Between Talk and Silence: The Friendly Stranger and the Reception of Contemporary Art

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Working as a museum art educator while completing an MFA and PhD, I began a research on the psychological functioning of adult visitors looking at art. To this day, I am immersed in a rich environment that combines art production and the exploration of the art museum context.

Abstract
The paper describes a museum research and evaluation strategy called *The Friendly Stranger Approach*. This visitor studies method was developed for art museums and tested more specifically for contemporary art. The paper examines how the Friendly Stranger methodology relates to the *Thinking Aloud Approach* and questions the impact of participants' museum habit of frequentation and art knowledge on the answers museum professionals are seeking. The procedure on how to collect the data as a Friendly Stranger is put forth. Finally, two instruments are suggested to treat the data in terms of visitor's moments of harmony and conflict while looking at artworks in a museum.

Keywords
Art museum, evaluation strategy, Friendly Stranger, Thinking Aloud, cognitive dissonance.

The Need for Evaluation Strategies in Art Museums

Art museums, if they are to survive and prosper in today's society, must demonstrate their social relevance and provide evidence of their educational value. This demands a greater sensitivity towards actual and potential visitors and, in particular, a better comprehension of the ways in which people understand art in a museum context. However, there is little information available in art museum research to guide museum professionals towards a better understanding of visitor reactions to artworks. Evaluation studies and research in cultural institutions are needed to understand visitor reactions better and to help art museum professionals to design and provide information for improving displays and programs.

Evaluation and research strategies can take many different forms, from observing visitors interaction with objects in an exhibition, method known as «tracking», to interviewing visitors about their reasons for visiting the museum by using a post-visit questionnaire. These instruments are useful to art museums to find answers to broadly based questions. These efforts offer a limited scope of visitors understanding of an art exhibit and their strategies to connect with the artworks. Visitor studies have a critical role to play in finding out how people are learning from their museum experiences. Visitor studies must become an integral part of art museum activities that will increase museums' capacity to respond to visitors needs and create the necessary tools that will enable them to make their own connections with artworks (Émond 2002).

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An Evaluation Strategy to Study Visitors' Reactions to Contemporary Art

The greatest challenge lies in the inherent complexity of the museum environment and in the art museum professional's own understanding of the reactions of visitors to the art they are viewing during their museum explorations. Art is a foreign territory to many visitors: they feel they lack the knowledge required to appreciate fully what they see. The challenge for museum professionals is to provide opportunities that encourage their exploration of artworks that can be potentially enjoyable, but one that may also give rise to inner conflict.

This paper details the strategy used to examine visitors' experiences in an art museum while looking at contemporary art.

The Friendly Stranger Approach as an Evaluation Strategy

The Friendly Stranger evaluation strategy requires, for single adult visitors accompanied on their visits around the art museum, to talk about what they see, think and feel about the artworks and the exhibition as a whole. The researcher's role is limited to listening to the visitors but as a «Friendly Stranger». This method is known as the «Thinking Aloud» and Friendly Stranger approach. This evaluation strategy provides very rich material but requires a greater input of time and labour both for data collection and for analysis.

Design of the Friendly Stranger Evaluation Strategy

The Thinking Aloud Approach

Nature of visitors' talk and silence

In order to understand how individual participants react to art objects, it is important to give them an opportunity to speak freely in their own words in their own time. In reality, this means that moments of talk and silence are equally important in our understanding of the visitor museum experience. By using the thinking aloud approach, we are gaining access to what goes on in the viewer's mind while looking at art. Having the participant talk aloud is the closest we can come to having the viewer "think aloud" while working through the specific task at hand, that is, looking at art. Here is an example of one of the visitors' talk that has been transcribed:

> "I think sometimes when I first see something I decide that I don't like it which can be kind of limiting (6 seconds of silence) maybe it's because there's just so much to take in that… that my brain is like OK well yah you don't like this because you don't wanna you don't wanna get into it cause it's just too much…to much to…to absorb so… maybe that's why what makes me decide what I like or not is when… when you know I can't handle this kind of internalizing or something. I'll just be like, no, don't like it… " (visitor # 01).

