

Embodying Artistic Process in Art Gallery Visits

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Introduction

In this chapter, we explore the ways in which visitors make meaning in art museums. We look specifically at processes of art interpretation as acts of meaning making during which visitors are often “seeking symbols and relationships, making analogies and metaphors, and finding ideas and implications that emerge from given observations” (Yenawine, 1991, p. 137), manifested through talk and a range of embodied practices. For example, visitors may identify specific features of the artworks which are visually accessible (e.g., colour, composition, form, space; subject-matter; materials; style), make brief statements, and pose questions about these features by drawing upon information available in the gallery resources (Hooper-Greenhill, Moussouri, Howthorne, & Riley, 2001; Bruder & Ucok, 2000) or through comparisons to the rest of the artefacts displayed in the museum. As the majority of visitors arrive in groups, these meanings and interpretations are shared with others in interaction (Stevens & Martell, 2003), making art interpretation “an endeavor that is both individual and personal, and communal and shared” (Barrett, 2000, p. 6).

Our approach to meaning making in the museum is informed by a sociocultural perspective, introduced in museum learning research in the early 2000s. Sociocultural learning theories acknowledge learners – here visitors – as active meaning makers who are interpreting the world around them through their engagement and participation within it. During their participation in the world, visitors are involved in an ongoing “explanatory engagement” with each other and with the museum (Leinhardt & Crowley, 1998; Schauble, Leinhardt, & Martin, 1997). This explanatory engagement refers both to the physical and the verbal interaction that

unfolds when visitors make meaning, not only of their encounters with artworks (Stainton, 2002; McKay & Monteverde, 2003), but also of their encounters with each other.

To better understand such processes of shared meaning making, we explore visitor interactions with artworks in two galleries, the Courtauld Gallery in London, UK, and the National Museum of Art, Architecture, and Design in Oslo, Norway. Attending to visitor interactions, we examine what they talk about and how they talk about it, in relation to each other and to the gallery resources. In this chapter, we focus specifically on the embodied ways in which the artist and the artistic process become relevant features of visitors' meaning making.

We build upon previous work on art interpretation, specifically on research exploring visitors' talk to identify patterns in aesthetic development in which visitors pay more attention to the artist as they gain expertise (Housen, 2007) and on research exploring the interpretive strategies and repertoire deployed by art museum visitors (Hooper-Greenhill et al., 2001). We extend this research to demonstrate that expertise in interpretation involves (among other aspects) considering the creative processes of the artist and the recognition of the artist as a living body interacting with an artwork. Accordingly, we also draw on recent research that emphasises museum visitors' interpretive processes as fundamentally embodied. Embodied practices, such as the recreation of the gesture of an artist's brush stroke or imagining the position of the artist in relation to the depicted scene, constitute important aspects of visitors' meaning making (e.g., Steier, Pierroux, & Krange, 2015; Christidou, 2018; Steier, 2014a; Christidou & Pierroux, 2019; references). Such practices are important not only to understand how visitors use their bodies to make meaning of the artworks but also to acknowledge the bodies of artists by animating them.

We place in the foreground of this study the ways that visitors bring the lens of "creation" into their meaning making, "the decisions, motivations, and techniques of the artist" (Knutson & Crowley, 2010, p. 197). We define creation as (i) the physical process of making the painting (i.e., use of tools, technique), (ii) the psychological process of making (artist's motivations, feelings, thoughts, and so on), and (iii) the compositional process of arranging things on the

canvas. We address the following research questions: (1) How is the artist (and his or her process) made to be relevant in interactions with art? (2) How do visitors use embodied means (gesture and language) to interpret artistic technique and process in encounters with artworks?

Sociocultural and Embodied Approaches to Meaning Making in Museums

Theoretically, we first build on sociocultural approaches to meaning making in museums, particularly in art galleries (Knutson & Crowley, 2010; Pierroux, 2006; Leinhardt & Knutson, 2004; Leinhardt, Crowley, & Knutson, 2002; Steier, 2014a; Christidou & Pierroux, 2019), which emphasise the significance of language and conversation as the mediational means for visitors' meaning making (Vygotsky, 1986; Wertsch, Del Rio, & Alvarez, 1995; Wertsch, 1991).

Knowledge and interpretations are not owned by any individual actor but are instead treated as patterns of participation that may be attributed to the group. Thus, linguistic expressions by visitors do not stand on their own as isolated expressions of meaning but rather develop in relational sequences.

