to how picture-taking should be seen as a mechanical-bodily-event added to the process of viewing instead of considering it as a complete replacement of direct looking.

**Table 6.1 Classification of Visitor Photography**

| Type of Gaze | Characteristics | Performed in Conjunction with Picture-Taking |
|---|---|---|
| **Romantic Gaze** | This emphasises a personal, semi-spiritual relationship with the object, a lonely contemplation (or only with significant others). | Type (1) Direct seeing comprises the primary way of experiencing artworks.<br>Type (2) Direct seeing and photo-taking occupy the visitor's time equally.<br>Type (3) Photographic seeing predominates.<br>The shared feature of these three types is that viewers, seeing directly or taking photographs, spend a relatively long time with each artwork that interests them. The slowness which characterises their looking practice often becomes the defining rhythm of their movements in the gallery space. |
| **Collective Gaze** | This involves conviviality, a collective consumption of the place. Other people also viewing the site are necessary to give liveliness or a sense of carnival or movement. | Type (1) Visitors have their photos taken with artworks by their companions, take photos of their companions with artworks, or take selfies with their companions in front of artworks.<br>Type (2) Visitors whose decision to take pictures of certain artworks is a result of seeing others photographing those works.<br>The rhythm, if using the metaphor of paint strokes, is of a combination of heavy and lengthy ones around some artworks, in which photographs are taken and fairly thin and quick ones in the rest of the exhibition space. |

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| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Spectatorial Gaze** | This involves collective glancing at and collecting of different signs that have been very briefly seen in passing at a glance. | Type (1) Visitors who are brought into the gallery space as a tourist group or by other more interested companions.<br>Type (2) Lone visitors.<br>Both subtypes stroll through the exhibition space and look at everything–each work is allocated with a brief moment. Viewing artworks photographically with this type of gaze assumes, compared with others, the fastest rhythm and most regular tempo. Their pause in front of each work feels more automatic and fleeting. If considering each photographic moment as an instrumental beat, each artwork is struck equally; either each exhibit is equally favoured or the picture-taker treats them with the same indifference. |
| **Reverential Gaze** | This describes the spiritual consumption of a sacred site. | Visitors consume art museums as semi-religious sites: places acquiring a sacred quality for crowning the hierarchy of cultural value. Taking pictures of artworks can be paralleled with paying tribute to the divine existence. |
| **Anthropological Gaze** | This describes how individual visitors scan a variety of sights/sites and are able to locate them interpretatively within a historical array of meanings and symbols. | --<br>* This type can be considered as a way of looking which involved expertise, which the curators would perform, it has little relevance t picture-taking. |
| **Environmental Gaze** | This involves a scholarly or NGO-authorised discourse of scanning various tourist practices to determine their footprint upon the ‘environment’. | -- |

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| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Mediatised Gaze** | This indicates a collective gaze where particular sites famous for their 'mediated' nature are viewed. Those gazing on the scene relive elements or aspects of the media event. | Visitors who approach artworks through this type of gaze have photographic images of those works delivered to them before seeing the original. The media event both motivates the viewer to make the actual visit and prompts her/him to photograph the object 'by her/himself'. The photographic activity performed because of and with the mediatised gaze results in the concentration of visitor flow in some parts of the exhibition space and the rhythm is a mixture of the busy-ness of photo-taking, the lingering of those-who-reach-the-final-destination, and the attempted slowness of those who wish to view with their own eyes. |

The romantic type of seeing might be the one that bears most resemblance to Bourdieu's pure gaze. Immersing the self in the contemplation of the artwork in focus, the viewer can be described as situated inside an invisible membrane: s/he and the work are occupied by each other to a degree that the surroundings are excluded from this relationship. Those who perform this type of gaze and photograph artworks can be divided into three sub-types. What differentiates them is the proportion of time that direct seeing and picture-taking respectively take up. In the case of the first two types, photographic activity happens irregularly, for not every work is recorded. In general, the difference between the first and second types is that the former appears to use photographic devices in a more casual or amateurish way. Picture taking is completed quickly and thus occupies only a small part of their visit. The sense of documentation is strong. The latter, however, gives photographing a more prominent role. Time is spent finding a satisfactory angle and the resulting images are often examined straight away. In this regard, the third sub-type shares the same seriousness in picture-taking. Yet those who belong to this type are unique in that, when turning to artworks, they almost only look through photographic devices.  In other words, little time is given to direct viewing. Or, it could be said, those brief moments of seeing with the naked eye are less about appreciating the artworks but about seeking photographic opportunities. Arguably, this can still be considered to be a form of contemplation, except that what is contemplated has shifted from the artwork to the photographic image of the artwork. Romantic picture-takers are, corresponding to Urry and Larsen's observation, loners. Even if they are with companions, they do not remain together during the viewing process but re-unite only occasionally or afterwards. This puts them in contrast with those who perform the collective gaze.

Picture-takers who approach artworks through the collective gaze perform, firstly, a kind of photographic recording which is impossible to do alone. It involves one visitor taking photographs of her/his companions with the exhibits or taking selfies with her/his companions in front of the artworks. Standing in front of the work and facing the photographic device is an often-assumed pose. At the same time, a trend was observed, in which the photographed visitor faces the artwork and shows only her/his back or profile to the photographic lens, so that s/he appears to be looking at the work in a contemplative mode. A consciously performative quality is highly present. The length of time spent with the work photographically largely depends on how long the subject needs to achieve the desired pose and whether more photographs need to be taken to satisfy participants. Another subtype consists of those who take pictures of certain works less because of their own preference than because they have seen others do so. There were occasions where I stood before artworks that were less popularly known, usually situated in less frequented rooms or corners, for a lengthy period of time, either simply looking or taking notes. It was found that other visitors' attention would then be attracted. Fairly quickly, finding the artworks not especially famous—thus not a 'must-see'—or not appealing to them, they would move away but not before having taken a few photographs as if to make sure they had missed nothing. It could be even said that the collective type do not want to be left out—both in the sense that they prefer to be in the photographic image and that they desire to include in their experience anything that is collectively valued. The rhythm, if using the metaphor of paint strokes, is of a combination of heavy and lengthy strokes around some artworks with which photographs are taken, and fairly thin and quick ones in the rest of the exhibition space.

The spectatorial gaze, according to Urry and Larsen, is characterised by an eagerness to acquire collectable visual impressions and fleeting attention to each of them (2011). It can be conducted either alone or collectively. Viewing artworks photographically with this type of gaze assumes, compared with other types of gaze, the fastest and most regular tempo. Picture-takers' pause in front of each work feels more automatic and fleeting. If considering each photographic moment as a musical beat, each artwork is struck equally. Either each exhibit receives a similar amount of favour or the picture-taker treats them with the same indifference. Visitors who were observed as belonging to some tourist groups being brought into, for example, The National Gallery in London or the Louvre in Paris as part of a package schedule, more often used the spectatorial gaze to take in the sights. The same was found in both those who appeared to be accompanying their more interested fellow visitors and those whose hands held a city guidebook, supposedly listing all the 'must see'. Collecting visual sights which can be permanently saved becomes a major purpose and duty of the visit.

The majority of picture-taking visitors can be described by one of the above three types. The next three, in contrast, are less likely—if not impossible—to observe directly. First, the reverential gaze in Urry and Larsen's definition involves spiritual consumption of a sacred site. While, as discussed in Chapter 2, art museums can be paralleled with a set of ceremonial institutions that are religiously sacred, in that they all adopt absorbing architectural arrangements to 'impress upon those who see or use them a society's most revered values and beliefs' (Duncan and Wallach, 1978: 28), and could metaphorically appear to art enthusiasts as temples or cathedrals devoted to the highest values of art, they are still not religious spaces. However, using this category might help to understand picture-taking conducted by those whose visits resemble pilgrimages. Thus, photographing artworks they long to see can be paralleled with paying tribute to a divine existence. However, this type is not obvious to the ethnographer's eye. The performance of picture-taking can look like the romantic or even the collective type. The veneration underlying the photographic activity is more likely to be deciphered from conversations. Secondly, the anthropological gaze, which might be considered to be a way of looking that involves expertise, perhaps performed by scholars or museum professionals, has little relevance to picture-taking. Moreover, as some of the professionals I interviewed admitted that they took 'bad' photographs which did not grasp the qualities and excellence of the artworks (even though they still did it from time to time), even an expert gaze does not necessarily lead to expert photographic capture. Thirdly, the environmental gaze plays little role in viewing works of art.

The last type of gaze on Urry and Larsen's list, the mediatised, while it might not be always visible to the ethnographer's eye, plays a part in the appreciation of museum artworks which cannot be ignored. Photographic images of famed paintings like Manet's A Bar at the Folies-Bergère at the Courtauld Gallery or Mona Lisa at the Louvre,116 or of high profile exhibitions like Damien Hirst's Treasures from the Wreck of the Unbelievable in Venice in 2017, more often than not reach the audience before they see the originals. While Urry and Larsen mainly refer to films as the 'media event' that familiarises the viewer with the sight prior to a visit, it is argued that any content delivered to the viewer through any kind of medium can be included. The media event both motivates the viewer to make the actual visit and prompts her/him to photograph the object 'by her/himself'. The photographic activity performed because of and with the mediatised gaze has picture-taking visitors gather around certain works—those seen via advertisements, websites, books, or films. This results in a concentration of visitor flow in some parts of the exhibition space and the rhythm is a mixture of the busy-ness of photo-taking, the lingering of those-who-reach-the-final-

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[116] Curator Omar Kholeif admitted that due to the wide circulation of photographic images of Mona Lisa, he retained the impression of having already seen the original and only realised he had not when he visited the Louvre for the first time (2018: 101).

destination, and the attempted slowness of those who wish to view with their own eyes directly.

In the course of applying Urry's typology of the tourist gaze to various kinds of photographic-seeing, it was found that there is one significant feature which separates the latter from the former: while gazing is a relatively continuous activity, photographing is a discrete event which takes place at intervals in the process of experience. The naked eye wanders—attentively or not—from one object to another in a continuous manner. However, it would be very rare—if not impossible—to spot one person who stuck her/his eye(s) to the camera lens or the photographic screen and saw *only* through the device. Thus, while their typology largely helps to categorise each variety of picture-taking and show the distinct features of each, further discussion is necessary in order to understand how visitor photography changes the spatial and aesthetic experience of art museums.

## 6.2 The Effects of Visitor Photography

The museum body, as discussed in Chapter 2 and 3, is found by scholars like Rees Leahy to be different from the body outside the museum. The walking pace and stance, for example, cannot be the same (see Rees Leahy 2016). While agreeing with Rees Leahy and acknowledging that the uniqueness of art museum bodies could be seen, visitors who photograph artworks introduce to the museum space another significant kind of body: the photo-taking body. It is argued here that this body, through the lived process of photographic seeing, breaks down the boundaries between inside and outside, between the art museum and other types of space, between the experience of the art museum and experience which could happen elsewhere—almost anywhere else.

This section examines the transformative effect of picture-taking on art museums. Firstly, the photo-taking body is scrutinised alongside the museum body to show what distinguishes them from each other. The latter is recognised as the body which is not participating in photographic activity: it can remain so throughout the visit or can at any moment become the former. Discussion then focuses on the uniformness of photographic movements and their effect on the gallery space. Secondly, attention turns to how the photographic activity brings its own kind of intensity, energy and aural effects, and thus affects the rhythm, flow, and acoustic quality of museum spaces.

### 6.2.1 The Uniformness of Photographic Movements

The museum body and the photo-taking body are differently occupied. The former is tasked with carrying out the visit and making sense of the experience. Visitor bodies which move in the museum are not only to some degree scripted by the institutional space (see Chapter 2; Duncan and Wallach, 1978) but are also in search of scripts (see Scott et al, 2013). The reading of labels before or after seeing the works they introduce, consulting exhibition pamphlets when moving across the exhibition space where real works are in proximity, and complaints about not being offered clear direction or guidance—voiced during our interviews—all demonstrate the disorientation and uncertainty felt by visitors and the need for direction. Museum visitors are thus not different from Sontag's tourists who seek the unexperienced but also feel lost and baffled by the new and thus need a guiding force (see

Chapter 2.1.3), not to mention that many of them are in fact tourists or foreign residents, traversing unfamiliar territory. The sense of uncertainty, however, was not observed in the body busy at taking photographs. The photo-taking body is oriented by a clear goal, which is taking pictures. This is not to say that visitors who take pictures of artworks behave confidently throughout the visit, but that when they are in the process of photographing, they become determined and appear familiar with the act. The possibility of photographic activity serving as an anchoring force is explored in Chapter 8. In this section, it suffices to point out these two types of body received scripts from different sources.

If the museum body is scripted by the museum as ‘a totality of art and architectural form’ (Duncan and Wallach, 1978:28), the photo-taking body is scripted by photographic activity. It should be noted that when discussing visitors at each art museum or gallery behaving carefully or casually in accordance to the characteristics of the institution,[117] visitor behaviour is often treated as a seamless process constituted by both direct seeing and photographic looking. In this way, various types, as shown in 6.1, can be differentiated.

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[117] Choosing among the four selected cases, some of my interviewees accepted the request to visit, beside the one they were already familiar with or tended to visit, another art museum or gallery. It was found, on the one hand, that each institutional space might elicit certain kinds of manners in the same visitor. Same Weber, for instance, considered himself to behave differently—though perhaps not to a great extent—at the Courtauld and Zabludowicz:

> *‘I don’t think there was a difference between visitors but a difference between how they behaved. The same person…I suppose I’m speaking of myself. There are things I think would be fine at Zabludowicz and wouldn’t be acceptable at Courtauld’*
>
> (Sam Weber, personal communication, December 16, 2017)

On the other hand, arguably, there is another reason for the distinct visitor behavioural features at each institution: the disposition of the visitors who choose to visit that particular institution. That the same person could behave fairly similarly in different types of art museum was also observed. Pan Kim and Danny Chang both frequented Tate Modern. When the former was inside Zabludowicz and the latter in the Courtauld for the first time, their manners were not dissimilar from when they were at Tate Modern. Therefore, it is possible that inside each museum only some types of visitor behaviour can be seen, less because of the scripting effect of art-architecture than because they each receive distinct types of visitor. However, considering the small number of the sample, exploration of this aspect demands further and more extensive studies.

However, if separating photographic moments from the process as individual events, it was found that, no matter whether the performer might have romantic, collective, or spectatorial interest, they consisted of relatively uniform bodily movements: lifting—sometimes lowering—the device, aiming it at the artwork, and clicking the button or touching the icon on the screen. Theoretically, each movement could involve various lengths of time and thus make each combination different from another. Yet, it was observed during my ethnographic observation that the majority of combinations were highly similar.

This similarity, which unites visitor photography, to some extent cancels the difference between art museums and galleries of various sizes, types of art, and ownership. We can see that while each art museum or gallery's visitor composition differs from that of another,[118] the universal process of picture-taking can be seen being performed at each space. Moreover, it also takes place in other types of museum—science, or history—as well as non-museum environments. Thus, art museums lose some of their ability to mark off a unique experiential space. The photographic seeing prevalent in our time can possibly homogenise the experience of art in art museums.

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[118] In the case of the four selected institutions, the Courtauld, as described by its staff (ranging from curatorial, education and visitor services, to security), received primarily 'very respectful visitors', who knew and enjoyed its quiet and intimate space and hardly broke the rules—except for attempts at picture-taking at its recent temporary exhibitions where a no-photography policy was enforced. Tate Modern, as was pointed out by several staff members from the Visitor Experience Team, attracted a large number of tourists who constituted a high percentage of its visitors. These tourists may or may not be interested in art. It could be Tate's status as a landmark of London which made it appear on the must-see list. The uncertainty expressed via bodily movements and facial expressions of visitors felt strong, which was not helped by Tate's overwhelming spatial scale. Zabludowicz was frequented by art students who behaved as if more at ease or, occasionally, with intensified, concentrated energy. On days when artists' or curators' talks were held, more senior visitors were present, who showed serious concern for art and relatively extensive knowledge. They appeared less casual and their stay was shorter though they looked interested. It was harder to characterise visitors to Raven Row in general. The gallery considered that due to its lack of advertising, only those who were interested enough in contemporary art would have known about it and visited. However, visits did not necessarily appear engaged or long lasting. Short visits were often seen and accompanied by the practice of photographic recording. Meanwhile, uncertainty could also be a strong element from time to time.

### 6.2.2 Photographic Busy-ness: the Re-configuration of Flow, Rhythm, and Sound

On the one hand, homogenous photographic movements, as just discussed, can be observed in art museums of various types; on the other hand, similar acts, when interacting with different spatial size and design as well as visitor numbers, result in different effects on visitor flow and rhythm.

Firstly, the performance of photography requires a relatively greater amount of space: even if some visitors were seen holding photographic devices fairly close to their bodies or faces, they took up more space than visitors who merely stood looking. As discussed in Chapter 2.2.2, Benjamin accuses paintings in art museums of allowing only a small audience to view them simultaneously. However, compared with photographic seeing, direct looking still offers a greater possibility to view with others. This is so not only because the performance of photographic movements itself takes up more space but also because the picture-taker often desires the area immediately around the artwork empty of other visitors so that the photograph includes only the work—and sometimes her/him/self or her/his companions. Our eyes and minds often allow us to focus on the object we wish to see and ignore other people who appear in our sights. In contrast, photographic devices cannot achieve the same effect. Preferably, other visitors would move away and make room for the picture-taker to complete the recording process—and though this did not always happen, many visitors were observed doing so. Visitors standing aside becomes the unavoidable consequence of photo-taking, especially in popular exhibitions and around famous works. Visitor flow is thus congested.

The second point appears to concern more the way visitor flow, as a result of exhibition design, influences the frequency of visitor photography. Yet since the latter in turn shapes the rhythm of visitors it is important to include it in the discussion. It was observed that the tighter the exhibition narration[119] and the larger the visitor numbers, the more frequently visitor photography took place. In this case, firstly, the exhibition was designed so that there existed an entrance and an exit—thus a beginning and an end—and in between the objects on display or rooms that accommodated the exhibits were numbered. Secondly, visitors filled the spaces so that moving back to rooms visited previously was difficult as they would have had to go against the general moving direction of visitor flow. When there was thus a more linear, one-way traffic, visitors were more often seen taking photographs. This effect was strengthened, first of all, when visitors consulted exhibition maps, information sheets, or audio/multimedia guides, which offered narratives matching the narration of the exhibition; and when this design was adopted by temporary exhibitions, secondly, there was also a strong sense that their existence was transient. It is possible that when the prospect of going back to see certain works again—either to rooms already visited, or back to the exhibition in one's lifetime, feels comparatively unlikely, visitors' urge to obtain photographic records is provoked. Moreover, the type 2 performer of the collective gaze (see Table 6.1), when seeing others take pictures, tends to join in, and visitor photography is thus intensified. By contrast, in a more loosely narrated exhibition space, in which visitors feel the freedom to wander randomly in and out of gallery rooms and in various directions, where the flow is more dynamic than monotonic, the obligation to record is less pronounced. In turn, the more frequently visitor photography takes place, the busier the gallery's room is felt to be.