Validity of the Thinking Aloud Approach

The "Groupe de Recherche sur les Musées et l'éducation des adultes" (GRMEA) of the Université de Montréal developed an instrument inspired by the Thinking Aloud used by cognitivist psychologist in order to study "Problem Solving" (e.g., Anderson, 1981; Deffaner and Rhenius, 1985; Singley and Anderson, 1989) which was validated by Ericsson and Simon

(1993). The thinking aloud approach has been discussed and validated by Dufresne-Tassé et al. (1995, 1998a, 1998b, 2000a, 2000b):

> There is a consensus among researchers in museology that to enhance the educational value of exhibitions, it is necessary to access and understand the actual experience of the individual visiting an exhibition. This experience is accessible through the psychological functioning of the person who is looking at objects. The discourse produced in this context following instructions for Thinking Aloud, a technique used in research in order to tap the cognitive processes of the learner, has been found to be a valid source of information about this functioning (Dufresne-Tassé et al., p.302, 1998a).

Here are the enumerated observations put forth by Dufresne-Tassé and Lefebvre (1995) that clearly attest the validity of the thinking aloud approach in collecting visitors' discourse:

1   The necessary time to realize a task doesn't vary if a person executes it or not while thinking aloud. (Ericsson and Simon, 1993);
2   The necessary time to make a decision also doesn't vary (Caroll and Payne, 1977);
3   The number of tasks realized in a given time is the same (Karpf, 1973);
4   Memory recall of given information is the same (Johnson and Russo, 1978);
5   The analytic activity is not greater (Marks, 1951);
6   While doing problem resolution, the thought process (Weisberg and Suls, 1973), and the structure of solutions elaborated (Bulbrook, 1932; Flaherty, 1974) are identical;
7   The models elaborated from the discourse rightly predicts the behaviour of people who realized the task in silence (Clarkson, 1962; Ericsson and Simon, 1993);
8   People who experienced the Thinking Aloud agree that this activity did not modify their course of action (Svenson, 1974).

In a museum context, the visitor is often the only one who can express how he feels, his thoughts and his needs. Verbalization, is then a way for researchers to tap into a visitor's reactions to works of art.

Limits of the thinking aloud approach

Dufresne-Tassé et al. (1998a,), when validating the thinking aloud approach raised concerns about the type of art viewed and the possible limits of the thinking aloud approach in collecting visitors' comments. Questions were raised about visitor reactions while looking at contemporary art that may indeed challenge their basic notion of art. Contemporary art may in fact confront some visitors since contemporary artists work at the margins of what is often perceived as acceptable. They often resort to unusual media, for example, and deal with subjects and presentations that might offend certain visitors. However, in the pilot project carried out (Émond, 1999) which asked participants to view some contemporary art of a sexual and exploitative nature, it was not found that visitors held back on their freely expressed thoughts as might have been expected by Dufresne-Tassé. Perhaps this is due to the fact that the participants to the study were frequent art museum visitors, underlying the importance of the selection of participants to evaluation studies. Even though, contemporary art might not be their favourite art

form, they nonetheless are quite aware of its existence and are not taken aback by its sometimes challenging nature.

The Selection of Participants

Previous research on visitor studies has shown the importance of visitor's profile in relation to what is being evaluated or researched in museums (Weltzl-Fairchild, Dufresne-Tassé and Émond, 1999). In this paper, we will look at two factors that should be considered when trying to understand adult visitors' functioning in contemporary art, that is, visitor's habit of frequentation and visitor's art knowledge.

Habit of frequentation

In museum research, like those of Chamberland (1992), Sauvé (1997) and Weltzl-Fairchild (1997), museum visitors were grouped into three types. Each type of museum visitors had patterns of museum frequentation. These categories are: *Never*, meaning that the visitor never went to a museum, *Rarely*, meaning the visitor goes to a museum once a year and finally, *Frequent*, meaning the visitor goes to a museum at least twice a year. When planning a evaluation strategy such as the Friendly Stranger method, it is necessary to precisely identify what we are looking for and which type of visitors could help us better in our task. In this paper, we are briefly presenting the main characteristics of different habit of frequentation and art experts versus non art experts.