This trajectory of a conversation in an art museum is characterised by Hooper-Greenhill (2000) as cyclical and as “a continuous process as the answers build on those questions that have already been asked and answered. This circular movement involves both the whole and the part, but also the present and the past” (p. 23). Visitors' past experiences and prior knowledge are made to be relevant to themselves and to each other as they collectively build interpretations of the artworks in the present. From this perspective, researchers have considered visitors' meaning-making as occurring through “conversational elaboration” (Leinhardt & Crowley, 1998), with visitors' conversations being gradually elaborated and detailed during and after viewing or participating in an interactive or hands-on exhibit.

In addition to (and in coordination with) the use of language, visitors also use their bodies in a variety of ways to mediate the interpretation of artworks and coordinate social activity around these artworks. We thus also draw on embodied interactional approaches to meaning making which emphasise the roles of human bodies in the physical world as contributing to processes of

communicating and knowing (Streeck, Goodwin, & LeBaron, 2011). For example, visitors direct attention through gestures and pointing (Christidou, 2018), physically pose with artworks to make sense of depictions of the body (Steier, 2014b), and also position and move themselves around artworks in order to perceive and highlight different aspects (Steier et al., 2015; Christidou & Diamantopoulou, 2016). By foregrounding embodiment in the artistic process, we wish to contribute to a deeper understanding of how bodily means of knowing and communicating contribute to meaning making processes with art in museums. We extend this line of research by investigating situations where “artistic creation” becomes relevant.

Methodology / Data Collection


We draw on video material collected over multiple years at art galleries in Norway and the United Kingdom as part of the authors’ doctoral theses. Video-based research allowed us to explore *in situ* visitors’ encounters with the artworks and with others sharing the same space, enabling a more holistic approach to the study of meaning making in museums (e.g., Heath & vom Lehn, 2004; Davidsson & Jakobsson, 2012). We first reviewed this large corpus of data looking for episodes in which the artist and artistic process became relevant in visitors’ meaning making. We then selected three such illustrative sequences of interaction in order to discuss the different contributions of bodily practices and talk in these processes of interpretation. The first sequence is from the Courtauld Gallery in London, UK, and the latter two are from the National Museum of Art, Architecture, and Design in Oslo, Norway. For the first sequence, a camera was fixed on a tripod next to a particular artwork, with an external microphone attached. For the latter two sequences, a researcher followed participants around the museum using a handheld video camera.



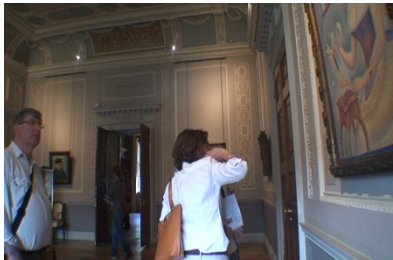
To analyse these sequences and address our research questions, we apply a perspective of embodied interaction (Streeck et al., 2011), in conjunction with conversation analysis and ethnomethodology. Accordingly, we attend to the visible and audible aspects of interaction (action and talk) as intertwined features of activity which are embedded within the context from


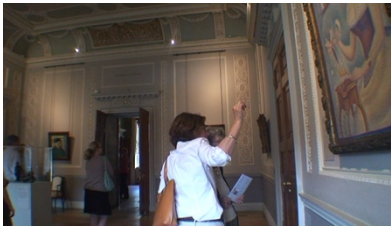
which they emerge. We bear in mind that “when people interact within embodied social frameworks that are structured and changed through their shifting co-presence, analysts should attend to what the participants themselves are treating as important” (Streeck et al., 2011, p. 12). The sequences were transcribed and viewed repeatedly over several rounds. In the transcripts below, italics represent emphasis given by the speaker, () represents a word that is inaudible and (()) contain a note by the researcher. We began by developing rich descriptions of the participants’ talk and action, and in subsequent rounds of analysis, we applied analytic concepts related to art interpretation and artistic processes. Participants’ talk and gestures were foregrounded in these analyses.

Three Sequences of Art Museum Interpretation Sequence 1: Animating Seurat at the Courtauld Gallery

In this sequence (Table 2.1), we join Maria and Anna as they are moving away from Seurat’s painting *The Bridge at Courbevoie*. The pair turns to their right and approaches the next painting, also by Seurat, titled *Woman Powdering Herself*. On the left side of the painting, there is a white label detailing the painting’s subject and the technique used by Seurat.