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[119] Narration, to borrow the architect David Dernie's definition, is 'quite literally about an approach to ordering objects in space in a way that tells a story. In that sense exhibition design is regularly defined as narration'(Dernie, 2006: 10).

While the performance of visitor photography results in the congestion of visitor flow at some points, at the same time it alters visitor rhythm by introducing a sense of busy-ness. Arguably, in most cases, picture-taking involved more bodily actions than direct looking. Moreover, except for serious photographers, like performers of type 3 of the romantic gaze (see Table 6.1), who spent a long time finding satisfactory angles, the majority of those who took photos did it quickly. During my observation, sometimes, looking away from one visitor briefly, I would find that, when returning my gaze, s/he had a mobile phone in her/his hand, had already taken the picture, and was about to put the device back in a bag or pocket. In that fleeting moment, while a non-photographing visitor more often stands still, a picture-taker performs a series of photographic movements. Furthermore, it appeared that the more pictures someone wanted to obtain, the more quickly s/he walked between each photographic moment. The spectatorial type of picture-taker (see Table 6.1) was most often seen moving around in the gallery space at a tempo faster than others'. This contrasted with the slowness that often characterised—and was typified by—the museum walk (see Chapter 2.2.3).

One might argue that sketching, which has historically been the major means of recording in art museums and has been encouraged by Tate Britain in London and the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, could equally well imbue the exhibition space with a sense of bustle. However, while sketching and photographing could be paralleled in terms of their ambition to produce long-lasting visual documents, each uses a very different process and thus has a distinct impact not only on individual experience but on the spatial rhythm, which affects the collectivity. Sketching requires the investment of a lengthy period of time. Often, a roughly done drawing would take longer than focusing the photographic device and clicking the button. Admittedly, a carefully composed photograph can take a long time to make. However, most picture-taking visitors, including artists, museum professionals, students of various art-related subjects, do not belong to this category of serious photographers. More often than not, an attempt to take a satisfactory picture takes less time than completing a causal sketch. Consequently, the sketcher can create many fewer drawings than the number of photos the picture-taker can produce. Sketching therefore happens less frequently than picture-taking in an exhibition, even without taking into consideration that far fewer people are equipped with the basic skills for sketching than those who are able to take pictures. As a result, an exhibition space where visitor photography is permitted appears busier, for more activities are taking place and on a more frequent basis. The faster the tempo of visitor movements, the farther away the art museum is from being a quiet interior for contemplation and a slow experience. This, together with photography's acoustic effect, which is discussed below, further breaks down the inside-outside division.

As discussed in Chapter 5.1.2, the quieter the gallery space, the more possible it is to maintain a reverential atmosphere. Since the quiet reverence of the art museum contrasts with the casualness of the street, it contributes to the separation of the inside from the outside. Visitor photography brings with it sounds which disturb that separation. It was observed that even in art museums like the Courtauld, where quiet manners were often practiced by visitors—that is, they talked softly, walked quietly and slowly, moved their limbs in a careful way as if not wishing to disrupt the atmosphere and attract uncomplimentary attention, the shutter sounds generated by either film or digital photographic devices were most often not silenced. The sound distracted other visitors from their own seeing activities when the museum was in general quiet. It was less conspicuous at places like the National Gallery in London or the Louvre in Paris, since visitor sound in those places was very loud, and photographic noises blended into the acoustic fabric without standing out as a particular source of distraction. At the Courtauld and Raven row, as well as in the quiet parts of any busy museum, like Tate Modern or the British Museum, photography sounds could be clearly recognised. Moreover, unlike visitor conversations or sounds caused by visitor movements which stretch over a relatively long and seamless period, photographic sounds are abrupt. They cut through the space and enter people's consciousness without prior notice. Even though cameras and smartphones are familiar devices in our time, people still seem reflexively to search for the source when suddenly hearing shutter sounds. Thus, the sound of visitor photography can undermine or redefine the museum-ness by bringing in an acoustic element historically unheard—or less heard—of in the gallery space, and adds to the interior a sense of commotion by causing even non-photographing visitors to involuntarily participate in the activity. The quieter and thus the more distinct from the street an art museum is, the more significant and disturbing is the effect of the sound of picture taking. This sonic effect also serves as a reminder that the visitor's existence in the museum is never an eyes-only experience. While one might bodily move away from other visitors' photographic activities, it is not possible to shut one's ears and block out photographic sounds from the experience of art. Therefore, the more a space is designed for visual engagement, the farther s/he is forced from the ideal and idealised experience. That one is either constantly or from time to time suddenly made aware that there are activities taking place other than the seeing of the artworks, again compromises the uniqueness of the art museum as a place for art only.

### 6.3 Photography, Experience, and Memory

As discussed in the Literature Review, photography plays a prominent part in modern society which, in the face of rapid change, endeavours not to forget. That visitors I interviewed repeatedly expressed the wish to remember when reflecting upon their practice of photographing artworks fits into this cultural phenomenon. Yet the acquisition of lasting memory in the form of photographs is not simply a personal choice but a not always available option provided by the art museum with restrictions. Hence it is necessary to understand visitors' relationship with photography rules. In this section, firstly, interviewees' awareness of photography policy and the latter's regulative force is examined. The second part focuses on the photographic devices used for capturing images of artworks. The roles that cameras and smartphones respectively play in the performance of visitor photography and its growth are examined. The third part discusses the relationship between visitors and photography. Starting with why visitors valued the photographic, the significance of being able to remember was discovered. The examination then moves on to explore how visitors regarded their photographic works and what was intended to be photographically kept as a memory. Finally, despite photography's contribution to remembering, interviewees disclosed that they felt picture-taking intruded on experience. The conflict between engaging in the experience of art and creating tangible memories raises a challenge for art museums and galleries and will be further explored in Chapters 7 and 8.

### 6.3.1 The Relationship between Visitors and Visitor Photography Policy

While the art gallery professionals themselves appeared to be not entirely aware of the up-to-date photography policies of their fellow institutions—for example, during my interviews with curators and educators, the already lifted photography ban of the National Gallery was believed by a number of them to still be enforced, their visitors had a slightly clearer idea of whether photography would be permitted at each art museum or gallery they visited. Among the ten interviewees, about half sought no information regarding the photography rules when visiting art museums and galleries. Two subtypes can be further divided among this half: the first assumed photography was allowed and would take pictures when they felt like it.

> *'Going to art galleries now, I usually just assume photography is allowed without flash. That's what I expect of almost every art gallery. And I'd start taking photos if I feel like it. And if one of the wardens stops me, that's fine. I won't take anymore. But rarely look up the policy. And partly I think it's like if I don't know it's wrong, then I can just do it. I'm so used to photography being allowed in galleries I just don't check anymore.'*
>
> (Sam Weber, personal communication, December 16, 2017)

The second did not usually include picture-taking in their visits and thus did not feel the need to enquire about permission—they either admitted that visitor photography policy had hardly ever occurred to them as an issue to think of,

> *'I didn't enquire. But I don't normally take photos, so…I didn't think about it. Are you allowed to?'*
>
> (Mark Evans, personal communication, December 17, 2017)

or had an impression that photography was generally prohibited, a perception which was based on their assumptions about a no-longer universal photography ban from before its rapid change in recent years:

> *'I don't bother. And I know it's not generally allowed'*
>
> (Pan Kim, personal communication, December 19, 2017)

The other half, when in an art museum or gallery, either already had an idea about whether there was a ban on visitor photography or would instinctively look for signs:

> *'I kind of have a feeling of if I can or I can't'*
>
> (Estère Ozols, personal communication, November 25, 2017)
>
> *'I did have a look and there was a sign for no photography. Otherwise I would have maybe taken photos of some portraits I was especially interested in. But the sign was very small. If you go to see museums or exhibitions fairly regularly you'd notice if you're allowed to take photos or not. I did notice.'*
>
> (Danny Chang, personal communication, December 17, 2017)
>
> *'You got the major ones [art museums and galleries] having some parts where photography isn't allowed, like Tate, V&A. Saatchi…sometimes it's allowed sometimes not…I think when you don't see a sign saying it's*

> *forbidden, it’s probably allowed. There’s nothing here [Zabludowicz] so I think it’s okay’*
>
> (Hayward Scott, personal communication, February 25, 2018)

As discussed in the Literature Review, each art museum or gallery has its rules, written or tacit. Yet for those rules to function and shape the space, they have to be discerned and observed. There appeared to be a spectrum of rule-abiding. Those who followed the regulations were on the one end and those who did not play along occupied the other. In between, there were visitors who were aware of the rules and usually complied with them. Yet they would sometimes take photos described as ‘sneaky’ in their own terms.

> *‘I’d try to obey…Sometimes I do take sneaky photos, which I’m not allowed to. I'd say ninety percent out of…yeah, I’d follow the rule.’*
>
> (Danny Chang, personal communication, December 17, 2017)
>
> *‘Sometimes I do take photos. Sometimes even when I know I’m not supposed to.’*
>
> (Mark Evans, personal communication, December 17, 2017)

This need to satisfy the photographic desire can be examined together with the frustration expressed on occasions where taking pictures of artworks is not allowed.

> *‘I went to the exhibition at the British Library two weeks ago and really wanted to take photos of something. Sometimes I do anyway. But there was this invigilator around so…’*
>
> (Estère Ozols, personal communication, November 25, 2017)
>
> *‘I remember going to see Barbara Hepworth’s exhibition a few years ago. I was very much inspired by some of her works in college. What happened was I bought the ticket and went in there, and they said you can’t really*

> *take photos. I was literally gutted that I couldn't take pictures of those moments.'*
>
> (Hayward Scott, personal communication, February 25, 2018)

That 'moments' personally experienced are desirable subjects to capture photographically links experience, memory and photography tightly together. Its impact on the policing of visitor photography is that some visitors would choose to satisfy this craving instead of adhering to the rules:

> *'I always assume that you can. And even if they say you can't, I take anyway. I understand that flash isn't allowed. But photography…come on, I take it anyway...It's just our memory.'*
>
> (Lucas Barros, personal communication, December 15, 2017)

What Lucas Barros revealed was an emphasis on both memory and ownership. This will be further explored in Chapter 6.3.3.

### 6.3.2 Visitors and the Photographic Devices in Use

When the ethnography was in progress, it was observed that digital cameras were more commonly used than smartphones in art museums and galleries, especially in the case of Tate Modern and the Courtauld. This may be associated, firstly, with the fact that museum visitors comprise a large number of tourists, who appear to be more likely to carry cameras while also having smartphones to hand. Further research is required for a more accurate and detailed understanding of this. Secondly, as revealed by the interviews, cameras were considered by those who treated photography as a serious pursuit as the 'proper' equipment (Pan Kim, personal communication, November 8, 2018). Hayward Scoot, an MA student in

Print, who had taken Photography at A-level, was observed using a professional-looking DSLR to photograph an exhibit at Zabludowicz. He explained that,

> *'I try to avoid it [using a smartphone to take pictures] as much as possible. Cuz I remember my photography teacher, who was quite old school about how you take photos. There are various types of lens, that sort of thing. I think part of me just keeps that. I have a small camera I keep with me. As long as it's a camera I'm cool.'*
>
> (Hayward Scott, personal communication, February 25, 2018)

This hierarchy of photographic devices was shared by Pan Kim, a children's art teacher and artist. She went further to put film cameras above digital cameras.

> *'I always carry my film camera in my bag…I do take photos with my mobile too but…I prefer to use a proper camera…Mobiles and digital cameras have many good reasons to use so I take advantage of them as well. But film cameras have soft texture and colours I love so much. There are always chances I want to use them in my work later.'*
>
> (Pan Kim, personal communication, November 8, 2018).

At the same time, however, my interviews revealed how the latter had played a significant role in the image-capture activity. Among the nine interviewees who had taken pictures during their visits,[120] which were followed immediately by the interview, all but one employed smartphones, including the aforementioned Pan Kim. For some interviewees, the beginning of their taking photographs at art exhibitions coincided with the beginning of their possession of a smartphone. On the one hand, the 26-year-old art graduate, Estère Ozols, growing up into an era which sees mobiles with built-in cameras as a common everyday tool, uses smartphones without much considering the alternatives. As she reflected,

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[120] The exception was Charlotte Lopez, who did not photograph during our visits to either the Courtauld Gallery or the Tate Modern. She revealed having only taken pictures in an art museum once in her life time and at the request of her companions. This was when she visited the Uffizi Gallery in Florence:

> *'They weren't pictures of the paintings only, though, I took the pictures of my colleague next to the paintings, one with The Spring of Botticelli, another one with a Roman sculpture and the last one with Judith Slaying Holofernes of Artemisia Gentileschi.'*
>
> (Charlotte Lopez, personal communication, January 9, 2018)

> *'I've always used a mobile since I [began to be] interested in art. […] Past seven years old or so. I had a phone which could take photos'*
>
> (Estère Ozols, personal communication, November 25, 2017)

On the other hand, those who belonged to generations which remembered the days when cameras were the only devices for picture-taking, were influenced by the invention and advancement of smartphones, whose incorporated photographic functions were sometimes deemed more competent than cameras,

> *'I bought this iPhone only when I got here [London in 2014]. So I never went to an art museum in Chile with an iPhone… We brought one [camera] when we came to London…I must have placed it somewhere but I can't remember. The first week we bought an iPhone and then never used it [camera] again. It isn't a great camera. The iPhone camera is a lot better'*
>
> (Lucas Barros, personal communication, December 15, 2017)

Alternatively, the design and operation of smartphone were considered to be more suitable for shooting in the gallery space:

> *'I remember going to art galleries as a child. Back then we had a film camera and you wouldn't have taken it to art galleries anyway because you'd have to use flash for it was too dark but you weren't allowed to use flash… I got my first smartphone in 2013 I think. By that time I think most*

> *galleries were fine with you taking photos. So before that I just didn't have a camera on me most of time.'*
>
> (Sam Weber, personal communication, December 16, 2017)

Paula Díaz, who now used her iPhone to photograph exhibits when visiting art museums or galleries, also reflected that,

> *'I used to have a camera. I used it…when I was with my friends…when I went on holidays. I used to have a very very good camera and I learned something. But I wasn't very good. It wasn't my thing. But for art exhibitions, I never took...[photographs with camera]. Perhaps outside the museums, a family thing, but not of the exhibitions'*
>
> (Paula Díaz, personal communication, December 15, 2017)

This overlap between the routinisation of smartphone usage and the photographing of artworks echoes the reason given by art museums like The National Gallery in London for lifting the ban on visitor photography, discussed above in Chapter 4 '… so that we are able to accommodate the new ways in which our visitors wish to interact with the collection' (Visitor Engagement Assistant, personal communication, May 28, 2018). On the one side, cameras have not gone out of fashion; on the other side, smartphones have increased the frequency of visitor photography.

### 6.3.3 Visitor Photography and Memory

The exhibition of artworks, which (as demonstrated in Chapter 5) is to curators a potential way to initiate visitors in the experience of art, becomes to visitors something they want to remember.[121] Photography is used to assist the process of memory:

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[121] This research focuses on artworks as the subject of picture-taking. Other objects in the art museums and galleries are excluded. However, it is worth pointing out that besides artworks, labels were also often observed to be photographed. Two points revealed here are, firstly, the use of

> *'I take photos…only when I see something I want to remember. Not always'*
>
> (Estère Ozols, personal communication, November 25, 2017)

As a form of memory, photography seemed to be valued less for its possible exact resemblance to reality than for its direct relationship with the people who take the photos. It was unexpected that all my interviewees who had taken photographs of artworks, and all the picture-taking visitors who had conversations with me, expressed satisfaction or happiness with the resulting images – images which to my eye—detached from the subjects' personal experiences—seemed unable to convey the excellence of the artworks or to impress. This was contrary to the thoughts of art museum professionals who reflected that their photographs of artworks did not meet a standard of competence:

> *'I don't take very good photos. They don't come out very well when I take them. So I don't tend to document a lot of stuff. But if I see something I really like, I take a photo of that.'*
>
> (Caireen McGinn, personal communication, February 2, 2018)

> *'I wanted to take photographs of different things. And then I looked at the photos and thought some of them were so bad. I knew I wanted to remember but it's not enough.'*
>
> (Dr Alexandra Gerstein, personal communication, February 21, 2018)

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photography is not only to 'capture the experience' but, paralleled to note-taking, to store information. When switching the lens from the artwork to the label, what is also switched is the purpose of photography. Unlike maps or information sheets which can be taken away and out of the art museums or galleries, labels, like the artworks, stay in the space. Recording them becomes—besides imprinting them onto mental memory—the way to save the data. It can also be seen as an alternative to purchasing catalogues. Secondly, that visitors appeared to want record the label contents, just as they spend time reading those texts, shows that getting to know the artworks through mediated engagement—in this case mediated by professionals with expert knowledge of art—might be highly needed and valued by some visitors.

On the one hand, this might be partially explained by the fact that the professionals train to develop ‘a good eye’, as nurtured and encouraged in art history departments and reflected on by the curator and scholar of visual culture Irit Rogoff: one who has a good eye performs ‘a rigorous, precise and historically informed looking [which] would reveal a wealth of hidden meanings’ (1998:17; see also Rose, 2007: 35). On the other hand, however, first, some of my visitor-interviewees themselves had a background or profession in art-related subjects; secondly, despite their dissatisfaction with the image quality, professionals like the aforementioned McGinn and Dr Gerstein still continued the practice of picture-taking. That people were content with the photos they took, or were not prevented from taking more by the flaws they could see in the pictures, perhaps signifies that the photographic act and its product are important as a personal investment.

Hayward Scott was the only one who admitted that some pictures might have been improved. However, as noted above, Scott was an MA student in Print who had taken Photography at A Level. Thus, he was more likely to see the flaws in photographic images. Nevertheless, he still pointed out the importance of having taken those images himself:

> *‘Definitely, sometimes I looked at the photos and thought I wish I could have captured that moment better. But I think if you look over it, it’s better taking photos and then remembering than not taking photos and forgetting about it. Referring back to the Barbara Hepworth situation, she’s a well-known artist and images of her works can be seen everywhere. But it still would have been nice to take photos. Because it was the*

> *moment I saw with my own eyes...A year later, I might need the photo to trigger my memory.'*
>
> (Hayward Scott, personal communication, February 25, 2018)[122]

Social media was found to play a role in the process of memory preservation for some interviewees. They emphasised that online platforms served to keep and organise the results of personal encounters:

> *'I took pictures mostly for memory's sake. But there're also other elements. For example, for posting them on social media. But the reason I post them on social media is because it's kind of my diary. So I can look back at what exhibitions I've seen, where I've been to.'*
>
> (Danny Chang, personal communication, December 17, 2017)

However, sharing pictures via social media is not universally practiced.[123] For example, for Pan Kim, Sam Weber, Diane Winspear, and Hayward Scott, sharing images of personal life was not desirable.

> *'I think I respect them being very personal. I just don't want to put them out there.'*
>
> (Hayward Scott, personal communication, February 25, 2018)

Here again, the personal-ness of photographs was stressed.