Frequent visitors to museums have not been studied in great depth (Falk and Dierking, 1992). However, we know that some adults visit museums frequently, while others come only for a special reason, such as not missing the blockbuster exhibit of the season. Studies in museum visitors show that frequent visitors may constitute as much as 50 per cent of a museum's annual attendance (Gunther, 1994). To explain this phenomenon it is believed that frequent visitors have developed a different pattern of museum visits than those that are considered in the never and rarely categories (Hood, 1981). Here are the major differences between the patterns frequent visitors demonstrate with those that never or rarely visit art museums:

1) Frequent visitors already know how to find what they are looking for in the museum when they arrive (Falk and Dierking, 1992);
2) They see their visit as an opportunity to learn and being challenged by new experiences (Hooper-Greenhill, 1999);
3) They are empathetic with museum values (Weltzl-Fairchild et al., 1999);
4) Frequent visitors understand the language of art and the museum code (Hood, 1981);
5) They do not feel compelled to see the museum in a single visit (Falk and Dierking, 1992);
6) The frequent visitor's pathway through the museum is substantially different from the visitor that never or rarely goes to an art museum (Weltzl-Fairchild et al., 1999);
7) In general, frequent adult visitors do not mind exploring a museum alone and believe that visiting a museum is worth one's time because it gives them pleasure (Gunther, 1994);
8) Frequent visitors are different from others because their expectations are formed by repeated museum experience (Weltzl-Fairchild et al., 1999);
9) When frequent visitors' expectations are not met, they can become highly critical (Falk and Dierking, 1992).

Novices Versus Experts Art Viewers

In museum research studies, Silverman (1990) and Lachapelle (1999) looked at the different characteristics between novice art viewers and expert art viewers. Here are some of the characteristics that were observed between novices and expert art viewers:

1) Novice art viewers need to build a personal connection with the artwork (Silverman, 1990);
2) Novice art viewers talk more about themselves (Lachapelle, 1999);
3) They talk more about their own personal reactions to the works of art (Lachapelle, 1999);
4) Novice art viewers elaborate an emotional response to the artwork so that other ways of experiencing the art object are stunted (Silverman, 1990);
5) For novice art viewers, personal experience, it seems, may be the source of the affect-laden operations (Lachapelle, 1999);
6) Experts, on the other hand, try to be more objective (Lachapelle, 1999);
7) Their overall stance is more intellectual (Lachapelle, 1999);
8) Experts try to relate the work of art to their understanding of the art world concepts and theories (Lachapelle, 1999).

Procedure in Collecting Data

Once you have identified visitors' habit of frequentation and art expertise for your visitor studies you need to prepare yourself as the researcher-observer known as a Friendly Stranger. At this point, it is important to choose museum professionals that are actually working in the institution and are willing to spend time in the galleries with the participants.

Equipment

The selection of the cassette recorder for use in this Friendly Stranger evaluation strategy has to be set about with great care. This method of collecting visitors comments needs to be well thought through so that visitors forget that they are taped-recorded. In our research studies, we found that specialized equipment such as the professional WM-D6C Sony stereo cassette-recorder walkman along with a 900MHz transmitter and receiver WCS-990 wireless microphone system is necessary. It is chosen because it allows the participants to be independent from the researcher-observer better known as the Friendly Stranger. Visitors are equipped with a microphone and transmitter, as they clip on a tiny wireless omni-directional lavalier microphone of 1.5cm in length which is connected by a cord of approximately 1 metre in length to the clip-on transmitter that is very light and small, 6cm x 5.5cm. This system permits the participant to be as far away as 50 metres from the researcher-observer.

The Role of the Researcher-Observer as a Friendly Stranger

The procedure for collecting the data is the same for each subject and each participant is accompanied through his visit by the researcher acting as a silent observer. Meaning that as a researcher you chose to be a non-participant observer maintaining a professional distance (Fetterman, 1991; Yin, 1989).

In general, researchers, not unlike art educators, have limited time to make the person feel comfortable. When this is accomplished we become a "Friendly Stranger" (Cotterill and Letherby, 1994). As we become this Friendly Stranger, we are creating a relationship with a

participant that is unfamiliar with the researcher prior to the visit. The advantage of being a Friendly Stranger, is that, it allows you to accompany the participants without being viewed as a threat. Within a few minutes of being engaged in the visit, the participants feel at ease, safe revealing what they think spontaneously to the researcher. Participants will often share information that usually they would find quite difficult to do with family members and close friends because even though you are friendly you are still a stranger:

> The "Friendly Stranger", unlike a friend, does not exercise social control over respondents because the relationship exists for the purpose of the research and is terminated when the [visits are completed]. Indeed, respondents may feel more comfortable talking to a "Friendly Stranger" because it allows them to exercise some control over the relationship (Cotterill and Letherby, 1994, p.120).