Turn	Speaker	Talk	Embodied Action	Video Still
1	Anna	She is up, to California	She is approaching the interpretive text.	
2	Maria	It’s another of his	She is facing the painting while Anna leans towards the interpretive text.	
3			Maria walks closer to Anna and positions herself to her right. She then extends her right hand and points at the first line of the	

			interpretive text.	
4	Maria	“Seurat’s divisionist technique of painting with small dots of colour has been extended here to the dark border”.	She is reading the interpretive text aloud while still pointing at it with her right hand. Upon saying the words “small dots”, she stops pointing, and using the same hand, she performs a gesture resembling the act of punctuating in front of the interpretive text.	
5		He painted far () creating more like a frame.	She extends her index finger, and while pointing at the painting’s frame, she starts punctuating with it in the air, moving from the bottom left corner to the right and then upwards, stopping midway. With the same finger and hand, she points at the painting, moving her finger up to the top right corner and then at the top left corner until she reaches the frame’s right side midway.	
6	Maria	“The subject, a woman at her toilette, seems to be a return to the themes of nature and artifice, and public and private life, which Seurat had earlier explored in his scenes of outdoor recreation”.	She continues reading the interpretive text with her right hand now being lifted close to her face.	

7		“The imbalance between the robust figure”	Upon reading the word “robust”, she extends her right hand and imitates grasping something in the air. She then uses the same hand and points at the painting.	
8		“and the delicate domestic objects seems intentionally ironic, as does the contrast between the gravity of her classical pose and the frivolity of her actions”.	Using her right hand, she makes a <i>pursed hand gesture</i> , which shifts to a pointing gesture.	

Analysis

Upon reaching the Seurat painting *Woman Powdering Herself*, Maria utters “it’s another of his” (Turn 2). With this brief statement, Maria shares with Anna two important pieces of information regarding this painting: (i) by using the possessive adjective “his”, Maria identifies the artist’s gender as male and (ii) by using the adjective “another”, Maria situates this painting as one of a collection of works. Here, the “another” might refer to the painting *The Bridge at Courbevoie* on display in the same gallery room, which the pair approached first (Figure 2.1). The recognition of these artworks belonging to the same collection potentially emerges as the result of comparison between these two and the rest of the paintings the pair encountered earlier during their visit. This comparison led Maria to realise the similarities in the technique used in both artworks, which informed her decision to group them conceptually together and identify their creator as being the same artist.



Figure 2.1 Seurat's *Woman Powdering Herself* (1888–1890) (right) and *The Bridge at Courbevoie* (1886–1887) (left) at the Courtauld Gallery, London, UK.

This act of comparison functions as the opening act of a relatively lengthy interactional sequence between Maria and Anna. According to previous research, the naming of the creator, the style, or the artwork's features and composition accomplishes the act of "identification", which is considered the first step in visitors' meaning making, preceding the more elaborated steps of "interpretation" and "engagement" (Allen, 2002; Borun, Chambers, & Cleghorn, 1996; Fienberg & Leinhardt, 2002). Following this initial step of identification, the pair draws heavily on the painting's interpretive text, which offers information about the creation of the painting in terms of the subject portrayed, its style, and other visual characteristics. In Turn 4, Maria approaches Anna in front of the painting and starts reading the text out loud, a behaviour also known in visitor studies as "text echo" (McManus, 1989). In Turns 4–8, Maria continues reading the whole text aloud, assigning to herself the role of the "designated reader" (Hirschi & Screven 1988,

p. 60) – that is, the visitor responsible for reading the interpretive text to the rest of the group throughout a museum visit.

While reading, Maria draws on the text and painting, while also introducing in Turn 5, her personal interpretation of what she is reading by rephrasing a line from the text (“he painted far, creating more like a frame” instead of “which frames the composition”). In a study on family learning in museums, Borun et al. (1996) found that families did not read the interpretive text in its entirety if the “designated reader” considered it as obstructive to individuals’ ability to enjoy and maintain the family’s ongoing social relationships in the museum. This may explain the tailoring of “text echo” in Turn 5 (Allen, 2002; Crowley & Jacobs, 2002). However, when looking at the video data, Maria not only shows that Seurat has painted a “frame” (border) but also animates the fact that he created a frame with millions of dots through her gesture of punctuating in the air. As she alternates this punctuating gesture with a deictic gesture towards the painting’s top right corner (Turn 5), she also “animates” the extent of Seurat’s creation of a frame around the main figure.