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[122] That photographs might not be a substitute but a trigger of memory can be seen with Dr Gerstein's reflection on postcards. In this case, the postcard reminded her not the perceived artwork but that her attempt at having it remembered:

> *'I was in Boston and a friend said you should go to the Boston Museum of Fine Art, there's an amazing work by Turner. Strangely, when I looks at my paper the other night and I found a postcard of it. It's a famous painting and I tried to remember how it was in my mind. The postcard didn't really help with that but it helped me to remember that I wanted to remember it.'*
>
> (Dr Alexandra Gerstein, personal communication, February 21, 2018)

The postcard was thus a memory trigger of, instead of the experience, the designated value of the experience. It served as a reminder of what should be recollected

[123] Graham Black, scholar of Museum and Heritage, quoting the journalist Jose A. Vargas' phrase 'WITNESS-RECORD-SHARE', recognises that this new experiential pattern is forging some different relationships between the visitor and the museum (2015: 126). Yet during the time of my ethnographic study, on-site sharing was not so conspicuous and common that it qualified as an obvious 'pattern'.

While memory was the major reason cited by interviewees for picture-taking, it was confessed that they often forgot to look at the photographs after their visit. However, the knowledge that those images were stored in their personal devices, accessible to them, seemed to be significant.

> *'I had in the past when I took a photo of the artwork and then the label. Because I thought "Ah yeah, this looks interesting and I'll look it up later". Very rarely I did. But it's nice to know it's there if I want to refer back to.'*
>
> (Sam Weber, personal communication, December 16, 2017)

Moreover, photographs can function as triggers of, to borrow Marcel Proust's term, involuntary memory ([1922]2013):

> *'Sometimes I forgot and when I was looking for something else, I found them and felt 'Ah yeah'. Kind of good memories as well.'*
>
> (Estère Ozols, personal communication, November 25, 2017)

> *'Sometimes I took a photo, a few months later I happen to see it and remember that moment.'*
>
> (Hayward Scott, personal communication, February 25, 2018)

Knowing that personal photographs are there and can either be deliberately sought out or accidentally presented to the owner, bringing back memories of past experience, is thus revealed as a major purpose of visitor photography.

The last point concerns what one would like to be included in memory. Interviewees were found to be scattered along a spectrum of approaches from creative and detailed to documentation. At one end, those who adopted the creative or detailed approach would use the images to make new works or practice drawing from them. Their photographs were often of parts of entire artworks or taken from various angles. At the other end, the documenting type tended to photograph the whole piece, or whole artworks and from a front-central position in relation to the works. They were also more likely to include either themselves or their companions in the pictures.

### 6.3.4 Against Photography

While visitor photography was seen by some interviewees as an important memory tool for preserving impressions of experience, for others it collided with experience. The latter view was shared by those who rarely or only occasionally took photographs at art exhibitions. The supporting rationales can be discussed from three angles. Firstly, taking pictures of artworks was considered intrusive to other visitors or disrespectful to the artworks. Pan Kim, who took only one picture of a moving object in the Invite exhibition at Zabludowicz, revealed that she felt ‘guilty’, when she was explaining why she had not made videos, which might seem to be a more suitable medium for recording movements,

> *‘I think taking photos…I felt a kind of guilt…not really guilt…but you know. And taking videos felt too much and I knew I was not going to watch that one…I don’t want to intrude.’*
>
> (Pan Kim, personal communication, December 19, 2017)

Picture-taking, which can be completed quickly, was thus her compromise choice for documenting: it reduced her sense of violating the artworks, even though on that occasion only she and one invigilator were in the room, and the Zabludowicz did not prohibit either visitor photography or film. Secondly, there was a perception that art museums or galleries are spaces for reverential experience: artworks should be appreciated with an investment of time instead of quickly snapped. Whereas the sense of wrongdoing partially prevented Kim from photographing artworks in general, Charlotte Lopez, who as shown above had only once taken pictures in an art museum in all her life,[124] described taking pictures in art museums and galleries as ‘disrespectful’ and expressed her vexation at seeing it happen (Charlotte Lopez, personal communication, January 9, 2018).

> *‘Now when I visit an exhibition I have to fight to be able to look at the works because people are taking pictures. That is something that gets me angry. It seems like somebody taking a picture is much more important than you. Because you don't want to take pictures but just look at the work. I can't understand this.’*
>
> (Charlotte Lopez, personal communication, January 9, 2018)

Thirdly, turning to its effect on one’s own personal connection with artworks, picture-taking was seen as a distraction from the appreciation of art. Mark Evans recounted that,

> *‘I’m quite aware of the fact that—you know, it isn’t a criticism to anyone who does use their phones, because we’re all different—but I’m quite aware that using a mobile in a gallery can distract your attention from the details. For some people. Not for all, necessarily. But for some people. And I feel when I’m in an art gallery, walking around the exhibition I enjoy, I feel I need to give all my emotion and intellect to that exhibition. ’*
>
> (Mark Evans, personal communication, December 17, 2017)

At the same time, those who did take pictures were not unconcerned about the negative effects of other visitors’ photographic activity. However, together with those who rarely took photographs, although it was agreed that in general they would make space when necessary for others' picture-taking—by slightly moving away or waiting to one side, having to make allowances was not always welcome:

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[124] Being at the age of 20, Charlotte Lopez was the youngest among my interviewees.

> *'I don't like it when everyone has to queue to see the actual painting because people are taking photographs.'*
>
> (Paula Díaz, personal communication, December 15, 2017)
>
> *'I don't like that. But I don't think the best way to deal with it is to prohibit photography. There should be some more intelligent ways…'*
>
> (Lucas Barros, personal communication, December 15, 2017)

It emerged from both ethnographic observation and interviews that innovative ways of accommodating and directing picture-taking visitors are needed. On the one hand, visitors did not wish to be deprived of the chance to take photos and art museums did not wish to build barriers, which might be criticised as leading to exclusion. On the other hand, institutions cannot avoid the responsibility of dealing with the consequences of allowing visitor photography.

## 6.4 The Unphotographable

It can be argued that some types of artworks cannot be photographically captured. Or to be more precise, due to their nature in terms of temporality or texture, some artworks are relatively impossible to depict in photographic images. In fact, it can even be said that none of the visual phenomena perceived by human beings can be adequately conveyed by photographs. However, this appears to be a highly subjective debate and, as previously discussed, picture-takers valued the images because they were personal instead of being an exact copy of experience. It was found during the ethnography that every kind of art has its picture-takers: from the highly auratic Rothko at Tate Modern, to the glazed paintings at the

Courtauld and Raven Row, which resulted in reflected lights in photos, to the audio-visual installations at the Zabludowicz, visitors photographed regardless.

As mentioned previously, Pan Kim recorded a moving exhibit in the format of still photography instead of video to try to reduce the possibility of intrusion. While that appeared as a compromise she had to make, it was found that others did not in general consider photography incapable of capturing satisfactory images of artworks in various forms. The point of photography seems less about reproducing an exact look-alike than grasping an aspect of the artwork and obtaining, to borrow Barthes' words, a 'certificate of presence' ([1980]2000: 87; see also Chapter 2.1.2):

> *'It doesn't bother me that they look different on the screen from on the wall. Because having that photo, if it's of details, that can be still quite good actually. And if you take a photo of the whole thing, it's not like you're going to send it to make a big copy print to hang on your wall. You take a photo to say I was there, this was the one I saw. So when you flip through your [picture] gallery and show it to your family, they can see the places you went, the paintings you saw. I don't think it matters so much that the quality isn't there.'*
>
> (Sam Weber, personal communication, December 16, 2017)

As to works consisting of moving parts, for example those Hayward Scott was observed photographing, he did not find it problematic to be unable to convey their entirety photographically:

> *'Yes, because it's a moving image, it can be quite difficult to capture every single moment. But you don't necessarily need to catch every single moment. It's an aspect of how that work is observed, I think.'*
>
> (Hayward Scott, personal communication, February 25, 2018)

A similar attitude was held towards works separated from viewers by glass. Here, a sense of creativity was further added:

> *'Yeah, I understand why they do it [glazing]. I don't think that bothers me so much. Unless it's very reflective and you really can't see much. But it's bit of a shame that you just have to have an extra layer separating you form the artwork. I don't think it's so much a photography problem as an experience problem.'*
>
> (Sam Weber, personal communication, December 16, 2017)

> *'Yeah, it is hard. But sometimes I try to take advantage of it. It's like the photo you're taking becomes another piece of work. There's always reflection of light, yourself, or camera.'*
>
> (Estère Ozols, personal communication, November 25, 2017)

This opportunity or need for creativity, which stemmed from the impossibility of producing an exact photographic copy of the original artwork, is arguably what gives visitor photography its own life and can be referred back to something stressed by Annie Bedford and Dickon Moore, Tate's Information Manager and Visitor Experience Manager (see Chapter 5). They forcefully pointed out that allowing visitors to create was critical to meaningful personal experience. This point will be further examined in Chapter 8.

## Conclusion

This chapter has examined visitor photography through revealing its relationship with visitor experience. The latter consists of the visitor, the art museum as an experiential space regulated by rules, and the artwork. Thus, when one take pictures, a complex set of relationships between the visitor and other visitors, the visitor and the space, the visitor and the photography policy, as well as the visitor and the artworks, simultaneously emerge. It is not possible to simply sum them up as either positive or negative. On the one hand, the photographic activity brings into the gallery space elements previously unseen: the busy-ness and acoustic effect of visitor photography are not usually taken into consideration when exhibition design and visitor behavioural code are devised. On the other hand, visitor photography enables a connection between the visitor and the artwork: it is, firstly, personal for the feeling that ‘I am the one taking the picture of this artwork’ and ‘I will be the one having the picture of this artwork’ (though with digital photographic devices the latter is instantly realised); secondly, it is ‘unofficial’ in the sense that while the spatial arrangement and the sometimes available guide are designed to orient the visitor’s direct seeing, visitor photography receives no institutional instruction—creativity is thus offered a way to grow. How visitor photography brings with it new challenges to the gallery space will be explored in the next chapter through examining its relationships with Hetherington’s three organising principles of the art museum. The affordances of visitor photography will be looked at in Chapter 8.

# Chapter 7. Visitor Photography and Art Museums as Experiential Spaces

## Introduction

In this chapter, discussion turns to the final research question, which focuses on how the embodied processes of visitor photography in the shared gallery space have social consequences. While in previous chapters, gallery spaces and visitor photography are investigated separately, here they are examined together. Based on findings from the ethnographic work, previous chapters have shown on the one hand how art museums and galleries present artworks to the public through a set of spatial arrangements and visitor behavioural regulations, and on the other, how visitor photography of various types is lived in the space in which visitors encounter art. While visitor photography policies have been made or changed in response to the large number of people taking pictures in the gallery rooms—and in an increasing number of cases the response is to lift an existing ban—it does not appear that art museums and galleries have yet begun to take visitor photography into consideration when planning their spaces and exhibitions of artwork. In spaces designed for direct-seeing and thus the direct-seeing of visitor bodies, allowing picture-taking does not merely mean that visitors can now have photographic images of artworks, but that picture-taking bodies are going to take up room and have an impact on the space and other visitors. As demonstrated in Chapter 6, the movements of photo-taking bodies have consequences: busy-ness resulting from the quick rhythm of some types of picture-taking and congestion in visitor flow, as well as the acoustic effect of the unsilenced shutter. Moreover, it raises a question about whether seeing original artworks has lost its currency, for picture-takers are in effect looking at a photographic reproduction. If so, how can art museums and galleries remain unique places in which to see the original, when photographic images can be obtained outside these institutions? As summarised by Hetherington and discussed in Chapter 2.3.2, there are three spatial motifs around which art museums are organised: interiority, singularity, and outside. That is, an art museum as a unique experiential space separated from street life becomes possible by maintaining the interior, appropriating the singularity of the original artworks it houses, and exerting an ordering power on its collection. How visitor photography might or might not, through confronting these three motifs, challenge the maintenance of art museums and galleries is explored in this chapter. In each of the following three sections, the practice of visitor photography is examined as what I term a 'destabilising factor', which, on the one hand, disturbs the spatial organising principles, and on the other, consolidates their exercise. The fourth section turns to an examination of how, in a society where experience is in high demand, art museums and galleries react, not only to make their experiential spaces possible but to attract people inside, and how visitor photography is involved in this effort.

## 7.1 Visitor Photography and the Interior

### 7.1.1 Challenging the Maintenance of the Interior

Visitor photography as a destabilising factor which challenges the first spatial principle, interiority, could be examined from a number of perspectives. Firstly, as discussed in Chapter 6.2.1, the photographic act—which when combined with the practice of direct-seeing can be subsumed under several gaze categories—is itself a relatively uniform process. Two possibilities can be further explored: the picture-taking visitor might or might not have an indiscriminate attitude towards objects on either side of the museum walls. In the case of the former, the fact that something appears to the visitor as photography-worthy does not necessarily equate to aesthetic excellence. In other words, an object that a visitor believes can be translated into a good or interesting photographic image might not be a good piece of art. Although whether an artwork can be judged as good is subjective, the point here is that some picture-takers do not mind whether the artwork is good or not: for them, whether it is a good item to photograph matters more. The value and meaning of this process lies more in producing photographic images than appreciating the artworks. Consequently, the differentiation of the museum interior as a space for art is not appreciated. The visitor can photograph an artwork in the gallery space with the same attitude and interest s/he assumes when photographing a non-art object outside the art museum. In the case of the latter, the uniformity of the act still reduces the separating force of the boundaries between inside and outside. The visitor can possibly change her/his other behaviours after entering the gallery space—for example, walking more slowly and quietly, or talking in lower volume—and thus contribute to the differentiation marked by the architectural boundaries. Yet, the relatively uniform performance of the photographic act compromises this differentiation effect.

Secondly, a sense of busy-ness resulting from visitor photography makes the interior less distinguishable from street life.  As shown in Chapter 6.2.2, the space taken up, visitor flow congestion caused, series of movements required by, and sounds created by the completion of picture-taking, all build up an impression of commotion. On the one hand, with the development of technology, especially in the case of mobile devices, taking a picture can be more inconspicuously incorporated into both daily and museum-visit routines. While in the past, cumbersome equipment was required and a long setting-up process unavoidable, in our time, for anyone who photographs, these are choices instead of necessities. One can whip out a pocket-sized device, aim at the subject, push or touch the button, and complete shooting in a moment. On the other hand, however, regardless of how instant this process is, no step can be omitted and thus the gallery room is given an added sense of motion. In effect, the more instant the whole process is, the busier the space feels.

Thirdly, the inside-outside separation feels blurred when the art museum's power to govern visitor bodies appears weakened. As Tony Bennett points out, the museum 'explicitly targeted the popular body as an object for reform…This was accomplished, most obviously, by the direct proscription of those forms of behaviour associated with places of popular assembly by, for example, rules forbidding eating and drinking, outlawing the touching of exhibits…' (1995: 100). When art museums permit visitor photography, they give away their governing power over the visitor's body and manners to some degree. When art museums forbid visitor photography, they find their rule constantly disregarded. This is not to claim that visitors now roam freely in the museum space with photographic devices in their hands, abandoning any awareness of the need for manners. It was noted that visitors still exercised caution or inhibition when taking pictures inside the institutional space. What significantly challenges the institutional authority of maintaining an organised inside is the grey area of visitor discipline opened up by the new museum behaviour of photography. Without a formally installed set of photographic etiquettes, visitors bring their routine photographic procedure to their encounter with museum artworks. Related to but subtly different from the first two respects, the point here is that when taking photographs, visitor bodies—perhaps unconsciously—cease to conform to the tiptoeing mode of museum manners. The reverential connoisseur behaviour that demands that the body is reduced to the seeing eye is not in harmony with the body busying at photographic recording, not to mention the case of deliberate defiance of a no-photography rule.  However, with the relaxation of photography regulations—that is, the institutionalisation of visitor picture taking, albeit still in the stage of exploration, control is gradually retained by the art museum—this will be examined in the following part.

### 7.1.2 Legitimising Visitor Photography: Picture-taking as Part of the Interior

It is argued in this part, firstly, that the implication of art museums' and galleries' decision-making powers over their own photography policies is that they still hold regulating power over their spaces. Secondly, by acknowledging the visitor's desire to take photos and allowing picture-taking to be performed, institutions interiorise a practice previously belonging to the outside only and might then have control over it. It should be noted that there is a certain degree of restraint when visitors photograph artworks in the museum space. Although many—if not more and more—visitors take pictures in a manner not so different from what might be done in the street, some—for example, Pan Kim, as shown in Chapter 6.3.4—feel less free and attempt to render their photographic performance less conspicuous, limiting the amount of time invested. The stealthy performance of visitor photography I noticed in many cases falls into this category of subjecting oneself to the museum's power. And some are careful to make sure they do not violate the official policies:

> *'I don't like to do something and get told that it's forbidden. So I always check.'*
>
> (Paula Díaz, personal communication, December 15, 2017)

The current confused state of visitor manners and experiential modes caused by the widespread relaxation of photography policy does not necessarily lead to a compromise of the institution's power. Instead, by gradually normalising visitor photography inside the space, art museums are taking back their dominance over the visitor body and thus a step further to exercising control over maintaining a tightly organised interior.

**Case Study. Legitimation of Visitor Photography in Tate Modern**

We cannot examine on its own the way visitor photography activities are monitored inside Tate modern, but only in conjunction with the regulation of visitor behaviours in general. The administration of visitor regulation is a complex issue in an institution that receives a huge number of visitors on a daily basis—while Raven Row could have 25 visitors in a day and consider that figure regular, Tate Modern's attendance figures might reach that number as soon as opens its the doors. What is in question is how tight or how loose the regulations should be, and who and what comes first? As mentioned already in Chapter 5, members of The Visitor Experience Team are those who directly face visitors in the gallery and manage the co-existence of the art works with the wide range of visitors in the Tate exhibition space. Annie Bedford, the information Manager, observed,

That's so hard for people who work in the Team. In the gallery, there're thousands of people there right now, all looking for different experiences. And visitor assistants in our team have to manage - not only like this digital technology - but you can apply the same thing to the exhibitions, say, you want to sit down and sketch and look around the space, enjoy spending some time, maybe making some noises or look through their legs at the painting. And you have people who want to have a quiet experience and are annoyed by that.'

(Annie Bedford, personal communication, February 20, 2018)

Among various experience-seekers, those who intend to take photographs appear to have their wishes fulfilled at the expense of others whose experiences are affected by photographic activity. As the Visitor Experience Manager Dickon Moore reflected,

'Sometimes I think there would be a bit of conflict between those who require or feel it having an advantage to their experience using technology. And generally when that kind of conflict happens, it seems that those who use harmless technology came up to the top because they just did it and people kind of…grumbled a little bit but didn't say anything.'