Being a Friendly Stranger allows for this brief relationship between the researcher and the participant to be non-threatening. Using the thinking aloud approach, it is important to establish a good relationship with the participant as it is elaborated above. Another important factor to the success of the thinking aloud approach, as it will be stated below, is to give clear instructions to the participant before starting the museum visit. It is important to make the participant comfortable so that he doesn't feel judged or evaluated during his visit in the galleries. During the thinking aloud approach, if you have a participant that feels everything he is saying is being judged by the researcher-observer you create a situation that is not suitable for the purpose of the research. This concern was described by Dufresne-Tassé when she validated the thinking aloud approach as part of the procedure applied in her research methodology:

> La crainte de se voir évalué par l'expérimentateur est suscitée par deux facteurs (Rosenberg, 1969; Johanson, Gips et Rich, 1993). D'abord, des consignes ambiguës, qui amènent la personne participant à la recherche à se demander si on lui en révèle le véritable but ou si l'on veut évaluer sa personnalité. Ensuite, un statut ou un comportement du chercheur qui ferait de lui un juge compétent du fonctionnement psychologique et un arbitre sérieux de bénéfices potentiels (Dufresne-Tassé et al., 1998a, p.310).

Observations on greeting participants

It is important to know that details have an impact on the overall results. How the researcher greets participants, where, what is said prior to entering the targeted galleries, its physical presence all these factors play an important role in making participants comfortable in this particular situation. What researchers have to remember, is that they have only seconds to create a positive mood that will enable visitors to enjoy their museum experience.

Before entering galleries

Before entering the targeted galleries, short biographical histories are completed for each participant, and these include questions seeking information on previous museum attendance, previous art and art history training, their field of work, and their educational backgrounds. Each participant are asked to sign a consent form before the research procedure is initiated, authorizing the researcher to tape their comments while accompanied in their gallery visit.

When the microphone and transmitter is in place, each participant is instructed on how to deliver his remarks. Specifically, each is asked to say out loud what he thinks and feels while visiting the galleries, and told not to be concerned with justifying comments. This is the basic

information given to participants in order to use the thinking aloud approach that was described earlier. Each participant is lead over to the beginning of the target exhibit. Before entering the galleries, the nature of the study is explained to participants in the following manner:

> The aim of the research, for which you have accepted to participate, is to learn more about the experiences of adult visitors looking at works of art. It is important for you to know that there are no correct or incorrect responses. Presently, we know very little about such experiences, so everything you say and share with me during your visit will be precious and give me further insight. You might say that you allow me to see through your eyes, your sensibility and imagination. Walking through the galleries, I would like for you to share with me what you see, how you feel, what you think or imagine. Thank you for your collaboration.

> *In the galleries*

Subjects are instructed to stay within a predetermined space. At this point, the tape recorder is turned on and the Friendly Stranger proceeds in walking with the participant. Participants, once in the targeted galleries, are free to choose the course of their visit. They can look at any art object that attract their attention and talk out loud when they desire to do so.

The museum professional, being the Friendly Stranger, needs to understand that the adult visitor accepted to participate to the study, meaning to look at artworks accompanied by a museum staff. We cannot forget, in this situation, that the visitor needs to feel that he is in contact with both the art object and the Friendly Stranger. To be a good Friendly Stranger, the researcher-observer needs to be aware of how to move through the galleries and artworks. The Friendly Stranger's approach should abide by the following criteria:

1) Avoid influencing the visitors choices;
2) Not placing himself or herself in a position of authority while looking at an artwork with the visitor;
3) Respecting the visitors' personal space;
4) Being aware of his or her body language;
5) Being an active and interested listener.
6)

From this point on, the Friendly Stranger is visiting the targeted exhibit with the participant and feels as if the latter is speaking to him, telling a story without expecting any responses. Usually, participants to a research, who were accompanied by a museum staff in the role of a Friendly Stranger, were very content by their museum experience. In general, they manifested their content that the «museum» was responsive to their outlook on art and felt valorised by the experience.