In Turns 6–8, during which Maria is reading the text aloud, she animates certain information, such as “robust figure”, “delicate”, “frame”, and “dots” through a range of different gestures, including pointing and depicting. Specifically, upon reading the word *delicate* aloud, she immediately gives a “pursed hand gesture” (Morris, 1994) by extending her hand, straightening the fingers and thumb, and bringing them all together in making an upward point. In this case, this gesture depicts the adjective *delicate*. While continuing her reading, in Turn 8, Maria performs another pointing gesture towards the painting when she reads aloud the phrase “*frivolity of her actions*”. When Maria finishes her reading, she briefly glances at the painting and then moves away. Anna lingers for ten more seconds, looking at the painting and the interpretive text, and then moves away, joining Maria.

As “the very act of reading sets in motion a translation” (Spence, 1982, p. 51), in this example, the ongoing translation (and thus interpretation) is further informed by the talk and gestures performed by Maria. This example is a combination of “telling and tagging”

(Christidou, 2012) with Maria talking about the painting while pointing specific features out, both verbally and non-verbally. At the same time, Maria's performance is part of the animating through "displaying doing" performance (Christidou, 2012), as she uses her own body to bring the exhibit, or aspects of it, to life. The combination of these categories brings forward the fact that being the recipient of a partner's interpretation allows one to experience the exhibit through this person's eyes; that is, the painting is infused with what each visitor says and does (Heath & vom Lehn, 2004).

Munch Room

In the following sequences, we explore two different video-recorded interactions in the Munch Room of the National Gallery of Norway in front of the painting *The Sick Child* by Edvard Munch (Figure 2.2). The first is of a discussion between a pair of teenagers, and the second is from a walking interview with a head curator.



Sequence 2: Teenagers' Interpretive Comparisons of Munch


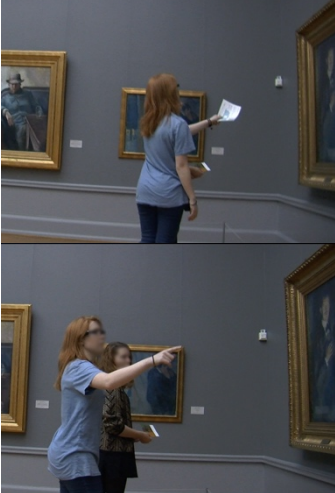

In this sequence (Table 2.2), Siri and Brigid have been visiting the National Gallery together and have agreed to have their entire visit recorded. They have been walking together around the Munch Room, which is a popular room at the museum containing a selection of Edvard Munch's most famous works. Siri approaches *The Sick Child* first.



Figure 2.2 Curator standing in front of Edvard Munch’s The Sick Child (Det syke barn), 1885–86. Nasjonalgalleriet, Oslo.

Table 2.2 Visitor Conversation and Interaction at the National Gallery, Oslo

Turn	Speaker	Talk	Embodied Action	Video Still
1	Siri	This is nice. GINGER power!		
2	Brigid	But this is so different from all the other paintings.		
3	Siri	What all the other paintings, what?	Looks around the room.	
4	Brigid	Yeah that he’s done, because it’s so	Points toward name plate on the	

			painting's frame.	
5	Siri	Have you been to the Munch Museum?		
6	Brigid	() but look at all the other paintings here. It doesn't really look like all the other paintings () because it's so out of focus. It looks way. older.	Also looks around room.	
7	Siri	Self-portrait.	Walks to the next painting, reads title of Munch's <i>Self-Portrait with Cigarette</i> , 1895.	
8	Brigid	See, even that one is more in focus than that one.	Points to one painting and then the other.	
9	Siri	Well they're not all in focus.		
10	Brigid	Yeah this is a <i>different</i> not in focus than that one.	The pair continues walking to the next painting.	