(Dickon Moore, personal communication, February 20, 2018)

On the one hand, while there are guidelines on monitoring visitor behaviours, they have not been extended to cover every aspect of visitor photography.125 As examined in Chapter 6, the performance of the photographic act often takes up more space than direct-seeing. Moreover, picture-takers usually expect other visitors to step aside, clearing the space in front the artworks for photographs that include only the objects (and some cases subjects) with which they are concerned. That each visitor should be entitled to a certain amount of temporal and spatial freedom to be with the artwork is protected by the guidelines. However, there are no guidelines on how the right to acquire a better viewing position can be balanced between those who take pictures and those who do not: 'there're guidelines…So if there're school groups, guided tours, or families spending a lot of time in front of one artwork, this is not necessarily written down to the public but internally to staff our guideline is no more than fifteen minutes in front of one artwork. So for instance, if some people crowd around a work for more than fifteen minutes, doing a talk, we'll have them move on. I guess that hasn't yet come up for photography because it's a bit quicker. But I can totally imagine a scenario where somebody is…well, we don't

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[125] Tate Modern bans the use of tripods and selfie sticks. On the one hand, as Annie Bedford reflected, it was not usual that gallery assistants felt required to intervene when visitors violated these rules; on the other hand, that this violation, when it occurred, was nevertheless regarded as 'annoying' by other visitors:

> *'We actually had a conversation this morning in the con room about selfie sticks. Because we tried to tackle that problem. We ban the use of tripods in the gallery. Also I found out this morning that we ban selfie sticks in exhibitions. Because obviously everyone going around with extra bit of metal on their cameras is even more obtrusive. But I guess visitors self-manage quite a lot, don't they? Our team don't have to step in that much in situations like that. But we do get comments that people get annoyed'*
>
> (Annie Bedford, personal communication, February 20, 2018)

It appears that while each visitor might tend to prioritise her/his own ideal type of experiential mode, Tate Modern is playing the role of tolerant host.

allow filming for the same reason. When filming, you stand a bit longer…I don't know, that might be a problem. But that hasn't come up yet for photography, like they are hogging the space for a long period of time. It's more like they're generally annoying…for example, their elbows, you know. But we don't really have guideline for that at this moment.'

(Annie Bedford, personal communication, February 20, 2018)

'No, not really. There's a lot of discussion about this. You kind of have to decide a balance between someone affecting others' experience and that person's ability to have ownership of her own. So it can be tricky.'

(Dickon Moore, personal communication, February 20, 2018)

On the other hand, it is stressed that each visitor's preferred type of experience should be allowed, that there are equal rights in the gallery room. This means that although there are visitors who, like my interviewee Charlotte Lopez (see Chapter 6.3.4), condemn visitor photography as 'disrespectful' and, as Bedford describes, find it annoying, those who want to take pictures are considered to have the right to do so:

'Sometimes we have to really put our foot down to those people who [make complaints about others]. The ability for all of our audience profiles to have ownership of this space by being themselves, sometimes that means being noisy or whatever, is a vital thing for them to kind of feel at home in our gallery. Sometime people feel scared by, you know. It's really important to allow that comfort for people. Sometimes we have to be intolerant of people who find it objectionable. They want me to go into the gallery and say 'shut up' actually and I would say 'no, I'm not going to do that'. I think that's the line we have to take. It's good we do. The idea that everyone should experience in the same way is really dangerous. I think you have to enable people to be themselves and experience in their own ways. So you can be inclusive…yeah. '

(Dickon Moore, personal communication, February 20, 2018)

Thus, regulations are enforced in two ways: preventing certain behaviours and ensuring all other behaviours can happen freely. Both aim to accommodate every visitor's preference. As can be seen, the governance of visitor photography does not have clear guidelines to reference. However, the insistence on and attempt to allow the co-existence of visitors with different behaviours is clear. Moreover, that they take a conscious decision and effort indicates that the institution is the one which holds the power to exercise control.

## 7.2 Visitor Photography and the Principle of Singularity

### 7.2.1 Challenging the Status of Being Singular

The art museum, as pointed out by Hetherington, possesses the character of singularity which originates in its appropriation of the singularity of its art collection. This singular character of art is 'something that comes about because of its sacred or other character (Hetherington, 2014: 75). For critics like the French Philosopher Maurice Blanchot, while previously, art was where sacred experience was to be had, the museum, by assuming the singular sacredness of the artwork, replaces the artwork and becomes where sacred experience takes place. (Hetherington, 2014: 75-6). It can be said that the sacredness of the artwork, its holiness— because it originally serves a religious purpose— turns the non-religious art museum into something out of the ordinary when it is transferred to the exhibition space. 'Other characters', which Hetherington does not investigate, among them the qualities of 'being original' and 'being art' themselves occupy prominent positions. These two characters reference each other heavily yet deserve to be treated separately with care. On the one hand, in the Western tradition, art is valued for its originality (see Fyfe, 2004). Therefore, an artwork, when bearing the traces of its one and only creator, stands above reproduced versions: the original, which is ‘the only one’, and imitations that open up the possibility of an infinite number of reproductions, are thus valued differently.[126]

Being art, on the other hand, while largely associated with being one-of-a-kind, is also positioned highly on the ladder of cultural value because it is considered either refined or above the material. Again, this is embedded in the Western ideological structure, which follows the logic of an evolutionary view of civilisation, rooted deeply in Enlightenment thinking. Even the contentiously conceived ‘primitive art’ which has been re-framed in some liberal or post-colonial ideologies as (instead of mere artefact) art which links to spirituality, does not by existing fundamentally alter the separation between the elitist appreciation of the connoisseur and the mundane appreciation of ‘the people’. While anthropologists have endeavoured to challenge this already globalised Western perception/structuring (see, for example, Bell, 2017; Burt, 2013; Gell, 1996; Graburn, 1976), the current artworld still practices the kind of attitude that—often literally—treats art as the untouchable almighty. Correspondingly, a set of reverential attitudes and manners is demanded of visitors to the art exhibition. Moreover, the uniqueness of each original artwork not only contributes to the museum’s exceptionality but attracts visitors to travel to and come inside the museum building. Following Berger’s idea, as discussed in Chapter 2.1.2, the art museum which feeds its visitors authentic artworks becomes a place of worship. If it features on the 'must do' list of art lovers and tourists the singularity of the museum is reinforced.

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[126] Brendan Cormier, Lead Curator of the Shekou Design Museum Project, publishes—as a catalogue essay for the exhibition ‘A World of Fragile Parts’ which ‘looked at how the V&A’s 19th century tradition of reproduction-making has taken on new meaning in the 21st century’—on the V&A Blog, these words: ‘given the choice between originals and copies, the original always wins. In a recent study, a focus group was asked to imagine that the Mona Lisa had been reduced to a pile of ashes, but a perfect copy existed. They had a choice to see either the ashes or the copy, and 80% still chose the ashes, even though hypothetically it bore absolutely no resemblance to the original work itself, and was indistinguishable from any other pile of ashes’ (Cormier, 2017). The study referred to was conducted by philosophers Angelika Seidel and Jesse Prinz (see Seidel, 2017; Seidel and Prinz, 2018)

However, taking photographs and thus visually focusing on the screen of the photographic device generates a question: if visitors are in effect looking at photographically reproduced images of the original artwork, is the singularity of art threatened? To put it in another way, how might 'not looking' flatten the art museum and leave the latter less distinguishable from online galleries? Attempts at answering this question could be made by examining several aspects. Firstly, attention given to the real work decreases when it has be to be shared between direct looking and photographic recording. This challenge posed by visitor photography echoes the tension between photography and the original pointed out in literature review: 'the original does not receive the contemplative attention it requires according to the dominant premise of aesthetic experience. This leaves the question as to whether this encounter is still meaningful.' (Chapter 2.1.2). As supported by my ethnographic observation, when people have to squeeze both direct looking and picture taking into a time-limited visit, they reduce the amount time spent focusing on the original. In an economy of attention, time and energy invested in an activity or object consequently increase the value of the latter. Following this logic, the original work which has been given less and less attention is deprived of its value of being the 'only one' looked at.[127]

The second point concerns the way in which the original artworks receive reverence from visitors. As mentioned in Chapter 6.3.4, one of the interviewees, Charlotte Lopez, condemned visitor photography as ‘disrespectful’. For her, artworks deserve to be looked at directly and invested with attention and time—a view correspond to that of the ‘old school’ professionals at Tate Modern (See Chapter 4.2.3). Besides deciphering and enjoying its aesthetic qualities, if treating their ideal form of appreciation as a way of showing respect for or worshipping the original work, what is in question is this: when people engage in this type of appreciation less frequently, is the value of being singular—of the artwork and consequently the art museum—diminished? Here, instead of asking whether the public’s viewpoint on the value of the original has changed, I ask whether, when a long-practiced ritual ceases to be enacted, it affects the value of the worshipped object? In other words, unlike the first point where the actual attention paid to the real work was indeed observed having to share with photo-production and photos reproduced, what is being explored here is whether, when the reverential worshipping ritual is not performed, reverence still exists? This leads to a further question concerning the significance of the work being one-of-a-kind:

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[127] The popularity—and frequently necessity—of including the gift shop in one's visit puts the singularity of the original work into an even more ambiguous state. Looking at the mass produced products (reproduced images of artworks; tourist souvenirs) was observed to occupy a significant portion of time and testified to by my interviewees as having meaning attached. The store is where visitors make a personal connection with the experience by possessing artwork-based consumer goods. Many of these products are printed with photographically reproduced images of original artworks: postcards, catalogues, mugs, calendars, T-shirts, umbrellas, bags, scarfs, etc. The fact that

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what they were viewing were not originals did not appear to undermine their pleasure, not to mention the visitors who went to the gift shop first— and sometime only to the gift shop. It was not rare to see visitors at Tate Modern or the National Gallery wandering into the gallery rooms with gift shop bags already hanging on their arms. While it was possible that these visitors had returned—instead of just coming in for the first time—to the gallery room after a trip to the shop, an article published by VOX supports the idea that some people did make the gift shop the starting point of their visit: ‘Some visitors even “begin with the shop in order to find out what is important to see in the museum!” says Sharon Macdonald, director of the Centre for Anthropological Research on Museums and Heritage and professor of social anthropology at the Humboldt University of Berlin’ (Higgs, 2018). One point worth exploring is that, as revealed during my ethnographic work, people appeared more relaxed in the gift shops—in the sense that they moved and used their bodies more freely. One of the interviewees, Pan Kim, who rarely took photographs in the gallery rooms and usually spent a relatively long time looking attentively at each artwork, reflected that she always went to the gift shop at the end of a visit and enjoyed the time there:

> *‘I always try to buy something after the show. Very often I felt disappointed that they didn’t have the ones I wanted. But still…’*
>
> (Pan Kim, personal communication, November 8, 2018)

Her reflection was echoed by Mark Evans, who among my interviewees also belonged to those who less often took photographs:

> *‘I always go to the shop. If it’s an exhibition I enjoy, I tend to go to the shop to see if there’s any prints I’d like to buy.’*
>
> (Mark Evans, personal communication, December 17, 2017)

Gift shops, offering products bearing reproduced—and often in unsatisfactory quality—images of the original artworks, see visitors conduct themselves at leisure and with greater ease. This might result from the fact that visitors understand that items here are less valuable, as well as that they can touch the products, and thus feel a sense of intimacy. Therefore, the value of the gift shop, paradoxically, lies in its approachability for not having real artworks.

will physical museums still be valued more than online galleries or virtual museums? On the surface, it appears that visitors who spend time looking at photographically processed images treat the original work with an indifferent air. However, this cannot explain why a large—if not increasing—number of visitors still go to art museums. In the following section, it is debated that, considered in a different light, the singularity of the art museum is in effect strengthened.

### 7.2.2 Reinforcing the Sense of 'One-of-a-kind'

The freedom to make photographic copies can contribute to strengthening the hierarchy between the original and reproductions, and this can be examined from two angles. Firstly, taking photographs could be seen to be an emerging worship ritual which to some degree replaces the old one we used to associate firmly with visual appreciation in art museums. The disappearance of the ideal form of the latter—the quiet and slow contemplation considered appropriate for visitors who come to meet 'the real thing'—should not be interpreted as an abandonment of the value attached to the original by visitors. On the contrary, taking pictures is visitors' chosen way—conscious or subconscious—to express their marvel at meeting the original. Photography is used to try to make the moment permanent or last in the memory. Berger argues that '…the uniqueness of the original now lies in its being *the original of a reproduction.* It is no longer what its image shows that strikes one as unique; its first meaning is no longer to be found in what it says, but in what it is' (1972: 21, see also Chapter 2.1.2). This might or might not be true, but applying it to all visitors indiscriminately risks universalisation. Yet he does offer a plausible explanation for visitors' still strong longing for the original. Another explanation, however, runs against his reasoning that appreciation of original works' aesthetic properties becomes a lesser purpose. It is very possible that it is because the viewer is overwhelmed by the aesthetic details of the real—that cannot be transmitted by reproductions seen prior to the visit—that s/he feels the need either to capture this revelation or to release her/his emotions by creating something tangible. Thus, taking up a photographic device and taking a picture becomes a ritual that confirms the value of the original art work. The singularity of the work, appropriated by the art museum, remains unshakeable, if not gaining even more currency.

Secondly, I argue that the singularity of the tourist experience contributes to the singularity of the art museum. I have observed that I am more tempted to take photographs of the art museums—though not the exhibits—when travelling away from London, where I am based. The realisation that it would not be easy to go back and view the things that intrigue me again after I leave—in other words, the sense that this might be the only time in my life that I have to imprint the experience onto my body-mind memory-scape—motivates a search for ways to aid to the preservation of impressions. Handheld cameras in the past and smartphones in recent years are readily available tools which can help to complete the memory task. Moreover, debatably, the term visit already implies a sense of comparative rarity. Even 'repeat' visit, a term used by the Courtauld Gallery, does not expel the out-of-ordinariness of the experience. The Courtauld records that repeat visitors in 2016/17 had been to the gallery 2.90 times in the previous 12 months, while the figure was 3.70 for 2015/6 and 4.45 for 2014/5 (Courtauld Annual Visitor Survey 2016/7). That a great number of people do not go back to the same art museums often results in making each visit something close to a singular event. The sense that one must record, in the case of the art museum experience, in effect accentuates the status of the 'real' and thus consolidates the hierarchy between the original and the copy. Since the production of copies has to take place in the art museum where the original is on display, the art museum remains irreplaceable[128].

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[128] It was observed that there were people taking photographs—albeit at several occasions stealthily for it was prohibited—of artworks in art museums, of performances in theatres or at live music events. In cinemas, on the contrary, audiences had not been observed taking pictures of films during screening.

**Case Study. The Copy of Durer's Hare: Travelling to See the Original**

The longing to see an original artwork can be nurtured by years' familiarity with its photographic reproduction. A sense of fondness for the image, in the case of Sam Weber for Albrecht Dürer's painting Young Hare, grew so great that he travelled from the UK to Vienna so he could finally look at the real thing with his own eyes. The wish, however, was frustrated. At the Albertina, he found that the painting in front of him—looking exactly the Young Hare—had a label underneath signifying the work being a facsimile:

'That [the original painting] was the reason I visited…So what's the difference between that and a poster? I don't understand why they bothered to display it.'

(Sam Weber, personal communication, December 16, 2017)

Even though, when being further probed, Weber admitted that, unlike posters, the reproduction on display was indeed expertly executed, he insisted that the purpose of art museums and galleries was to exhibit the original works:

'Yes, a very well done copy. But that should never be something you display in an art gallery. Unless you're doing ii for some reasons. Like if you want show an exhibition of an artist and you only have a few of his works, then you may make some copies to show how his other paintings look. But that's different. Seeing a facsimile in art gallery is the most meaningless thing to me. At a science or history museum, it can be interesting because museums are much more information based. So you're looking at facsimile of a famous

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Arguably, the space of black box would make photographic activities especially conspicuous and intrusive. Yet equally arguably, theatres and some gallery rooms—for example, the Zabludowicz's during the *Haroon Mirza/HRM199: for a Partnership Society* exhibition (28th Sep – 17th Dec 2017)—could be as dark. That it is the original, one-of-a-kind pieces which induce people to photograph shows an interesting relationship between singularity and copy.

scientist's journal and that's combined with some artefacts related to it. That's how museums work. As to art galleries, you're there to see a genuine piece of art.'

(Sam Weber, personal communication, December 16, 2017)

What is revealed is that, firstly, Weber's journey to the Albertina resembled a pilgrim's to the holy place—or the place where the divine power could be closely felt. Secondly, it was the singularity of that Dürer piece which marked the art museum for him a singular place and thus became the trip's destination. That the institution in fact exhibited a facsimile brought Weber to question its purpose. Moreover, as observed during the ethnography, it was not unusual for Weber to take photographs of artworks he was attracted to, often of details he wanted to remember or study later. He reflected that had the Dürer's Young Hare been the original work, he would have taken pictures of it. In that case, the art museum's singularity would not be diminished but reinforced by visitor photography as a way of expressing and continuing admiration.

## 7.3 Visitor Photography and the Outside

### 7.3.1 Challenging the Practice of Ordering

This section explores the way visitor photography allows people to negotiate the order of the exhibits in their virtual collection The final principle of the art museum concerns the institution's power of ordering its exhibits and providing narratives to its visitors. Inside the space, not only is the artwork presented as the height of the genius master, the art museum speaks via its collection and exhibition with an authoritative voice to those who cross the threshold and come inside. According to Hetherington, the museum 'constructed a fabulated topos in which narratives of historicity assumed a *mimetic realism* in which the display of artefacts sought to evoke a sense of the past to visitors in ways they could come to understand not only that past but also their place in the present in relation to it' (2014: 81).

Visitor photography interferes as a destabilising factor here not only because it assists the isolation of viewers' attention by fixing the body-mechanical eye onto specific objects and thus disrupting the exhibition's narration, but also because smartphones have now enabled users to assemble the images, a process which entails an ordering power.

Moreover, the tourist inclination to aestheticise experiences, aided by photographic tool kits, further complicates re-narrating. As demonstrated in the Literature Review, Bauman's view of tourist strategy of modern human beings implies an aesthetics-centred principle of organising experience. With photographic devices ready to be employed, visitors do not only seek the new and the sensational but invest their own creativity in the experience. Possible conflict lies in the fact that the aesthetic criteria enlisted by visitors might or might not correspond to the organising logic of the narration created by art museums, based on certain knowledge framed within art history and curatorial considerations.

This is not to suggest that visitors without recourse to picture-taking, either in the past or in the present, successfully detect or receive agreeably museums' narration of exhibits. However, visitors equipped with photographic devices are now capable of taking fragments of the display, and are with either digital archival space or social media platforms able to re-sequence, re-categorise, or juxtaposition in previously unimaginable ways. That is, visitors can now record the works encountered and construct a personal gallery which alters the official order. While there is the type of visitor who documents every exhibit chronologically, orienting their photographic activity by the viewing order designated by the institution, many take pictures selectively and thus suspend the coherent narrative. However, the ordering of online personal galleries,[129] and how they might deviate from the official narrative, awaits further empirical study which is beyond the scope of this PhD project.

### 7.3.2 Photographically Consolidating the Museum Order

While visitors can wander freely from one work to another without having to obey a particular order, they are more often than not oriented by the design of the exhibition, and largely follow the curatorially intended narrative. This phenomenon can be observed in both direct-seeing-visitors and picture-taking-visitors. The potential freedom opened up by visitor photography is compromised by visitors' disposition to be guided. This need to entrust oneself to the art museum was found constantly during my ethnographic work. In interviewing, as mentioned in 5.2.1, people expressed the demand for clear guide signage and introductory information. It was also observed that consulting traditional print version of guide materials—for example, labels, panels and booklets—and the audio or multimedia guides (which often presented reproduced images on the screen) was a common – if not universal—visitor activity. While visitors were not seen to photograph words or images shown on the screens of multimedia guides, they were observed taking photos of labels and panels. Most museum professionals in the interviews expressed their surprise and confusion at this latter practice. However strange that might appear to them, those picture-takers who photograph not only artworks but labels and panels are in effect giving value to the official texts. This action is often underlaid by a trust in the superiority of art museums' cultural and aesthetic knowledge. The explanatory power of the histories of art and the organising authority in the display of artworks are thus reproduced in the reproduction of images of guiding materials. As a result, the institution retains the power of narration.