Understanding Adult Visitors' Reception of Contemporary Art

Coherence Paradigm: Cognitive Dissonance and Consonance

Usually a significant amount of text is assumed from the audiotape transcriptions of the museum visit where a participant is accompanied by a Friendly Stranger. These are first transcribed and second, analysed using the categories identified by Weltzl-Fairchild (1997, 1999, 2000) in her study of the typologies of dissonance (Table 1) and consonance (Table 2), allowing a closer scrutiny of the participants' discourses. As each viewer operates differently in a state of

consonance or dissonance, the Weltzl-Fairchild instrument permits the emergence of individualized approaches and thus creating categories of analysis in an inductive fashion, after data has been collected. This instrument is used to identify the content with generalized descriptions such as: *the viewer is referring to his or her knowledge; the viewer is referring to himself or herself; the viewer is referring to the work of art; the viewer is referring to the artist.*

In her research, Weltzl-Fairchild, through the analysis of the verbalizations of visitors' comments developed two instruments based on Festinger's cognitive dissonance theory. These instruments are used to identify the different types of dissonance and consonance visitors express during an art museum visit.

From her studies on the cognitive dissonance theory she defined dissonance and consonance in the following way: A visitor in a museum will experience dissonance and or consonance as a result of being confronted by the museum object, museum practices, information (remembered or perceptual) or his dreams and desires, in the measure of his/her previous knowledge, expectations or desires. She illustrates in her research the nature of the relationships between cognitions:

> A simple example will illustrate the nature of the relationships between cognitions which are either in consonant or dissonant or irrelevant relationships. The cognition: "I like this painting" (A) and cognition: "It is a good painting because it is realistic" (B) can be linked in a consonant manner. One can imply the other [or ones follows the other]. However, cognition (C) "This is a good painting because it is not realistic". One is the obverse of the other. However, the cognition "It is raining outside" (D) is a cognition that is irrelevant to either A, B or C. There is no implication in this statement with any of the other cognitions (Weltzl-Fairchild and Émond, 2000a, p. 143-144).

Another element of her research was to link the cognitive dissonance theory to learning (Weltzl-Fairchild, 1997, 1999, 2000):

> Some educators and psychologists have emphasized the need for these kinds of confrontations in museum settings (Kurylo, 1976, Feldman, 1987) as these provide a challenge to previously held cognitions. According to psychologists and educators (Piaget, Dewey, Feldman *et al.*), the resolution of dissonances, or modification of a schema, leads to learning. We assumed that if the dissonances that we noted in the verbalizations were resolved, then this would indicate learning on the part of the visitor. As well as instances of resolution leading to learning, we assumed that some work would continue after the visit was over and that visitors could well resolve dissonances at a later date. Therefore the identification of dissonances was important to understanding some of the issues that face visitors during a visit (Weltzl-Fairchild, Dufresne-Tassé and Émond, 1999, p. 150).

For the purpose of this evaluation strategy Weltzl-Fairchild's analysis instruments are valuable tools in identifying dissonance and consonance.

Typologies of dissonance

The typologies of dissonance (Table 1) was created by the analysis of the verbalizations of the visitors studied by Weltzl-Fairchild. The types and subtypes that emerged from Weltzl-Fairchild research are described and shown in Table 1.

Weltzl-Fairchild identified five types and thirteen subtypes of dissonance.

Type 1 dissonance are those which deal with conflicts between two of the following of the triad: the perception of the work of art, the visitor's previous knowledge or the label. This category has three subtypes, which are:

a   Conflict between previous knowledge and perception of art;
b   Conflict between label and perception of art work;
c   Conflict between previous knowledge and label.

Type 2 dissonance are conflicts, which exist between the visitor's expectations about the visit, or notions of Beauty or the role of the museum and the actuality of the experience. These conflicts are of a large conceptual nature, which indicate major differences in value system. This category has four subtypes, which are:

a   Conflict about the quality of the visit;
b   Conflict about the museum's role;
c   Conflict about the art object (Notions of Beauty and communication);
d   Conflict about the museum's organization.

Type 3 dissonance are focused on aspects within the artwork which the visitor feels don't go together. These could be conflicts noted between the rendering of parts of the painting, or the levels of realism between parts of the painting or a lack of concordance between the message of the picture and the means of expression. These dissonances are in effect criteria of judgement, which suggest that the visitor expects harmony within the artwork's composition, rendering or ability to symbolize. This category has three subtypes, which are:

a   Conflict perceived concerning the criteria of realism;
b   Conflict perceived between parts of the art object;
c   Conflict perceived between the symbolic message and the means of expression.