Siri makes a joke about the figure's red hair. Brigid quickly joins and immediately notes how "different" this work is "from all the other paintings" (Turn 2). Siri then turns and looks around the room as she asks what paintings Brigid is comparing it to. Brigid stays facing the painting and points to the bottom (the metal plate) to acknowledge Munch as "he" the artist (Turn 4). Siri

then asks if Brigid has been to the Munch Museum, the other major museum in Oslo dedicated to Munch's work. She seems to be situating this painting as more typical of Munch's work while also challenging Brigid here by asserting that she has more comprehensive experience with Munch's body of work. Brigid then returns the focus to a comparison of the rest of the works in this particular room. As she mentions "all the other paintings", she turns and scans the room (Turn 6). Next, Brigid clarifies what it is that she feels is different about this particular work, that it is "so out of focus" and thus looks "older" (Turn 6). This notion of being "out of focus" is an interesting way of interpreting the image as though it were being seen through the lens of a camera.


As she says "older", Brigid slowly scans the painting. But Siri has already moved to the next painting, reading the label aloud as "self-portrait" (Turn 7). This is another instance of "text echo" (McManus, 1989). This text echo here functions as an invitation to Brigid who then moves on closer to Siri so that they both stand in front of Munch's *Self Portrait with Cigarette*. However, upon approaching this painting, Brigid offers an evaluation comment by comparing it to the previous painting ("more in focus"), while pointing towards these two paintings to highlight this comparison (Turn 8). Siri suggests that the paintings "are not all in focus" as they both advance to the next painting (Turn 9). Brigid counters that "this is a different not in focus" while still referring to *The Sick Child* (Turn 10). Brigid later clarifies this difference as having to do with "blurriness" and "being in focus". She associates this choice as making the work look "older", but it is not clear if she means the age of the painting as an artefact or some commentary on the artistic period or style.



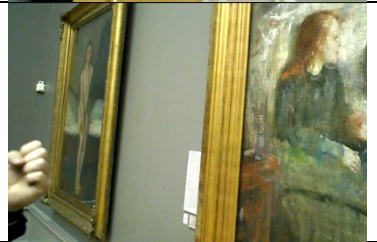
In this excerpt, we see that comparison emerges as a primary interpretive strategy, unfolding through their talk, gestures, and the positions of their bodies. Movement and gesture appear to be important to their interpretive processes, as they move between paintings and point between paintings to situate their conversation as being a comparison between works across the room and not merely about the one they are standing in front of. Munch, as the artist, becomes present in their interpretation when Brigid suggests that *The Sick Child* is in some way


“different” from the rest of the paintings in the room. Here, the use of adjectives (e.g., *different*, *another*) is important in visitors’ meaning making, as they signify comparison. The use of such adjectives and acts of comparison is very similar to what the pair at the Courtauld performs in the first sequence when they identify the painting as “another of his”.

Sequence 3: A Curator Performs Munch

The next sequence (Table 2.3) is excerpted from a walking interview between two researchers and a head curator moving around the same gallery room. The interview was conducted in the context of the design of new interpretive resources and activities for young people; the overarching question for the interview was “*how would the curator engage young people with the work of Edvard Munch?*”. Before we enter this excerpt, a researcher asks, “What should they be looking at in these works?” The curator approaches the *The Sick Child* painting first and starts describing the content of the artwork before turning to its broader themes.

Turn	Talk	Embodied Action	Video Still
1	It was a really common theme. It was not Munch that invented it.		
2	But the <i>way</i> how it is done is Munch mentioned that he was really like <i>struggling</i> , or really fighting with the canvas.	Moves both hands back and forth to depict struggling or tension.	
3	He painted it again and again.	Performs repetitive gesture by moving hands in a circular motion.	

4	And with this painting you can see like 20 layers of different, um compositions.	Shakes hands to show the buildup of layers of paint.	
5	And he made ((inaudible, describing multiple versions of the work)).		
6	This was like a frozen picture in his brain. That he always returned to again		
7	Not for economical reasons, but for yeah emotional reasons. He came again and again.	Repeats repetitive gesture over “again and again”.	
8	And you can see this endless process of creating this thing of thinking about this situation.	Performs single-handed cycle gesture with left hand to show “endless” process.	
9	You really see in the structure. It looks like old leather.	Points to the painting with open hand.	
10	He’s not really painting it,	Performs painting gesture.	
11	he’s struggling with the canvas.	Switches from painting gesture to moving fist back and forth as a struggling gesture.	
12	And this was so absolutely () at the time, because if you compare this painting with other paintings of the same theme it looks like a photograph.		
13	This painting was made in 86, 1886, but the structure looks like 100 years later.	Points to the interpretive text to reference date.	