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[129] From an opposite direction, with the help of websites like Instamuseum which 'Turn[s] your Instagram pictures into a virtual museum' (http://www.instamuseum.com ), any images could be assembled into a VR gallery. While this website does not encourage pictures of artworks only, it might be worth investigating whether any user arranged—and thus rehung—the photos s/he has taken of artworks via this Instamuseum and what were the differences in ordering between the official, 'real' version and the visitor, virtual edition.

**Case Study. Co-ordering the Personal Gallery of Photographic Copies**

Dr Alexandra Gerstein, the Courtauld's Curator of Sculpture and Decorative Arts, recalled an encounter in the Musée Maillol in Paris. A female visitor in her 60s was observed photographing seemingly every exhibit and label with a camera.

> 'I followed this lady…there was this woman who systematically took photos of every painting and the label. I was so curious. At the end we happened to be at the bookshop at the same time. I said 'hello, sorry to bother you'. I said I worked as a curator in a museum and I noticed how she took pictures. And she said it was just her way of organising it all….I don't know. She seemed to think…I think that was her answer…that that was how she visits museums and how she liked. I think you can just get a catalogue. But she said no because she liked to be able to organise. I think if I've this amount of photos I'll just leave in my computer without doing anything forever. But she said she actually organise them. Ah I think she was an avant-garde museumgoer and talk-goer. She was sort of a well-educated French citizen and she would go to talks offered by curators, a supplement for her. She had a proper education…She was probably a teacher…it was so odd…To me, she seemed not looking at the exhibition but the pictures but she didn't seem to mind. I think, well, you can just stop for a minute.'
>
> (Dr Alexandra Gerstein, personal communication, February 21, 2018)

Firstly, that the visitor in question was emphatically described as properly educated implies that her behaviour—which was mostly invested in taking photographs—did not fit into what was expected of her by the curator. Two points can be further elaborated: that she had been able to assume a sophisticated connoisseurship, and that adopting photography as the major way to engage was regarded—perhaps instinctively—as a form of superficial consumption. Hence the curator's puzzlement over the conflict between these two presumptions. Secondly, whether or not she was capable of informed aesthetic enjoyment, it appears what was valued by this visitor was the opportunity to exercise the power of ordering. This invites questions about what a serious—in the sense of paying attention—and consciously chosen form of looking might be; and further, whether this cannot be photographing. Thirdly, however, while the visitor could rearrange the order and thus juxtaposition of the images, that the labels were part of her documentation suggests that the institutional narrative might still exercise an influence on the organisation of her personal gallery of photographic copies. The individual and the art museum can be seen as co-involved in the re-ordering process.

## 7.4 Art Museum in the Photography-Valued Experience Society

Art museums and galleries, following Hetherington's ideas, organise their spaces based on the three principles to serve as containers for experience. Yet they are of various types and situated in different geocultural locations and time-periods, and thus have to tackle dissimilar situations and issues. The three sections above have explored how visitor photography might confront as well strengthen these organising principles. This section turns to examine what strategies have been developed by museums and art galleries, in a society where experience has increasingly become a staged product—as discussed in Chapter 2.3.1, not just to make their experiential spaces possible but also to attract people inside. Visitor photography plays a role in this challenge because, on the one side, there are people who want to enjoy their visit with or through picture-taking, and on the other side, there are museum professionals who do not want picture-taking to become the major or even the sole method through which their exhibitions are experienced, and there are visitors who do not want their time in the gallery rooms be disturbed by others' photographic activities.

Professionals, as demonstrated in Chapter 5, showed during interviews an emphasis on experience—either of the museums or of the artworks. According to the economists Pine and Gilmore, the experience economy focuses on providing 'memorable events' and tries 'to engage…in a personal way' (1999: 12, see also Chapter 2.3.1). Firstly, while none of the interviewees used words such as 'unforgettable' or 'memorable', the continuous emergence of ever more spectacular museum buildings (for example, the Blavatnik Building of Tate Modern) and renovation plans (for example, the ongoing Courtauld Gallery refurbishment) suggests that this might be one direction art museums and galleries have been taking. The underlying logic, though rarely explicitly expressed, and maybe not even consciously grasped, could be read as claiming that the more spectacular images with which an art museum can provide the public, and the more photo opportunities that come along, the more visitors will be attracted. With many art museums and galleries beginning to meet people's demands for permission to freely photograph inside the gallery space, just as they can the exteriors of museum buildings, a memorable experience thus often means photographically memorable.

Secondly, the idea that experience should be enabled in the form of personal engagement can be seen as reflected in, as mentioned in Chapter 5.2.2, art museums' and galleries' focus on inclusivity and accessibility. Though often interrelated in that both appear to aim to reduce the uncertainty possibly felt by visitors, it is one thing to make visitors to art museums feel welcome and another to make the exhibits accessible. The former is to lower the high social and cultural status—or at least to give that impression—of the art museum and to reassure the public that no matter what their social background, coming inside the space requires no expertise and—eventually—no special etiquette. The latter opposes the white-cube model by offering narratives and stories which serve as a bridge between the exhibits and the viewers.[130]

Another significant strategy for engagement favoured by a large number of art museums and galleries is the inclusion of spaces for non-art activities. That cafés and gift shops[131] are installed in the majority of art museums and galleries can be understood, alongside their function of generating revenue, as providing options for visitors so that some of them can choose to make connection with the institutions for art not through artworks but as places where they feel on a more sure ground. The reflection of Tate's Visitor Experience Manager about '*broaden[ing] the way*' to entice people to enter the museum space, touched on in Chapter 5.2.2, can be recalled and expanded here:

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[130] It is worth considering, however, that the essential difference between artworks exhibited in art museums and other narrative-based cultural products like films and plays might make it inappropriate to offer narratives to audiences of the former. Admittedly, it might be easier to be absorbed in a story than a painting. Hence, as introduced in Chapter 2.3.1, organisations such as Museum Hack which provide story-based tours have achieved great popularity and success. Yet, the power of artworks might just lie in the fact they do not—at least not entirely—operate within the system of words. Integrating them into stories, while enabling interest and understanding, risks turning them into mere historical objects. From another angle, Sylvia Lahav questions the provision of 'specialist forms of writing' such as labels and wall texts, arguing that the practice of reading may fracture the experience of looking 'so that a work of art and "its mode of existence [is] established within its 'saying' rather than its seeing" (Preziosi, 1989: 83)' (Lahav, 2011: 80).

[131] Moreover, arguably, the more well stocked the gift shop can be, the more possible that people can come away with tangible souvenirs, the higher the visitor satisfaction rate and the popularity of the art museum.

> *'Even if in your first visit at Tate you don't see any artworks at all, the fact is you've been to Tate and you've made a connection. In the end you might get to see some artwork and that might start to affect your life…makes you start to think about the questions artworks bring up, start to think about yourself, and how you deal with the questions in your mind. That's the ultimate aim. But…we need to broaden the way we get there... people who feel a bit intimidated by artworks and by their own level of knowledge might prefer to be able to have different types of experiences at first. Or a kind of mixed experiences. They can go to the cafes, can look at the building, or an event…*[132] *That serves a lot of needs and welcomes a broader audience. You're not going to discriminate between audiences. You don't provide experiences which only suit a particular audience. So that's a quite good democratic reason.'*[133]
>
> (Dickon Moore, personal communication, February 20, 2018)

One visitor to Tate Modern reflected after a visit that she and her companion went first to the café on the ground floor. That appeared to allow them to have a relaxing start to their exploration in the huge interior of Tate, which, they both recalled, was disorienting—though it should be pointed out that the fact that artworks were displayed mainly on upper floors contributed to their confusion: '*We didn't see any art after we entered! Didn't know where to find it'* (personal communication, May 22, 2018).

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[132] The viewing platform on Level 10 of the Blavatnik Building was also pointed out as serving the same purpose (Annie Bedford, personal communication, February 20, 2018).

[133] Tate Modern's practice and deployment of space is opposed to that of Raven Row, which had no shop, café, bar, or restaurant, but only artworks. The sense that this is a space for art and people to enter are expected to be interested in seeing art are comparatively strong.

In the case of visitor photography, it not only belongs to the first category of strategy—making experience memorable—but also serves the function of the second—making experience personal. It should be asked whether allowing visitors to use photographic devices as an anchoring strategy to tackle uncertain experiences is similar to offering visitors guiding materials. This point will be elaborated in the next chapter. Here, I argue that lessening the confusion possibly caused by the encounter with artworks can be questioned. While appearing to be a step to turn the art museum into an all-welcome, democratic, and inclusive space, it risks, at the same time, reducing the space into one for semi-religious worship or consumption—activities with which people seem to be more at ease. This is a danger that echoes the one warned about by Sloterdijk in his observation of the Crystal Palace as discussed in the Literature Review chapter (2.3.2).

Furthermore, the democratic accommodation of both picture-takers and non-picture-takers, as shown in the case study in Chapter 7.1, is confronted by the collision between these two different experiential modes. In the currently available spaces of art museums and galleries, photographic activity, though licensed, exercises a disrupting effect which is not yet resolvable: not only because the picture-taker has to allocate limited time to both direct-seeing and photo-taking and thus reduces the chance of the former, but the museum space has to be shared between these two types of visual activities; and often neither can be conducted satisfactorily at the same time. This raises the question of whether, while relaxing photography policies is deemed by many art museums to be a necessary step, the next step should be the development of innovative and updated exhibition design.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, based on the findings from ethnographic studies as discussed in the previous chapters, detailed examination centres on how the practice of visitor photography might pose a challenge to Hetherington's summary of spatial principles of the art museum as an experience container. It is argued that, while picture-taking shapes the museum space in ways that non-photographic-seeing does not, and thus confronts the idea and ideal of the art museum as a quiet place for contemplation, it also contributes to the force of those principles on which the art museum rests as a unique institution. The practice of visitor photography might alter the dynamic between visitors, art works, and art museums. However, the hierarchical relations between the institution and the public and between the original and the reproduction are not shaken. Picture-taking as a destabilising factor, absorbed into the institutional space and grown into a museum element, while it might or might compromise the aesthetic pleasure of seeing as recommended by conventional art professionals, does not necessarily render art museums powerless.

# Chapter 8. Visitor Photography and the Mediated Experience

## Introduction

Continuing to examine the possible consequences of visitor photography in art museums and galleries, this chapter discusses the various ways in which picture-taking shapes the visitor experience of artworks. Instead of dismissing taking pictures of artworks merely as a popular form of consumption—as opposed to a tasteful manner of appreciation, what is attempted here is to look at photographic contact as a complex interplay between visitors and artworks. In other words, this process is considered to be one meaningful to visitors and one out of which meanings are possibly generated by and for them. Section one concentrates on how allowing visitors' to take photos can and should be considered a manifestation of their right to be in art museums. Visitors' control over their own encounter with artworks through picture-taking will be explored from three angles: experience, collectable memories, and the creation of meaning. The second part continues the discussion of the mediascape begun in Chapter 2 and examines the multi-layered art museum experience comprised by the simultaneous presence of the original and the reproduced. The tactile connection set by picture-taking will also be explored as the affordance of this mediated looking. Part three pays attention to photography's power of imprinting the experience onto the visitor. The framing effect of picture-taking and the embodied and momentary intensification of visitors' attention are given particular focus. The fourth section examines the relation between visitor photography and memory. The desire to possess memories, against human beings' unreliable faculty for recall makes people turn to and trust photographic recording. The latter thus acquires the status of a souvenir and will be discussed in this light. Through exploring the materiality and affordances of visitor photography, photography is revealed to be an agent co-mediating the experience of artworks, and visitors are argued to have both the right to photograph and responsibility for this action.

## 8.1 The Right of the Beholder – to Photograph

Chapter 4.1 discusses the reasons given by art museums for relaxing their policies on photography. This section turns attention to the other side, visitors, and looks at how knowing or feeling that they are allowed to take photographs plays a significant part in their positioning in art museums and relative to artworks. Sensing the behavioural code of a space—and performing accordingly—in the case of the art museum, is twofold. On one side, by joining the institutionally approved, collective performance of a civil ritual complex (Duncan, 1991; 1995; 2005), the visitor is included into the totality of architecture-artwork. Ritual, as Goffman discerns, functions as a means through which order can be generated and maintained (1963). Rich Ling, a scholar of media technology and communication, summarises this, saying 'through our developing a mutually recognised focus and engendering a common mood and a common sense of shared status … we can cultivate our social ties to others' (2010: 286). This might result in a feeling of belonging[134] (see Goffman, 1963; Marshal, 2002; Turner, 1979). Thus, one can feel included by knowing the approved behavioural code. In other words, being able to possess the scripts for the ritualistic spaces of art museums and performing them accordingly, visitors become a part of the space. In the case of picture-taking in art museums, by having knowledge of the photography rules and abiding by them, visitors might feel themselves agreeable ‘insiders’ of a museum-going group.

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[134] This formula of ritual performance leading to inclusivity simultaneously entails that being without the knowledge or capability of practicing the ritual could exclude one from the space-event. Nina Simon, advocating participatory museums, argues that, for those who lack the 'entrance techniques', for example reading the map, the museum experience remains 'off-putting' (2010: 35). In other words, it is beyond their reach.

On the other side, however, the visitor subjects her/himself to the authority of the institution and becomes a disciplined being, a subordinate in the hierarchical world of art museums (see Bennett, 1995). The more rules imposed upon the visitor, the more powerlessness s/he might experience. One can also feel external to the museum as an institution even when s/he is physically inside the space. This might result from not only not taking part in the performance of museum ritual—due to having no access to, or going off, script—but from not being permitted certain conduct or activities.  The more specific the expectations of visitors’ behaviour, possibly the stronger the sense of exclusivity of the spatial community. This leads to the issue of the importance of allowing visitors the freedom to choose between taking photographs or not. It is argued that the sense of having the right to photograph contributes to the sense of having the right to ‘be there’.

During our brief exchange at the Taipei Biennial 2018 in the Taipei Municipal Art Museum, visitor Chung-Yao Huang pointed out it is better to ‘have the right to choose’ (January 12, 2018) where visitor photography is concerned. This statement revealed a request for visitors’ autonomy in art museums. This photography freedom involves three dimensions. Firstly, it directly touches experience: visitors can to some degree have control over the way of seeing. Secondly, it affects the ownership of tangible memories. With pictures they have taken and stored on personal devices, visitors thus build up a database of photographic representations of experience which is at their command. Thirdly, it involves visitors’ right to make sense of experienced objects and to experience them on their own terms. The following explores each of these aspects in depth.

### The Right to Experience

When discussing appropriate behaviour in public places, Goffman uses the term ‘special licence’ to describe the exemption enjoyed by certain roles in a given situation (1963: 203). As shown in Chapter 4.4.1, the Courtauld curator Dr Karen Serres reflected on the difference in the right to photograph between professionals and visitors,

> *‘We got so many people complained that they couldn’t take photographs…And I could understand! I was allowed to take photographs before public hours and I was like taking tons of photographs because I wanted to capture the details which spoke to me’*
>
> (Dr Karen Serres, personal communication, April 30, 2018)

The exhibition where Dr Serres took pictures was a temporary one consisting of paintings loaned by private lenders who did not cede those works’ copyright. Professionals were able to photograph because they were trusted to not share publicly the resulting images or use them for commercial purposes. For the general public, however, this trust did not exist and the regulation was enforced. Without a special licence for photography, visitors were partially turned into on-site yet external spectators of the authority of the museum and collectors’ power. This is not to claim that visitors could thus exercise no agency in the experience of art—on the contrary, direct-seeing can require and allow much aesthetic sensibility, creative association, and intellectual reflection. However, prohibiting photography reduces the size of the available toolbox of experience. By having the decision made for them—instead of deciding for themselves—about what range of tools to use, visitors' right to experience is compromised.

If visitors are given a licence to take photos, this might not only generate a sense of inclusion, but also opens up the possibility of being playfully outside the given frame of looking. Here the user of a photographic device can be associated with the figure of the flâneur developed by Benjamin (2005, 2006). This observation echoes Sontag's reflection that

> 'The photographer is an armed version of the solitary walker reconnoitering, stalking, cruising the urban inferno, the voyeuristic stroller who discovers the city as a landscape of voluptuous extremes. Adept of the joys of watching, connoisseur of empathy, the flâneur finds the world "picturesque"' ([1977)2008: 55).

The flâneur is conceived of as a gazer who does not see the totality but extracts from urban life 'a shower of events—primarily sights' (Weinstein and Weinstein, 1991:158). Whether s/he becomes a mere audience who treats the subjects and objects s/he encounters as spectacle, and whether s/he is consequently flawed in not taking action to reform society (see Weinstein and Weinstein, 1991) is another issue to be pondered outside this research. What is at stake here is that by pursuing aesthetic pleasure, the picture-taker as flâneur is able to access a playful form of engagement. David Frisby points out that

> 'Whereas the reality of existence "exhausts itself in concrete individual elements", the aesthetic dimension is felt in "the lightness and freedom

> of play”, for the latter implies that “one exercises functions…purely formally” without regard to “the reality-contents of life’ (1991: 74).

Thus, temporarily, the visitor can detach her/himself from the concrete reality of art museums. Like Simmel’s idea of the framed painting as a self-sufficient aesthetic entity ([1902]1994), the visitor who immerses her/himself in the photographic frame for a moment lives her/his life as a work of art. Urry and Larsen stress that, while photography can be seen as ‘a ritualised “theatre”’ through which people produce desired self-world relations, ‘there is also a significant play element to photography’ which is but should not be ignored in scholarly criticisms (2011: 208). This playfulness has the potential of bringing out visitors out of the world. Furthermore, the photo-taking visitor is using a framing tool neither recommended nor authorised by the art museum. In this sense, taking pictures can be seen as a way of exploring the possibility of seeing differently with another framework. A photographic devices is thus a kind of toy and the idea of playing is realised during the process of photo-taking. By obtaining the right to be relatively her/himself inside the space, the visitor has the chance to be located outside—even just fleetingly—the discipline of ‘correct’ seeing.

### The Right to Ownership

Following the right to record experience, the ownership of the resulting images concerns the entitlement to recallable and sharable memories. In Chapter 6.3.3, I showed how being able to retain their memories of museum visits, which they mentioned repeatedly, mattered to my interviewees. Later in Chapter 8.4, the way photography participates in the practice of possessing externalised memories will be further explored. In this section, the focus is on how being granted ownership of photographic images of the museum-artwork experience relates to a sense of being rightfully in the institutional space. This is an issue tightly linked to the definition of public space and consequently to the question of the degree to which the visitor has to be kept at a distance, not just from untouchable artworks, but from images of the latter.

Interviewee Lucas Barros emphatically pointed out, when asserting the legitimacy of visitor photography that '*It's just our memory.'* (December 15, 2017; see also 5.3.1.). His declaration indicates that while legally artworks might belong to institutions or lenders, the encounter between works and visitors belongs to the latter, and photographically captured images of this meeting should belong to them as well. Nina Simon, the Executive Director of the Santa Cruz Museum of Art and History in the US, arguing for unrestricted photography policies, states that 'few [visitors] try to capture the essential essence of an object or create its most stunning likeness'. Instead, they take pictures to 'memorialize their experiences…and share their memories with friends and families' (2010: 176). For her, it is important to recognise this wish to share for the museum to stay socially relevant. Yet, more than that, taking away photographs they have taken themselves of their own experience on-site, in contrast to purchasing in the shops the official edition of souvenirs or downloading digital images from museums' websites,[135] is itself a manifestation of visitors' shareholding in the visual appreciation of artworks.

This is a concern relevant primarily to public art museums. Not only because in general, private art galleries, including my case studies Raven Row and Zabludowicz, do not impose a ban on visitor photography. But public museums face the question of their responsibilities to the public, which inevitably involves a definition of the public and their supposed status. To be more precise, in our time of global migration and travelling, do public art museums treat their international visitors as customers or world citizens? Pondering upon whether the rights of the customer and the rights of the citizen are different, and whether they should be different in the realm of art museum is relevant to considering the rights of visitors. Yet those questions demand further research which is beyond the reach of this study. In the U.S., focusing his concern on architectural works where picture-taking is involved, Berkeley graduate Licensing Attorney Andrew Inesi points out that a 'public place could mean many different things, including public streets, state-owned buildings, and perhaps even privately-owned business open to the public' (2005: 88). Whether art museums, state- or privately-owned, can be treated as public places, however, remains an open question. As Inesi concedes, museums can still exercise tighter control over copyright protection (2005: 88). However, now that museums have been confronted with the issue of the ownership of their collections, and urged to return to their original societies objects obtained via the exertion

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[135] Institutions like The Met in New York and Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam have been offering free downloadable digital images of their collections online. Rijksmuseum's director Taco Dibbits, in an

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interview with Tim Cushing in 2013, explained the rationale behind the provision of digital images of the collection:

> *'We're a public institution, and so the art and objects we have are, in a way, everyone's property...With the Internet, it's so difficult to control your copyright or use of images that we decided we'd rather people use a very good high-resolution image of the "Milkmaid" from the Rijksmuseum rather than using a very bad reproduction'* (Kushing, 2013).

This objective was confirmed by Rijksmuseum in 2018 in our email exchange:

> '…our main object to share images of our objects is to create new art/design. And by offering high res images, the quality of these products will improve.'
>
> (Press Office, Rijksmuseum, personal communication, May 22, 2018)

This statement, stressed the public essence of art museums, but overlooked the constructive power of picture-taking as embodied engagement, no matter how poorly the self-taken photographs turn out. This point is further discussed in 8.3.

of colonial power, ownership of visitor spectatorship and visitor photographs is another subject they cannot avoid.[136]

## Right to Meaning-Making

Besides being a way of seeing and a means to preserve memories, taking photographs of artworks is also a helping device which could make understanding the works easier or more accessible. As the US based sociologist Wendy Griswold, when pointing out how perception serves as an important idea to 'account for the role non-human entities play in the interactions that facilitate meaning-making', summarises, 'Perception is both material and cognitive. It is material in that one must be able to physically engage with an object to make meaning from it; it is cognitive in that one has to notice an object and find it worth the effort to try to understand it' (2013: 348; see also Cerulo, 2009; McDonnell, 2010). Visitor photography fulfils the role of facilitator of meaning-making by allowing physical and cognitive access.

Two key aspects concerned in this process of access are distance and scale. Firstly, looking closely and slowly, as some art museums have been attempting to promote, is not always possible in view of the limitation of space. Benjamin, as discussed in Chapter 2.2.2, rightly points out that 'Painting simply is in no position to present an object for simultaneous collective experience, as it was possible for architecture at all times, for the epic poem in the past, and for the movie today' ([1936]1999: 228). Moreover, as my ethnographic study demonstrates (Chapter 6.2.2), visitors' photography further reduces the number of people who can stand in front of the artwork, because not only does the act of picture-taking demand more space, but one often wishes a photo to include no other people which requires that others step aside. In the case of highly popular works like the Mona Lisa in the Louvre or the Sunflowers in the National Gallery, the crowd gathered in front of them means that not everyone can stand close to the art. Paradoxically, photographing then becomes a solution via which the visitor can obtain an image of the artwork and possibly quickly move away, allowing others the chance to see it. Or, if s/he takes the picture from afar, the physical distance between the original and her/him is eliminated—albeit in a compromised manner. S/he can then, clutching the presenting screen to her/himself, study the image closely at her/his preferred pace and in his/her own time.

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[136] At the same time, the debate over image use fees has been heated among scholars of art history in the recent years. There is a view that researcher cannot always afford the fees when they intend to include the images in their publication. Hence, scholarly works are compromised. (Lydiate, 2018; see also Grosvener, 2019)

As to the aspect of scale, the idea of miniature is useful here to consider photos as a reproduced, graspable, version of the real thing which renders the latter more approachable—physically and psychologically—and thus more comprehensible. Defined by historian Lin Foxhall, a minature

> '…reproduces in some sense, at smaller scale, another object…One could think of this as a kind of "intertextuality" of materiality, where miniatures

> epitomise, echo and reverberate meanings captured in and associated with other objects, while creating new meanings of their own' (2015: 1).

Miniatures' complex role in the process of meaning-generating is also pointed out by the scholar of Art History, Carl Knappett,

> 'miniatures have certain physical and semiotic properties (or, in other words, affordances and associations) that enable them to bear meaning in an intensified fashion, while paradoxically being physically remote from those forms of which they are iconic or indexical' (2012: 103).

The photos shown to me by interviewee Sam Weber were mostly of parts of, rather than whole paintings, and are of smaller scale than the original works. Having neither a background in art nor a profession in a relevant realm, Weber used these pictures to study how those works might have been made. Digging through the digital images, he established a personal and meaningful connection with them which directed him back to the original artworks. The visitor photograph as a miniaturised copy of the original work opens the image of the artwork to manipulation and allows the picture-taker to read and interpret the image more easily. The altered scale and shortened distance are affordances of visitor photography. These points will be further discussed in 8.2, regarding picture-taking's mediating character.

Another layer in the process of sense-making is the preservation of meaning. I will argue that the collecting of evidence of encounters that are meaningful to the visitor is itself an exercise in meaning generation.[137] Outside Tate Modern in May 2018, visitor Yin-Hsin Lee, when sharing with me the pictures she had taken, and questioned about why she had chosen to photograph those particular artworks, said ‘Because they were works I felt I understood’ (May 22, 2018). In other words, what made sense to her was captured photographically and presented to her as a verification of meaningful experience. This was echoed by the practice of a German couple from Berlin I met in the Punta della Dogana where Damien Hirst’s *Treasures from the Wreck of the Unbelievable* was shown in the summer of 2017. Sitting on the same bench, they started a conversation with me and began to show me numerous photographs taken not only in that exhibition but in the venues of the Venice Biennale and the Prada Foundation. They presented the images, often slightly blurred or at crooked angles, accompanied by accounts of the meanings they got from the works. Beyond generating meaning via picture-taking, assembling photographs of individual artworks is itself a way of making sense of the visit as a whole. Possibly, the photographs serve as memory capital, which, as the above example demonstrates, might be exchanged into social and cultural capital – a point I reflect on later, in Chapter 8.4.

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[137] There have been experiments initiated by art museums that include visitors' photographic documentation as part of the archive of the exhibition. For example, in *The Art of Participation* at SFMOMA in 2010, visitors' 'informal' documentation became an accepted way to co-build art history: 'existing default restrictions on photography were lifted, after the informal documentation online was

## 8.2 The Mediated Experience

The effect of photographic mediation has seemingly contradictory sides at work which are especially relevant when considering the issue of experiencing the original, a concern central to this research and supposedly a major purpose of many visitors. That is, visitor photography visually directs the visitor away from the displayed artwork and tactilely refers her/him back to the latter. Firstly, photographic activity results in the picture-taker's becoming absent

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considered to be not only a useful supplement to formal documentation, but a way of further publicizing and encouraging participation after the museum visit’ (Graham, 2013: 232-3).

from immediate contact with the architecture-artwork complex. The picture-taker is simultaneously occupying multiple spaces. In other words, s/he is there and not there. S/he is absorbed and distracted. In Chapter 2.3.3, both ideas of co-presence and absent presence are discussed. On the one hand, the digital screen—or in the case of film camera, the lens—presents to the user images as mediascapes which situate her/him, simultaneously, with both the original and the reproduced. On the other hand, the photographic images absorb the viewer to a degree that s/he is in effect elsewhere. Visitor photography in this way has similarities with the multimedia guides provided and often promoted by art museums in their increasing attempts to integrate virtual and augmented reality into exhibitions. By drawing visitors into this form of distraction, they keep visitors ‘there’, in the exhibition space. Consequently, visitors are positioned in an increasingly intense circulation of images, oscillating between the original and various forms of copies. They are in effect constantly temporarily elsewhere.[138] The picture-taking visitor is physically present in the landscape of the architecture-artwork complex but by focusing her/his looking on the photographic images, s/he is in effect consuming the mediascape of the reproduced.[139]

Secondly, there is another layer to the simultaneous occupation of plural spaces. Different from the first kind, presence-absence, stemming from the consumption of mediated texts, this other type is a result of the modality of mediated seeing itself. Because the picture-taker is together with the artwork through photographic seeing, becoming ‘a part of’, s/he is both entering a unity of artwork-viewer and stepping outside the immediate world. This idea of immersion is used here to describe this state of being not only in the media-enabled elsewhere, but in the mediated site-specific happening. The scholar of music studies, Giacomo Albert, states that the immersive work’s ‘…goal is primarily to constitute a presence, not to represent something. Instead of a sign-based, cognitive paradigm it uses a perceptive paradigm involving the construction and constitution of a reality, a tactile, kinaesthetic actuality which involves the viewer’s whole body’ (2012: 2).[140] While Albert’s observation concerns works intended to be immersive, debatably, it can also be applied to photographic seeing which makes artworks of various types immersive. The momentary establishing of, and being wrapped up in, the invisible bubble includes the artwork, the image of the artwork, the picture-taker, and the architectural space in between, while simultaneously excluding others who neither participate in this photographic event nor are focused on by the picture-taker. An interior is thus created, with an exterior as an immediate consequence**.** I argue that immersing oneself in an artwork is, instead of—or besides— losing oneself, losing the world around. That is what it means to become ‘a part of’ the work: to leave what is beyond the

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[138] Susan Stewart, in her discussion of the subjective experience of miniatures, points out the possibility of 'an actual phenomenological correlation between the experience of scale and the experience of duration' ([1984]1993: 66). This is suggested by the findings of an experiment conducted by the School of Architecture at the University of Tennessee (see Delong, 1981, 1983; Knappett, 2012). She concludes that 'The compressed time of interiority tends to hypostatise the interiority of the subject that consumes it in that it marks the invention of "private time". In other words, miniature time transcends the duration of everyday life in such a way as to create an interior temporality of the subject' ([1084]1993: 66). This observation corresponds to the idea of picture-taker/viewer being wrapped in another spatial-temporal environment. However, taking into consideration that this experiment was laboratory-based and used 3-D models instead of two dimensional photographs—treated as miniatures in my research, further empirical studies are required for concrete evidence.

[139] That the visitor is seeing the reproduced image instead of the original artwork should not, arguably, be equated with seeing the ‘unreal’. As the visual anthropologist Paolo Favero points out, there exists a stream of criticism aimed at the ubiquitous practice and circulation of digital pictures: ‘Digital images,

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have…been seen as negation of a truer, more direct, “more real” experience of the world surrounding us, as a proper detachment from everyday life’, (2016: 209; see also Gere, 2005; Nicols, 2000). Contrary to this view, it is argued here that, instead of being less real, the mediated experience should be considered as ‘differently real’.

[140] Arguably, in order to receive this actuality so as to be totally involved, the body has to be tactile and kinaesthetic as well. The philosopher Maxine Sheets-Johnstone points out that contemporary scholarly research, by attempting at understanding ‘cognition (the mind, perception, and so on) [as] *embodied, embedded, extended,* and *enacted*’, has actually forgotten that the body which makes a person possible is itself already tactile, kinaesthetic, and affective (2018: 5). Sheets-Johnstone further considers that the use of technologies such as ‘texting, twittering and facebooking have overridden immediate tactile-kinaesthetic-affective qualitative dynamics of everyday life’ (2018: 5). It could be debated, however, that by operating the technological device, which is part of contemporary everyday life, the body is still establishing a tactile, kinaesthetic, and affective relationship with the immediate world.

connection between the experiencing body and the experienced work, to enter the embrace of that connection.[141]

## Case Study. The Momentary Photographic Interior

During the ethnography, it was observed that when a visitor was photographing an artwork with either a digital camera or a camera-phone, her/his eyes were fixed on the screen with an intensity—for even just a few seconds—that was not seen as often in direct seeing visitors. The U.S. sociologist Harvey Molotch suggests that the audience of art 'are lost in time and have no experience of its moment-to-moment passage', during which 'the mundane is gone' (2017: 130). Following this logic, the visitor who is photographing an artwork can be considered to have no experience of the passing of time in her/his immediate surroundings in the gallery. It is difficult—if not impossible—to tell or know how one feels time passing. Yet a sense of temporary oblivion of everything that was not included in her/his photographic interest was felt: the stillness of the device-holding body and the concentration of the eyes were signs of a devoted attention that could only accommodate a single subject.

Other visitors seemed be aware that this was not a situation to be disturbed. As if respecting someone's home, they did not enter without invitation. That is, it was rare to see other visitors walk into the space between the photo-taker and the artwork. Instead, they either made a detour round the back of the photo-taker or waited aside until the photographic activity was completed and the temporary interior vanished. This was not as often the case when people saw someone looking at an exhibit: people might pass right in front of the exhibit to get closer to the label or the neighbouring work.

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[141] It is worth thinking about whether, when enclosed in a photographic connection with the artwork and hence stepping outside the immediately surrounding, the viewer is simultaneously entering the world. Investigating the field of tourist experience, Britta Timm Knydsen and Anne Marit Waase, following Deleuze and Thrift's thinking on vitality, reflect that one of the characteristics of 'the affected body (whether the stimuli are of a more emotional kind or a directly physical kind)' is its openness to the world: 'the intensive experience of the body is in fact connecting the singular individual to the vitality of the world' (2010: 16). While their linking the investing and affected body with a 'performative authenticity' requires careful consideration, it is important to be reminded that the participant's body is real and the corporeal experience opens a passage between the self and the world.

That the photo-taker temporarily dwells in the photographic interior does not necessarily mean, however, that s/he dismisses other visitors. Except for the moment of looking at the screen which occupies the whole body-mind of the photo-taker, it is possible that having used and moved her/his body more frequently, s/he becomes more self-conscious and is made aware that s/he might be preventing others from approaching the artwork. This might explain why photo-takers were often seen checking around them before stepping into their preferred positions, carrying with them an apologetic air—expressed via facial expressions, body gestures, or mumbling words, and completing the photographic process hurriedly.

Thirdly, photographic mediation gives birth to an intimacy between the visitor and the artwork, bringing each closer to the other for a tactile connection is allowed. Intimacy, discussed in the last section, which can be seen as a shared affordance between visitor photography and miniature, is understood as a reduced physical distance that helps to increase cognitive understanding. Here, intimacy is a relationship generated via bodily involvement in the process of picture-taking. Cranny-Francis (see also Chapter 2.3.3.) points out ‘the sense of touch as “being with”’ and that the ‘modality of touch places the one who touches in an intimate relation to the touched, an acceptance of “being with” that creates the opportunity for an empathetic relationship between the two’ (2013: 23). The multi-occupation of spaces takes to another level 'forms of spatiovisual pleasure', according to

Guliana Bruno, scholar of visual and environment studies, in her analysis of travel discourse and practice developed since the eighteenth century (2018: 171). While art museums, where visitors wander through to view artworks, already participate in the provision of this spatiovisual enjoyment, photographic mediation expands the spatial territory beyond the physical and adds to the categories of pleasure.

Finally, picture-taking makes textural alteration to the images of artworks as examined in the Literature Review. That is, photographic images give the artworks a different texture—glossy or grainy, flat but also pronounced. The fact that my interviewees either appeared to be puzzled by the question which never came up for them before—and was never felt by them to be an issue—or attributed their dissatisfaction with their photographic images to their being 'very bad at taking pictures' instead of to photography's being an in adequate medium indicates, firstly, a willingness to overlook the textural changes made by photography, and secondly, a trust in this technology.

Chapter 6.4 discusses answers from my fieldwork to the question about what type of artwork invites picture-taking. The answer to this question—what kind of artwork possesses an affordance for visitor photography—was that judgements about what was unphotographable were highly subjective. Here, it is suggested that another question should be asked: instead of what artworks draw the photographic gaze, we should ask what lures visitors to gaze at artworks photographically? One possible answer lies in the affordance of photographing artworks which is the creation of intimacy. The viewer wants to be closer to the artwork and wants the artwork to stay with her/him.[142] This affordance forms the basis for both making an impression on the visitors' body-mind and reassuring a lasting connection even after the encounter. These points will be discussed in the next section.

### 8.3 The Impression Maker

The formation of an impression is the object leaving its mark on the subject, for the subject to notice the object, to receive the object via paying attention. In this section, it is argued that the visitor's bodily investment in the photographic process plays a significant part in the process of impression-making and therefore should not be ignored. As the Courtauld curator, Dr Alexandra Gerstein, ponders,

> *'Well, perhaps…a person who photographs, like me, is going to remember the experience…there're other pictures of paintings I love but the colours of the reproduction are terrible. But still, I kind of like to have it in mind. It's a sort of…physical thing to make me remember.'*
>
> (Dr Alexandra Gerstein, personal communication, February 21, 2018)

By participating bodily in, and focusing their attention on, the event—even if briefly, the picture-taker receives an impression of the artwork. Here, tactility plays a vital role in the process. Furthermore, it is possible that the photographic way of seeing, through framing—

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[142] It might be worth pondering, at the same time, from a psychological point of view, if and why people take photographs when what they see directly overwhelms and fills them with emotions. Photography might serve as a tool to share or release the intensity of feelings.

which is usually in a rectangular shape, concentrates the viewer's attention as well as the structures they see in a particular composition and thus enables an experience of aesthetics. To photograph is to both frame the experience and stage a visual image of the experience. In this sense, visitor photography functions as expression and creation rather than simply preservation.

### Bodily Investment

The importance of the personal embodied act of taking photographs lies, firstly, in its irreplaceability. In the Literature Review, the issue of the quotation effect raised by some scholars (Osborne, 2000; Urry and Larsen, 2011) is examined. In a world where personal and official photographic images of artworks circulate, though the idea of visitor creativity was much emphasised and valued by Tate Modern’s visitor experience professionals in our interview (see Chapter 4), the amount of originality achieved through photographing artworks is debatable. However, there must be reasons for the persistence of photographic practice, which produces numerous similar images. I argue that bodily input, singular in each person’s case, contributes significantly to the popularity of visitor photography regardless of the existence of the free, downloadable, professionally shot, and high-res images of artworks that are now provided by an increasing number of art museums.