	Like an abstract painting.		
14	There are big parts of the painting that are more or less abstract.	Motions over outer portions of the canvas.	
15	If you take out the two heads and this glass of medicine here it is more or less an abstract painting,	Points to these features of the painting (heads, then glass).	
16	with a surface that tells us about time, about age, about vanitas	With palm facing back, moves fingers to depict a textured “surface”.	
17	that nothing is resting forever.		

In this sequence, we wish to highlight a few important aspects of the curator’s interpretive performance. First, he gestures consistently as he speaks, often only to emphasise certain words. However, there are a few key gestures that are significant in that they enhance and embody aspects of his interpretation. Munch’s “struggle” with the canvas (Turn 2) is depicted metaphorically as a tension between the curator’s two hands. The buildup of paint on the canvas is not merely described but illustrated as his hands become these layers over the canvas (Turn 4). This overlaying of his hands to represent physical features of the paint on the canvas is repeated again in Turn 16 as he uses his fingers to depict the uneven texture of the surface of the paint. The curator also embodies Munch, himself, by performing the gesture used by Munch to paint and struggle with the canvas (Turns 10–11). In essence, the curator uses his own body to highlight aspects of the work but also to actually inhabit features of the painting as well as the body of the artist in recreating the painting. In this way, the curator performs and embodies being both “artist” and “painting”.

In addition to these embodied aspects, we also wish to note the ways in which the curator’s historical knowledge is made relevant. He is able to situate this painting in relation to Munch’s personal history as well as Munch’s iterative work with this theme. When he discusses

compositional qualities of the painting, he positions these features as contextualised choices and techniques employed by Munch and not merely as features of the work in front of them. For example, the layers of paint are described not only as a texture but as evidence of Munch's iterative process. Similarly, in Turn 2, the curator notes that "Munch mentioned" his struggles, perhaps referring to the extensive texts that Munch wrote about his own work. The curator also references the date, through the interpretive text in Turn 13, as a way to connect the work to a broader period in art history.

Comparative Analysis: Non-Expert and Expert Interpretations in the Munch Room

Looking across the two interactions with Munch's painting, we wish to highlight a few key aspects of the interpretive processes. First, both Brigid and the curator recognise that there is something *special* about this painting: Brigid recognises this unusualness and refers to it as "blurry", and the curator describes it as an almost abstract painting. When in Turn 10, Brigid notes that "Yeah this is a *different* not in focus than that one", this ambiguity demonstrates the difficulty in articulating her observation without more a nuanced/expert vocabulary. This turn in particular is reminiscent of the complexities of scientists learning to distinguish between different shades of black in Goodwin's (1997) study of practices in a science laboratory. Certain kinds of experiential expertise and expert vocabulary are required to articulate these distinctions. However, the curator is able to draw on a much richer understanding of the historical context, knowledge of technique, and even Munch's own writings. Thus, rather than reducing this feature to its *blurriness*, the curator can bring the artist into the conversation in a variety of ways and draw on the language of art history to talk about the artist's technique and use of visual principles. In addition to language choices, there are also bodily and performative aspects to the two respective interpretations. The curator also embodies Munch by performing the gesture used to create this texture. In contrast, Brigid's use of "blurriness" might be a reference to a camera lens – an artistic technique that she might be more familiar with.

Second, we also wish to highlight the importance of acts of comparison in interpretative processes. Brigid's initial observation about *The Sick Child* develops from a comparison between this work and the rest of the paintings in the room. Siri suggests that a broader perspective is required and makes the rest of Munch's catalogue of artworks relevant by mentioning another museum containing his work ("The Munch Museum", Turn 5). In contrast, the curator is able to perform even more sophisticated comparisons by situating this work in relation to other developments in art history (Turns 12–13). It is also important to note that the act of comparison drives the rest of the conversation between Brigid and Siri. As they move from painting to painting after *The Sick Child*, each new interpretation is framed in relation to the initial judgement about that painting being somehow unique from the others. For example, in Turn 8, Brigid notes, "See, even that one is more in focus than that one".

Finally, we also wish to note the ways that the visitors and curator make the artist a relevant aspect of their interpretation. For Brigid and Siri, the artist is present as the creator of these works. The episode involves a comparison between the painting and the rest of the works that "*he's done*" (emphasis added). The curator brings in the artist in much richer ways – by performing the technique (the struggle), performing the texture of the surface, and depicting the layers of paint.