While Benjamin considers that photographically reproduced and reproducible images do not afford the aura of an artwork, a consideration supported by ‘its unique existence at the place where it happens to be’ (Benjamin, [1936]1999: 214), it should be asked whether picture-taking itself is an auratic experiential act, though it cannot capture either the aura of the artwork nor the experience. British art historian Simon Faulkner reflects that '…the use of photography feeds off and reinforces the photographically generated "aura" of that location. This "aura" involves the combinations of the phenomenal experience of the actual site with its existence as a place-image within a dispersed field of visual images' (2010: 300). It could be argued that the aura that exists and matters is the aura of the presence of the visitor with the work instead of the work itself. That is, since aura is felt by the viewer, the focus of theorisation should be on the person who is present, bodily and cognitively. The aura of the original artwork might or might not be lost in the reproduced images and their movement away from the artworks' location; the one-of-a-kind being-with the artwork, in the case of picture-taking, is here itself an aura generative act. This returns the discussion to the point of the uniqueness of bodily engagement: why it appears important for some visitors to 'take my own photographs' even while they admit that the resulting images will not be good and may not be looked at ever again. The answer is the irreplaceability of bodily engagement, which enables aura and which is aura impressed.[143]

While direct seeing is, undeniably, also a process of bodily investment, a key characteristic of photographic seeing is that it is enabled by touching the device. This is an especially crucial aspect in our age of the prevalence of touch screen technology. In their discussion of the relations between gesture and touch technologies, Sinclair and de Freitas point out that '[t]he tapping of the finger on a surface or screen corresponds to the digital aspect because the eye is dominant as it determines where and when the tapping should occur… But screen gestures also include various dynamic gestures, such as sweeping. Through these, the hand becomes tactile' (Sinclair and de Freitas, 2014: 359). The tactile hand occupies the visitor's body with touching and thus adds another experiential aspect to the seeing subject.

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[143] Involving aesthetics, this discussion might go beyond the realm of sociology and would benefit from psychology, empirical aesthetics, and cognitive studies. While Bourdieu rightly associates aesthetic judgement and the practice of aesthetic appreciation with the possession and maintenance of economic and cultural capital, the aesthetic pleasure derived from framing as Simmel discusses might not governed by social systems of values. The same could be said about the appealing of aura. The valuation of aura might be cognitively recognised and socially produced, yet the sensory pleasure of feeling the aura, an individual and singular bonding with the uniquely perceived (or the perceived uniqueness, which is admittedly socially defined) is more than social-- or less than social.

That touching or handling photographic devices might be integrated into the ritual of the museum visit ritual—and consequently contribute to impression formation—can be seen, firstly, in Sontag's reflection that photography provides the disoriented tourist with a purpose (discussed in Chapter 2). This opens up a question about whether in the age of smartphone, tapping the screen has itself become an anchoring act—alongside picture-taking as another one (though in the case of touch-screen photographic devices, the former enables the later)—that visitors reflexively perform to navigate their experience in the art museum space. This means that visitors receive the impression of artworks via ritualised touching.[144] Secondly, this hand-engagement might be a subconscious performance of the role of 'safe', non-threatening, visitor. As I discovered in my ethnographic study, adult visitors without exception were observed having their hands occupied. There appeared to be a need to demonstrate that hands were busy with a clear purpose, so as not to draw suspicion from invigilators for potential wrongdoing. Here, the making of photographic copies might be mingled with an imitation of other visitors' seemingly legitimate bodily demonstration. Imitation in the case of picture-taking thus consists of two levels of meaning: making copies of artworks and copying others bodily manners.[145] Thirdly, however, ritualistic tapping-photographing can be considered to be a gesture that acknowledges the significance, not necessarily just of the artwork, but of the very experience. The value of the work in respect of art history or aesthetics might be lost on the visitor. Yet the importance of 'being there with this piece' is noted by her/him, deeming the situation recording-worthy. This brings back Berger's criticism, as discussed in Chapter 2.1.2, that a 'bogus religiosity' for the original artwork instead of appreciation of aesthetics is practiced by visitors (1972: 23). Berger considered that after photographic reproduction of artworks became available, it is interesting that visitors pay homage to the original by taking photographs.

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[144] Scholar of communication and interaction Jürgen Streeck observes that tapping is 'characteristic of ritualized behaviour' and allows one to explore the 'texture and temperature' of the devices (Sinclair and Freitas, 2014: 361; see also Streeck, 2009). The texture and temperature of a photographic device, information gathered by the user's skin via finger touching, have their impacts on the formation of an impression of the perceived (see, for example, Linden, 2016). How each combination of textural qualities of photographic devices psycho-sociologically interferes with the process of experience of artworks is a question which requires further extensive studies.

**Case Study. Ritualistic Screen-Tapping or Camera-Clicking as an acknowledgement of Value**

Between the Courtauld, Tate Modern, Raven Row, and Zabludowicz Collection, it was at the former two that visitors were observed ritualistically tapping or clicking their photographic devices while at the latter two this type of picture-taker was almost absent. Two major subtypes could be further discerned: both can be understood via Urry and Larsen's categorisation of the tourist gaze, extended by my description of various viewing practices as a combination of the direct and the photographic (see Table 6.1). The first has a spectatorial gaze: the visual attention given to each artwork is in the form of a swiping glance and occurs in almost equal proportions. In some cases, the glance is quickly followed by picture-taking; in other cases, the glance is replaced by picture-taking. These visitors' movements in the gallery space are a steady repetition of 'move, stop, tap' or 'move, stop, click'. The second executes a reverential gaze: selected works receive concentrated attention. This type of visitor appears to repeat the process of 'look at the artwork, look at the photographic screen and tap/click, look back at the artwork' in front of the same exhibit. They seem to be fascinated by the artwork while, at the same time, having an impulse to have its image recorded and saved. These two subtypes of performance are often highly rhythmical. That this ritual-like photographic act was seen at the Courtauld and Tate Modern but not at Raven Row and Zabludowicz Collection might be attributed to the fact that the first two give an impression of being the authorities on art. The fame of the institutions and the renown of their artworks might or might not be a shared knowledge or perception, yet their visitors seemed to have an understanding—an impression possibly acquired via travel guides, friend recommendations, the grandness of the Courtauld's interior or the architectural scale of Tate Modern—that they were in places where exhibits had been recognised as art – more than that, as important art.

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[145] In his discussion of the reproduction of art, Fyfe argues that imitation should be approached 'as an aspect of the interdependence that arises from the unfinished nature of the human body and as a means by which human beings may reach out, to complete themselves in imitation of others and by means of the copy…Copy presupposes a faculty for imitation that must itself be always be given cultural direction if it is to be realised as a human capacity' (2004: 61). In this light, photographically copying the artwork and copying others' photographic acts could be possibly considered from the angle of one's desire to reach out for something 'good' and thus increase her/his sense of completion. Further empirical support for this argument is, however, required.

### Aesthetic form

Photographing, cutting a square out of the continuous, extended visual presentation of the world, can be considered as a practice of framing. Through framing, organisation is achieved which thus allows focused experience. This observation corresponds to Simmel's theorisation of the picture frame's function as separating an entity form the ordinary world:'…the frame of a picture characterises the work of art inwardly as a coherent, homogenous, independent entity and at the same time outwardly severs all direct relations with the surrounding space' (1971:297). The affordance of framing is the provision of aesthetic form, and the affordance of aesthetic form is, debatably, the generation of impression. Inspired by a section of Milan Kundera's novel *Slowness*, in which the author writes 'Imposing form on a period of time is what beauty demands, but so too does memory. For what is formless cannot be grasped or committed to memory' (1996: 34)), Dr Christine McCombe, in the field of music and sound, reflects that '[t]his idea highlights the essential nature of temporal art forms, such as music and film/video, and provides a strong conceptual link between the role of memory in our daily lives and in the way we perceive and understand art'(2004: 1). This statement invites the question of whether what is formless cannot be first grasped by the mind aesthetically, and consequently formed into an impression.

The practice of framing not only re-forms the artwork, but also enables an exchange between the artwork and the life-world via aesthetics, which form a part of the impression-forming process. On the one hand, as John Dewey reflects, form 'as it is present in the fine arts, is the art of making clear what is involved in the organisation of space and time prefigured in every course of a developing life-experience' (1934: 24). On the other hand, 'making clear what is involved' does not mean that what is outside the frame has no relations with what is inside. Natalia Canto-Mila suggests that for Simmel, 'these two aspects of the frame—unity creating within the frame, and distance enhancing beyond it—are correlates. They make each other possible. The framework has the function of closing all possible bridges and doors though which the "external world" could burst into the picture' (2016: 94, see also Simmel, [1902]1994, 1994). Referring back to Dewey, this exchange with the world is for him how and when experience happens: 'Experience in the degree in which it *is* experience is heightened vitality. Instead of signifying being shut up within one's own private feelings and sensations, it signifies active and alert commerce with the world' (1934: 18; on vitalism see also Lash, 2006). It is suggested here that photographing artworks could thus go beyond being an experience of picture-taking and become an experience of the images of artworks.

### The Photographic Impression

The photographic exercise envelops the visitor in a connection formed by a concentration of tactile and aesthetic attention. The American video artist Bill Viola asserts that 'duration to consciousness is as light to camera' (quote in Bill Viola/Michelangelo exhibition at Royal Academy of Art, London). This implies that for the phenomenal world to make an impression on the photographic film, light is essential, while to make an imprint on the human mind, time plays an indispensable part. Agreeing with the importance of the investment of time when forming an impression, it is debated that it is not the only.[146] Bodily connection and aesthetic formalisation could be as effective. The momentary investment of attention, physically and mentally, makes possible the formation of impressions. In her analysis of the mobile phone age, Sherry Turkle points out that while people become more closely connected with one another through technology, hence a new kind of intimacy, they have simultaneously grown into more isolated individuals: in our time, we are 'alone together' (2017). It can be argued that with artworks, the momentary surge of energy brings the picture-taker and the artwork-in-the-art-museum 'together alone'—isolated from the surrounding people and objects who are not included in the sensory connection and aesthetic frame. There exist both intimacy and togetherness.

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[146] If one takes photographs automatically—that is, without much conscious decision and effort, it is more likely that the act/process would leave relatively (shallow) impressions on her/him. This might be a result of not paying attention. Duration, as Viola argues, is however not the only, but still a factor in impression formation.

Moreover, photo-taking, being an auratic act, as explored earlier in the section, not only directs the visitor to the image of the artwork but the world. As the scholar of urban geography Alan Latham, in his analysis of Benjamin, observes, ‘Auratic experience, then, is rooted within an emphatic way of relating to the world, which through the generation of a chain of correspondences between the self and object draws a limit of the self’s omnipotence, whilst all the while drawing the self into that world’ (1999:467). By performing the self-initiated act of photography, the visitor is given a defined entity to concentrate on. By being able to focus on what is framed within, s/he is granted a path along which to connect to the image of the artwork. Moreover, there exists the potential for the external world in which this artwork is embedded to relate to the photographically enclosed. By establishing relations between the visitor, the artwork, the surroundings, and the life world, an impression is obtained and the experience becomes meaningful—not necessarily in the sense that it reveals profound meanings of life or enables aesthetic transcendence but to the extent that it occupies a place in the visitor’s life.

### 8.4 Tomorrow’s Memories Shape Today’s Experience

As shown in Chapter 6.3.3., the memory function of photography was highly valued by visitors. Visits to art museums therefore, to various degrees, become an experience of the mechanical-bodily production of re-viewable memories. Extending from Bauman’s thesis that being a tourist serves as a postmodern life strategy, it is argued here that picture-taking has become a contemporary memory strategy. While Simmel reflects that the modern metropolis offers endless sensations which might render people blasé (Simmel. [1903] 1950), it should be asked if life in our time, fed with continuous streams of sights and events and encouraged by Facebook and Instagram culture to conduct a vigilant search for the photography-worthy, prompts people readily to take up their cameras or smartphones to capture what is encountered and immediately unburden themselves of the task of memorising.

Our current tourist culture and museum practices are among the forces which provoke this strategy. Firstly, especially with the proliferation of life coaching blogs (for example, Personal Excellence[147]), lifestyle (for example, Culture Whisper) and travel (for example, Visit London, Culture Trip) websites, event guides (for example, Time Out magazine, Londonist) and arts and museum news media (for example, Art Newspaper, Museum Crush), commonly used phrases like 'Must Visit Museums before you Die', 'Must See Exhibitions this summer', 'Top 10 Art Museums in London' make readers aspire to check into everything unmissable. Secondly, it might also be possible that the pedagogic agenda, the extensive learning programmes presented in the form of labels, panels, booklets, tours, talks, and workshops—to name just a few—instils in visitors a recognition that cultural capital should be collected at each visit and helps to builds up an anxiety about not being able to grasp—experientially and intelligently—everything. Visitor photography is then used as something that serves as visual proof of the accumulation of cultural capital, although in effect it functions as memory capital and whether that is interchangeable with cultural capital is questionable.

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[147] Celestine Chua, in 'Bucket List Ideas: 101 Things to Do before You Die' published on her life coaching website *Personal Excellence*, listed 'See the Mona Lisa' in the Louvre the ninety-ninth activity qualified as a 'must'. Her recounting of her experience, however, showed the Mona Lisa as a popular attraction was surrounded by crowds and permitted her only a chance to snap a quick shot. It was other 'artifacts and sculptures' which she spent longer time with and which considered by her made the Louvre 'one of the most enchanting museums I've been to'
Chua, C. 'Bucket List Ideas: 101 Things To Do Before You Die', *Personal Excellence*
https://personalexcellence.co/blog/bucket-list/4/

### The Externalised forms the Experienced

Another point concerns what one wants to be included in one's memory. As already mentioned in Chapter 6.3.3, interviewees were found to be scattered along a spectrum of approaches from creative and detailed to documentation. At one end, those who adopted the creative or detailed approach would use the images to make new works or practice drawing from them. Their photographs were often of parts of the entire artworks or taken from various angles.

> *'Today, I took some photos of some specific details. I might look at them again when I go home, I might create something myself.'*
>
> (Estère Ozlos, personal communication, November 25, 2017)

Even the glazing over paintings which prevents artworks from being photographed without being overlaid with reflections can be used for new aesthetic possibilities:

> *'Sometimes I try to take advantage of it. It's like the photo you're taking becomes another piece of work. There's always reflection of light, yourself, or camera.'*
>
> (Estère Ozlos, personal communication, November 25, 2017)

At the other end, the documenting type tended to photograph the whole piece or artwork, and from a front-central position in relation to the work. It did not mean the former did not wish to remember the whole work of art or how it was situated in the exhibition space. Nor did it imply that the latter did not experience artworks slowly or pay attention to small elements. What was revealed was the different focus of the intended memories, which determined different ways of relating to the exhibits.

### The Photographic Fabrication of Memories

Another aspect of what is to be remembered is decided less by individuals than by technological process. With the advancement of photographic function integrated in smartphones as well as digital cameras, my glances at other visitors' screens were often met with images sharper than the raw visual impressions the original artworks presented to my naked gaze. Those glossy images are what the picture-taking visitors were seeing alongside the artworks in the gallery space and might be what they recalled after the visit. This glossiness is a feature that also belongs to official installation shots of exhibitions and advertising images of artworks, and partially—if not entirely—explains why they may appear more visually attractive than what is actually seen in art museums.[148] Experiencing artwork via a high-res screen image could be seen, on the one hand, as a process in which, as Fyfe's examination of reproduction (2004) reminds us, techniques, skill and creativity are invested. On the other hand, it raised a concern corresponding to Debord's warning against the desire for spectacle and its too easy satisfaction. They are issues yet to be further researched and carefully considered. However, art museums would have to acknowledge the fact that the production of photography mediated recollection is processed in their space and that what visitors want to remember is what is being looked at.

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[148] In the study of the relations between magazine reading and celebrity culture, Mehita Iqani notes the role the materiality of printed images plays in the process. As De La Fuente summarises 'the materiality and textures of magazine medium cannot be underestimated in cultivating reader interest and a general sense of "other-worldliness" around celebrity culture' (le Fuente, 2019: 559; see also Iqani, 2012). The glossiness of the paper is seen as a necessary part of attracting the eye and provoking a sense of longing.

## Conclusion: Touching the Untouchable

During the circulation of images–from the perceived image of the artwork, the human-machine captured image of the artwork, to even the online-sharing of the image of the artwork, what it means to encounter an artwork in an art museum may either have multiple layers simultaneously or shift continuously. What is crucial is less about questioning whether art is still art at various stages but more about exploring how the visitor-photographer is involved in the experiential process of relating to the artworks. While art museums remain the authoritative and authorial producer of experiential materials, picture-taking visitors, to borrow Lester and Scarles' words, act as 'co-mediators' (2016:3). As shown in the Literature Review, on the one hand, art museums have gradually endeavoured to programme more touch-based or touch-possible activities, which aim at allowing greater engagement with the experience, or to include more diverse audiences, previously excluded due to different-able bodies. On the other hand, museum scholars turn to the sensory dimensions of art museums and visitor experience, uncovering previously overlooked aspects of the relationships between institutions, spaces, objects, and spectators. At the same time, visitors themselves to various degrees inadvertently initiate their own tactile engagement with artworks by photographing. This photographic practice is complicated by the issue of copyright and the agenda setting of art museums. Its future development has to be considered alongside the right of visitors to their experience, understanding, and memory.

# Chapter 9. Conclusion

## Photographing Artworks in Art Museum and Galleries

This research unpacks the visitor practice of photographing artworks in art museums and galleries. While picture-taking itself has become a commonly seen and commonly conducted activity, its occurrence in art museums and galleries remains, arguably, peculiar. That a space—not to mention spaces of the enormous type that are fast emerging—is allowed to be continuously empty for the sake of exhibiting artworks indicates the value placed on not only art but on seeing artwork. There are thus expectations of this visual engagement in terms of the manner in which it should be carried out: the ideal pure gaze which contemplates disinterestedly, for example, or at least a civilised looking which is willing to learn and avoids causing disruption. Taking photographs is not included. What does it mean, then, when visitors—a fast growing number of them—see artworks not just through looking directly but also photographically? What does it mean for art museums and for the visitor experience?

In order to reach a better understanding, a qualitative approach was employed that involved ethnographic observation and interviews. The first research question concerns the establishment and maintenance of art museum spaces, operating on the spatial principles of interiority, singularity, and the outside – as summarised by Hetherington (2014) and discussed in Chapter 2.3.2. Closely looking at the Courtauld, Tate Modern, Raven Row, and Zabludowicz Collection, the way each institution maintains itself as an experiential space for visitors was uncovered. Examining the set of boundaries—architectural, economic, cultural, invigilation, and photography restrictions—created around and within each institutional space, as well as museum-visitor characteristics, helped to reveal how they differentiate themselves from street life and from one another. It was found that the more immediate the encounter between the visitor and the exhibition of artworks and the less disturbance s/he receives from others, the more likely the museum or gallery is to feel like a space for art, distinct from the street outside. Having numerous or heavily guarded boundaries does not necessarily contribute to this effect. At the same time, museum professionals emphasised that there was not just one way of seeing art and preferred to avoid adding restraints on visitor behaviours—and this included restrictions on photography. Nonetheless, most did not consider the possibility of picture-taking as a way of engagement. These art museums and galleries were offering photography-tolerant or photography-welcome spaces for visitors without altering their design for the spaces, of which the function continued to be to serve the direct seeing of artworks.