Discussion: Making the Artist Present and Embodied Activity in the Gallery

Looking at the art museum through a sociocultural lens, we consider visitors in dialogue with each other and with the museum through the curated exhibition and the designed interpretive resources. Previous research (e.g., Hapgood & Palinscar, 2002; Hooper-Greenhill et al., 2001) has argued for the role of interpretive text and media in museums as an important factor facilitating the overall museum experience and visitors' meaning making.

As seen in all excerpts, these texts aided both the visitors' and the curator's framing of the paintings, particularly regarding the artist's creative process. In their effort to make meaning, visitors reacted to the specific exhibits either by attempting to interpret their visual experience

directly through comments and gestures or by seeking additional information in the available interpretive media.

As the interpretive text in the case of the Courtauld Gallery foregrounded aspects of the artistic process involved in the making of this painting, we saw that Maria drew upon it heavily while elaborating it with her own observations of the painting's techniques. After identifying the painting as another one of his (referring to Seurat) and establishing joint attention with Anna both verbally and nonverbally through their positioning in front of the painting (Christidou, 2018), Maria drew heavily on the interpretive text in her attempt to share more information about this painting with Anna. Here, the interpretive text is considered as another form of "the voice of the expert", similar to the voice of the curator. In this light, we imagine the interpretive text as an extension of the "voice" of the curator providing one side of the conversation and the visitors providing the other. We see the pair reading the text as being in an asynchronous conversation with the curator, similar to the interpretation given through the curator in the third sequence. By adopting aspects of the institution's language into their own discourse – through direct or rephrased text echo – and detailing their meaning-making through their own storytelling, visitors discover the exhibit not only in the light of the institution's authoritative voice but also in relation to their own personal context.

In the sequences in the Munch Room, such a longer interpretive text is not available. Yet we see in the second sequence that Brigid points to the painting's plate while referring to "he", the artist, as Munch. The simple gesture towards the plate and her utterance makes the artist a present feature in their discussion by physically locating an imaginary Munch in their shared space. The curator in the third sequence also points to the same plate while introducing information regarding the year of making ("This painting was made in '86, 1886, but the structure looks like 100 years later. Like an abstract painting"). In this case, the interpretive text serves to confirm information for the narrative the curator presents about the work's temporal significance.

In order to return to our research questions, we examine the interpretive processes across these three sequences. All in all, these three sequences unfold more around “how” the paintings have been made by referring to the style, tools, techniques, and zooming angle and less around “what” these paintings are depicting (i.e., the subjects or objects displayed in each painting).

Our first research question asked how the artist becomes a relevant feature in visitor interactions. We have identified several ways in which visitors made the artist present in their interpretation, involving the use of language and body and the combination thereof. When it comes to visitors’ verbal descriptions, one way is by using possessive adjectives that refer to the artist’s gender (“it’s another of his”; “Yeah that he’s done”), and the other is through acts of comparison across paintings exhibited in the same room or in the same exhibition (“See, even that one is more in focus than that one”; “it’s another of his”; “But this is so different from all the other paintings”).

The attributions through possessive adjectives become a kind of shorthand for situating the works as belonging to the particular artist and making that belonging relevant for their interaction. In the first sequence, Maria made the artist visible by saying “it is another one of his” (referring to Seurat), and in the second sequence, Brigid pointed to the bottom of the painting, where a metal plate stated the artist’s name and date, while referring to “he”, thus introducing the gender of the artist.

Another way that the artist was made present was through comparison of one painting to others by the artist in the room or elsewhere. Such comparisons allow visitors to frame the artworks as being either recognisable or unusual instances of the artist’s work. However, expertise is needed to contextualise these artistic choices. As seen in the third sequence, the curator in the Munch Room was able to draw on his rich knowledge of Munch to situate the painting not only in relation to others in the room but in the broader art historical context.

We now turn to our second research question and discuss the ways in which visitors use embodied means (gestures and language) to interpret artistic technique and process encounters with artworks. In the three previous sequences, we observed visitors performing a number of

gestures and bodily actions to either mimic the artistic process (brushstrokes, technique – i.e., pointillism) or to direct attention to features of the artwork and the available interpretive resources (i.e., pointing gestures).

In the case of Seurat in the first sequence, Maria embodied the act of creation for this painting by performing two different gestures depicting “punctuation” and thus, pointillism, which is the technique used for this painting: A reverse-pursed hand gesture to depict punctuation while saying “small dots of colour” (Turn 4) and her extended index finger moving upwards and downwards repeatedly when saying “he painted far creating more like a frame” (Turn 5). While turning to the interpretive text, Maria used a series of gestures to “animate” certain aspects of the painting. In doing so, Maria made Seurat visible in her interpretive performance – making him in a sense present.

The curator, in the third sequence, produces a similar performance as he mimics the “struggle” of working with an unforgiving canvas as opposed to a more delicate brush stroke (Turns 10–11). Freedberg and Gallese (2007, p. 197) argue that “viewers often experience a sense of bodily involvement with the movements that are implied by the physical traces – in brush-marks or paint drippings – of the creative actions of the producer of the work”. Our findings suggest similar involvement of the bodies of visitors in acts of art interpretation, highlighting the technique used in the creation of the paintings.

In the first sequence, Maria also performs a series of gestures to direct attention and animate parts of the interpretive text: She shifts her right hand and points at the interpretive text a few seconds before she starts reading it aloud, while continuing to point at it throughout her reading. Maria also used a deictic gesture to direct Anna’s attention to the painting’s frame in order to highlight that Seurat had painted outside of the borders of the frame, a detail given in the interpretive text. She also performs a number of gestures to animate adjectives such as “robust” and “delicate” when referring to the imbalance between the size of the woman and the delicate objects depicted in the painting. Following the information given in the interpretive text, Maria here foregrounds the “intentionally ironic” choice made by Seurat in creating this painting,

making relevant verbally and nonverbally both the artist and his decisions in the artistic process. By pointing out the length of Seurat's creation of frame and using a representational gesture of punctuating in the air (Christidou, 2012), Maria here introduces aspects of the painting's creation to Anna. These kinds of bodily forms of depicting qualities of the work (as opposed to the technique to produce them) are also evident when the curator performs the layers of built-up paint (Turn 4) and the rough texture of the paint (Turn 16).

In the second sequence, Brigid, in Turn 8, uses such deictic gestures to facilitate a comparison between two paintings by pointing to one and then the other. We also found that both the curator in Sequence 3 and the pair in the first sequence embodied not only the techniques used in making but also the effort and time put into the creation of these two paintings. Specifically, both repeated their gestures when talking about the technique each artist adopted in an attempt to reinforce the extensive effort embedded in the artistic process. Specifically, the curator embodied it through cyclical gestures and the use of the adverb "again" five times while talking about Munch making the paintings, and for Seurat, Maria embodied the making of millions of dots through a repeated gesture resembling punctuation in the air.

Previous research has acknowledged that visitors are making meaning in the museum while moving from one artefact to another (Roppola, 2012; Albano, 2014). In the first two sequences, we see how movement in space facilitated visitors in engaging in acts of comparison and in shifting the scope of their focus. The visitors are not merely performing a series of isolated interpretations, but rather each artefact and interaction contributes to an accumulation of interrelated interpretations. This mediation is not only informed by visitors' trajectories in space but also by the curatorial design. The spatial arrangements of the curatorial design and the rearrangements of visitors in space enable mediation and inform visitors' interpretations.

This study extends sociocultural perspectives on museum interpretation by highlighting the roles of visitors' own bodies as interpretive resources and the ways that they are used to introduce or to foreground the creative processes of the artist. As we have explored, museum visitors' meaning making with artworks often involves bringing the artists into the present,

thereby making them a relevant feature of interaction through a complex interplay between talk and bodily performance situated in a network of artefacts and resources. Visitors use their bodies to make relevant comparisons between an artist's work and to actually perform "creating the work" and "being the artist". Bringing forth these performances requires interpretive expertise drawn from both prior experience and the available interpretive resources. As museums, designers, and researchers recognise the importance of visitors' bodily practices for their meaning making, they can perhaps consider ways to integrate new forms of texts and resources that more directly introduce the artist as a participant in visitor dialogues. For example, future exhibitions and research might explore more direct demonstration or introduction of artistic technique and gesture in line with the ways we know that experts develop interpretations. In this study, we focused on interactions between participants and a small number of paintings. Future studies might look at longer time scales of visitor interactions with the works of an artist, perhaps over multiple visits, to explore how visitor relationships with particular artists develop over time. In this way, the artists are brought into the present, not merely as names on the wall, but as participants in visitor dialogue and interaction.

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