In a space that is not intended to accommodate the performance of photographic seeing, the latter, when it takes place, inevitably brings with it destabilising effects. Following Bourdieu’s idea that perception is an embodied practice, visitor photography was examined in terms of how it is lived bodily, which is the very concern of the second research question. Urry and Larsen’s classification of the tourist gaze offered a starting point for displaying in a clear way the properties of each kind of photo-taking. Through revealing what cannot be captured by Urry and Larsen’s typology, the uniqueness of visitor photography has been established: the completion of picture-taking requires a series of movements which would not be seen in the direct-seeing body. Thus, the final research question regarding the impact of visitor photography can be answered. First of all, photographic activity brings into the gallery space elements previously unseen and not usually taken into consideration when exhibition design and a visitor behavioural code are devised: a sense of busy-ness and an acoustic effect. Consequently, it co-configures aspects of the gallery room, such as rhythm, visitor flow, and acoustics. By quickening the rhythm, causing congestion in visitor flow, and producing shutter sounds, visitor photography introduces a sense of commotion and thus compromises the separation between the museum's interior and the street life outside.

Turning from looking at visitor photography's effect on the shared space to considering its relationship with the person who does it, we have seen that photographic engagement enables a complex interplay between the visitor, the artwork, and the space. This is a result of the affordances of photography: tactility and image retention. On the one hand, while the chief function of the photographic device is visual, the contact between the device and the visitor who holds it is immediate and tactile. The visitor thus inadvertently initiates her/his own tactile engagement with the artwork by photographing. On the other hand, the desire to possess memories, against human beings' unreliable faculty for recall makes people turn to and trust photography's capacity to record what they see. This process of picture-taking therefore assumes a sense of intimacy and feels personal. Moreover, picture-taking has a framing effect which renders this mediated seeing aesthetic. At the same time, however, the image presented to the user serves as a mediascape which situates the visitor with both the original and the reproduced. Not only is s/he in effect looking at the mediated image instead of directly at the artwork, but the image can absorb the viewer to the extent that s/he loses immediate contact with the surroundings. The picture-taker is simultaneously occupying multiple spaces. In other words, s/he is there and not there. S/he is absorbed and distracted. Given that each person's visit is restricted by the time and energy they have, upon entering the gallery they have to choose how to see, which consequently affects what is seen and where one is seeing it.

In the course of this research, a theme has gradually emerged which functions as a thread linking each research question: the dialectical relationship between the inside and the outside. What is involved is not merely spatial relations. To enter the space, one has to be interested enough to make the journey to, and confident enough to open, the doors—often literally—of an art museum. Once inside, one can still feel like an outsider because of the lack of orientation in terms of where to start, what to see, and how to behave in general and around the artwork. When looking at artwork, visitors can be held by it to such an extent that it is as if s/he is situated in a world that consists only of themselves and the work. Or, they can remain indifferent and detached. Photography further complicates the issue. One can be momentarily absorbed in the photographic process and image and thus absent from immediate reality; physically distant from the artwork—as conventionally expected—yet reaching the artwork by touching the photographic device and thus the photographic image of the artwork. At the same time, by seeing photographically instead of adopting the privileged mode of contemplating through direct-seeing, the visitor is deciphering the aesthetic properties in the way used by art historians or curators, who interpret and deliver art to the public. S/he might therefore be placed outside the knowledge system of art, or be developing room for creativity.

With its revelation of this complex relationship between visitors, photographic mediation, and art museums and galleries this research can contribute to the field of sociology, on the one hand, and the fields of museum studies and museum practice, on the other. In the case of sociology, the discipline’s vision of the art museum as a powerful yet often overlooked institution is brought into focus. Through the investigation of the popular form of photographic seeing, its operation in and connection to contemporary society is disclosed. The exploration of both the governance of, and the performance of, the visitor body by and in the historically privileged space of the gallery or museum, separated from and inter-influenced by the everyday, helps to build a more complete picture of power relations in society. At the same time, this little piece of jigsaw contributes to a deepened understanding of the changing cultures of experiencing and recording. In the case of museum studies and museum practices, after showing that art museums and galleries are socially shared spaces and that visitor photography has social consequences, scholars and practitioners could then reflect on visitor experience and relevant designs with the benefit of a sociological understanding which helps to reduce the misrecognition of visitors. This is especially timely when a wide range of cultural institutions are now competing for public funding and attention, and when the social relevance and responsibilities of art and museum practices have become frequently discussed topics both inside and outside art museums.

## Research Limitations

As shown by the research findings, adopting one way of looking allows a certain understanding and engagement while at the same time excluding others. Yet one can only look in one way at one thing at one point. Thus, there are unavoidably limitations to this research. Firstly, this doctoral project examined closely only four UK art museums and galleries and was supported by observations made in similar types of institution in other parts of the world. Art museum practices in the Middle East, Africa, South America, South Asia, and South-east Asia, however, were not included. Secondly, no attention was focused on the life of the photographic image after the visit. The research interest centred on the photographic activity happening inside the art museum. Yet studying the circulation of the images that result from visitor encounters, and their relations with tourist culture in general, and practices in the art world could further uncover the entanglement between art, photography, and the tourist.

Finally, it is noted that there are various possible ways in which photography mediates one’s seeing and tackling this aspect was not entirely possible. At one point in the second year of this PhD, a photographer friend taught me how to see photographically without a photographic device. It is a method of perception he, as a professional, has practiced for years. Instead of acquiring that technique within a couple of hours, what I learnt was, firstly, that the difference between photographic and direct seeing can be defined differently by each person. While for me, photographic seeing means applying an often rectangular frame—literally or imaginarily— to the scene and thus rendering it aesthetic; for him, it means seeing the light in different colours. Secondly, that he would automatically translate his visual perception into a photographic format served as a reminder that everyone sees differently. Ideological discourses around proper seeing in relation to art cannot entirely regulate how it is lived. My friend might go to an art museum and look at artworks directly and quietly. Yet his seeing would be already simultaneously filtered by his photographic training. This research could not trace each interviewee’s biography and point out each source of influence on her/his way of perception. Given the restrictions on time and human capacity, the research did not cover these aspects. Future projects looking at them might further our understanding of visitor photography.

**Visitor Photography in the Future**

Returning to the Louvre in 2018, the room that housed the Mona Lisa looked as busy with a picture-taking crowd as it had sixteen years ago.[149] The one change, significantly, was the prevalence of smartphones. In 2019, when this PhD project was approaching completion, ICOM Canada (International Council of Museums, Canada) invited museum professionals to submit revised definitions of museum because 'Over recent decades museums have radically transformed, adjusted and re-invented their principles, policies and practices, to the point where the ICOM museum definition no longer seems to reflect the challenges and manifold visions and responsibilities'.[150] When the institutional definition has been updated, how each art museum reacts with its own strategies becomes an issue of concern. Photographic seeing, I argue, would take a central place.

First of all, as this research has revealed, a confused state of etiquette, which has been brought into the gallery space by visitor photography is currently occurring. This deserves further and multifaceted consideration as it is directly concerned with is portrayed as desirable spectatorship. As is shown in Chapter 4.2.3, the idea of an 'old school' was used by one museum professional to describe those colleagues in his museums who denounced picture-taking as violating the ideal form of contemplation. We can also see that another professional protested against this differentiation. In this case, allowing visitor photography meant that the museum was being more inclusive, while the performance of visitor photography itself was appreciated as an indication that visitors were actively engaging with the artworks. These value associations require close examination and sociological analysis. In the field of theatre studies, Kirsty Sedgman (2018), looking at what is considered 'proper' audience spectatorship, points out the necessity of being aware of reinforced biased valuation when binary oppositions are made. It is argued here that the same care should be made when studying art museums and their visitors. While the term 'active' is often linked to a positive image, and art museums and galleries have been trying various way to encourage or allow their visitors to be more active, it should first of all be asked what kind of activeness is referred to in each case and whether visitor activeness has not already occurred since the birth of the art museum. Attention should be paid to the difference between bodily activeness and intellectual activeness. The ideal 'old-school' type of visitor, who looks at the artwork with a relatively still posture could be having a vigorous inner emotional and intellectual debate and experience. On the contrary, a bodily busy visitor can assume the appearance of a high degree of involvement while feeling little engagement and agency. Moreover, the multicultural quality of contemporary societies renders the issue of etiquette and ideal 'audiencing'— to borrow Sedgman's term (2018: 6) even more complex. Among academics, there is a demand for in-depth understanding of the nuances of culturally performed bodies and, at the same time, an awareness of the risks of categorisation. For museum professionals, decision-making is unavoidable: they are tasked with finding the right point on the continuum of adaptation. There are multiples ways of embodying and living with, picture-taking. How they are, whose way is being discussed, theorised and acted upon, and which one is being prioritised or dismissed, all warrants future research attention.

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[149] Though I felt sure that during our family visit to the Louvre in 2002—as mentioned in Chapter 1, my father had a photograph of me taken with the Mona Lisa behind me, we could not, during the course of this research, find it in the family album which displays pictures of that trip to France. While I can still remember that visit, whether or not we photographed has become uncertain. This is a twist in the relationship between photography and memory: photographs—printed or digital—can cease to exist but memory might stay.

[150] **Towards a Revised Museum Definition** https://www.icomcanada.org/2019/04/05/towards-a-revised-museum-definition/

Secondly, art museums seem to have increasingly made attempts at 'using virtual reality to transform the ways in which visitors experience collections' (Glinkowski, 2019: 14). When this research was drawing to an end in 2019, the Louvre announced its VR project *Mona Lisa: Beyond the Glass* for the Leonardo exhibition in the coming autumn. It was reported that a statement about the project claimed '"Visitors will have the rare chance to be immersed into the world's most iconic painting, stepping behind the glass to access the intriguing portrait up close in an entirely new, transformative way"' (Harris, 2019). As mentioned previously, the theft of the Mona Lisa in 1911 was not immediately noticed because security assumed the painting had been taken to a studio for photographs (see Diagram 4.1). More than 100 years has passed, the painting remains exhibited in the Louvre and the museum continues to attempt to use updated technology to reproduce its image.  Another example of adopting VR as an innovative type of visitor engagement is the Tate Modern's Modigliani VR which recreated the artist's Paris studio.[151] That art museums are inviting visitors to immerse themselves in reproduced images opens up questions about what seeing in the art museum means and, subsequently, whether visitor photography should be perceived and positioned differently in future exhibition design. [152]

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[151] **Modigliani VR**
https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/exhibition/modigliani/modigliani-vr-ochre-atelier

## A Person's Own Looking

David Hockney, when discussing with Martin Gayford the relationship between photography and painting, reflects that from photographing, 'you'd gain something, but you'd also lose something' (2016: 250). Hockney focuses his thoughts on the photographic exercises conducted by painters and reflects that the aspects of the image that might be disabled or enabled by photography could matter to one painter but not another. Yet this observation can be applied equally to people in general: a visitor can gain something from photographing artworks and lose something at the same time—as has been shown by this research. Whether it matters depends on what s/he values in this encounter. Arguably, the important thing is to be allowed to make a choice.

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[152] While in film studies, Laura Mulvey (2009) points out the passivity of audiences of immersive or experiential cinema, the current trend of museums and galleries emphasises the engaging effects of an immersive experience, which allegedly turns visitors into active participants – an issue which should be examined carefully and critically. The idea of being inclusive and immersive, nowadays laden with an often-praised willingness on the institution's part to reach out to 'the public', positions museums as quiet spaces for contemplation on the negative side, shadowed by passivity, exclusivity and arrogance. Here again, the making of binary oppositions requires careful examination.

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# Appendix A. Interview Schedule: Visitor

## 1. Background

How often do you visit art museums?

Which types of art exhibitions do you frequent?

What makes you want to visit an art museum?

Do you usually go alone or with companions?

## 2. Experiencing the exhibition

Did you use any guiding materials, for example, maps, booklets, or audio/video guides?

Did you join a guided tour?

Did you read the labels?

Did you feel you behave differently when inside art museums?

Did you feel there is a ‘right’ way to experience each exhibition and you know about it or wish to know?

## 3. Photographing the artwork

Did you take photos of artworks today?

In general, do you take photos of artworks when it is allowed?

Do you take photos of artworks when it is not allowed?

Why do you want to take photos?

Do you think art museums should permit visitor photography?

How do you decide which artwork to be photographed?

What type of device do you use to take pictures?

Outside the art museum, when and of what do you take photos?

## 4. Photos of artworks and souvenirs

Can you show me the photos you took during today’s visit?

Do you usually look at the photos taken after your visit?

Do you feel you captured what you desired to?

Have you purchased any souvenir or are you planning to?

Do you share your photos, either directly to others or on social media sites?

# Appendix B1. Interview Schedule: Curator

## 1. The curatorial profession

Can you describe your work as a curator?

Do you have a degree in art history, fine art, or curating?

What types of art do you work with?

What types of museum or gallery do you work with?

Do you contribute to the making of exhibition labels and guiding materials?

## 2. The production of experience

Would you describe your working process when curating an exhibition?

When curating an exhibition, what are you aiming for? What do you want to present in the end?

Does the idea of experience play a role in your process of curating?

When curating, do you draw upon findings from visitors studies?

Do you work with the educational department or the front of house team?

How do you position yourself as curator in relation with the artwork and the visitor?

## 3. Photographing the artwork

Do you decide whether your exhibition permits visitor photography or not?

If yes, what aspects do you consider when making the decision?

If no, do you wish visitors to your exhibitions take photos?

What do you think about visitors taking photos of artworks?

Do you feel photo-taking alters the experience of art?

Do you design any photography-based activity to complement the exhibition?

When visiting an exhibition which allows photography, do you take pictures?

## 4. Photographic reproduction and souvenir

Do you contribute to the making of exhibition catalogues or the producing of postcards sold at museum gift shops?

What do you think about photographic reproduction of artworks?

What do you think about souvenirs, for example, mugs bearing images of artworks?

# Appendix B2. Interview Schedule: Educator

## 1. The education profession

Can you describe your work at the education department?

Do you have a relevant degree?

What types of art do you work with?

What types of museums or galleries do you work with?

## 2. The production of visitor programme

Can you describe your working process when creating visitor events or learning programmes?

When creating visitor programmes, what are you aiming for?

Does the idea of experience play a part in your process of creating visitor programmes?

Do you work with the curatorial department?

How do you position yourself as a professional in education in relation with the artwork and the visitor?

Do you contribute to the making of exhibition labels and guiding materials?

## 3. Photographing the artwork

Do you have influence on deciding photography policy?

What do you think about visitors taking photos of artworks?

Do you feel photo-taking alters the experience of art?

Do you design any photography-based activity to complement the exhibition?

When visiting an exhibition which allows photography, do you take pictures?

## 4. Photographic reproduction and souvenir

What do you think about photographic reproduction of artworks?

What do you think about souvenirs, for example, mugs bearing images of artworks?

# Appendix B3. Interview Schedule: Visitor Experience/Invigilator

## 1. The profession

Can you describe your work?

What types of museums or galleries do you work with?

Do you work with the curatorial department?

How do you enforce the no-photography rule?

Why kinds of visitor behaviours would you caution against?

What kind of museum environment you'd wish to maintain?

## 3. Photographing the artwork

What do you think about visitor taking photos of artworks?

When visiting an exhibition, do you take pictures?

Do you think art museums and galleries should permit visitor photography?

## 4. Photographic reproduction

What do you think about photographic reproduction of artworks?

# Appendix C. Information Letter to Participants

Dear Madam or Sir,

I am a current Ph.D. student in the Department of Sociology at Goldsmiths, University of London. My research explores the increasing prevalence of photographing artworks by visitors to art museums. With more and more art museum loosening their photography policies, taking pictures of artworks has been integrated into many visitors' experience of art. I am particularly interested in if visitors, when photographing, experience artworks in ways correspond or differ from what are expected by museum professionals. The purpose of this study is, instead of making judgement in terms of which experiential mode is superior, to unpack this emergent photographic seeing and thus gain insight into the contemporary art museum experience.

My Ph.D. research, for which I have obtained full ethical approval, will consist of ethnographic observation at two London based art museums, Tate Modern and the Whitechapel Gallery. It will take place during both weekdays and weekends when the museums are open to the general public. This will be complemented by interviewing with both museum professionals and visitors. The former group includes curators, educational staff, as well as visitor experience teams. The latter group comprises adults who either take pictures of artworks or not. Each participant will have final input into transcripts and drafts upon request. In gratitude for your participation, I offer my services in any way to your own work, including presenting research findings to all participants.

The ultimate aim is to increase understanding of visitor experience and provide basis for future planning of exhibitions which endeavour to make art accessible and relevant to contemporary audiences. Thank you in advance for your attention, and I look forward to speaking with you.

Kind regards,
Chien Lee

Department of Sociology
Goldsmiths, University of London
c.lee@gold.ac.uk
+44 (0)7478490490

# Appendix D. Consent Form

You are being invited to participate in a research project conducted by Chien Lee, a current Ph.D. student in the Department of Sociology at Goldsmiths, University of London.

Your part in this research will involve a 40-60 minute interview which may be recorded on a digital voice recorder with your prior consent. (You have the ability to switch the recorder off and on during the interview.)

If you choose to take part in this research, you are undertaking this on a voluntary basis and have the right to withdraw your consent at any time. You also have the right to refuse to answer any questions. There might be questions asked by me without giving reasons. I am willing to share the transcript of our interview as well as research drafts with you upon request. You have the right to review the transcript, add information, and identify statements to be omitted from publication or presentation.

We will discuss and agree upon a standard of anonymity, including the use of pseudonyms, withdrawal of the name of institution or exhibition, or other options.

If you still wish to be kept completely anonymous, please tick here:

Research findings may be used in academic conference presentations, and published in academic articles, books, and my Ph.D. thesis.

All data and information collected during this research will be stored confidential in my personal laptop, protected by password known by myself solely. Only my supervisors, Professor Mike Featherstone and Dr Monica Sassatelli, may be shown excerpts from transcripts. Should you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a participant or dissatisfaction regarding my research, you may report them in confidence to:

Professor Mike Featherstone, Goldsmiths, University of London

m.feathersone@gold.ac.uk, +44 (0)20 7919 2202

Dr Monica Sassatelli, Goldsmiths, University of London

m.sassatelli@gold.ac.uk, +44 (0)20 7919 2202

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I confirm that I am over the age of eighteen and therefore legally afforded the right to participation. I understand and am well-informed about the above information, and I voluntarily consent to participate in the research project: ‘Photographic Mediation’.

| | |
|---|---|
| ----------------------------------------------------- | -------------------------------- |
| signature of participant | date |
| ----------------------------------------------------- | -------------------------------- |
| signature of interviewer | date |

I, the researcher, will leave a signed copy of this consent form with you, the participant, at the beginning of the interview.