Type 4 dissonance are of a very personal nature which the visitor expresses but often doesn't explain. They seem to be rooted in old memories and experiences. This category has three subtypes which are:

a   Conflict between the visitor's taste and some part of the visual language of the art work;
b   Conflict between the visitor's taste and the content of the art work;
c   Conflict between the visitor's taste and the artist's style.

Type 5 dissonance is a catch-all category of the unexplained statements. The visitor might indicate strong conflict but without explaining what he is in conflict with and for what reason. Conflicts exist and it is impossible to categorize them, to do so would be to interpret the visitor's thoughts, which is not acceptable in the context of this approach.

Table 1: Weltzl-Fairchild's Typologies of Dissonance

1. Dissonance between previous knowledge, label or artwork.	a. Conflict between previous knowledge and perception of artwork. b. Conflict between label and perception of artwork. c. Conflict between previous knowledge and label.
2. Dissonance between the visitor's expectations and the aesthetic event.	a. Conflict about the quality of the visit. b. Conflict about the museum's role. c. Conflict about the art object (Notions of Beauty and communication). d. Conflict about the museum's organization.
3. Dissonance perceived within the art object.	a. Conflict perceived concerning the criteria of realism. b. Conflict perceived between parts of the art object. c. Conflict perceived between the symbolic message and the means of expression.
4. Dissonance based on the visitor's personal, idiosyncratic taste.	a. Conflict between the visitor's taste and some part of the visual language of the artwork. b. Conflict between the visitor's taste and the content of the artwork. c. Conflict between the visitor's taste and the artist's style.
5. Unexplained dissonance.	

Typologies of consonance

In Weltzl-Fairchild's research we can observe the interest of understanding the reasons the visitors would give for their sense of harmony. The types and subtypes that emerged from Weltzl-Fairchild research are described and shown in the Table 2.

Weltzl-Fairchild identified five types and seventeen subtypes of consonance.

In type 1 consonance the visitor has a spontaneous reaction towards the artwork. In one instance he is happy to recognize an aspect of the art object in the museum and he could also feel a certain pleasure as he verifies his previous knowledge. This category has two subtypes which are:

a   recognizes artist, art movement or style, or subject matter;
b   verifies information after questioning.

Type 2 consonance is about the self and comprise five subtypes which are:

a   feels pleasant somatic state in museum;
b   evokes personal memories and nostalgia;
c   personal taste in style or subject matter or visual language or museum's role;
d   metacognition;
e   enters work; identifies with it.

Type 3 consonance places the focus is on the artwork. The visitor expresses how the artwork fulfils his series of criteria, which are the standards of excellence. This category has five subtypes which are:

a   recognizes symbolic aspect within work;
b   notes work is full of life or movement;
c   well painted and rendered;
d   notes a pleasant somatic state in work;
e   shows the past.

Type 4 consonance focuses on the artist. The visitor puts the emphasis on the artist's role. This category has three subtypes which are:

a   expresses own feelings and vision;
b   shows the past (customs, life...);
c   works hard, has talent; good technique.

Type 5 consonance is unexplained. These comments are not well explained, so hard to be categorized. Two expressions were used in such situations.

a   "I like it!";
b   Beauty (liking, stereotype, judgement)

Table 2: Weltzl-Fairchild's Typologies of Consonance

1. Knowledge	a. recognizes artist, art movement or style, or subject matter.
	b. verifies information after questioning.
2. Self	a. feels pleasant somatic state in museum.
	b. evokes personal memories and nostalgia.
	c. personal taste in style or subject matter or visual language, or museum's role.
	d. metacognition
	e. enters work; identifies with it.
3. Work of Art	a. recognizes symbolic aspect within work.
	b. notes work is full of life or movement.
	c. well painted and rendered.
	d. notes a pleasant somatic state in work.
	e. shows the past.
4. Artist	a. expresses own feelings and vision.
	b. shows the past (customs, life...)
	c. works hard, has talent; good technique.
5. Unexplained	a. "I like it!"
	b. Beauty (liking, stereotype, judgement)

The study of the verbal comments of visitors allows a close observation of those moments when expectations are met and enjoyment is experienced. The same can be said when expectations are not met, and visitors experience moments of conflicts. That is to say, visitor verbalizations imply that cognitive structures exist which are in a consonant or dissonant relationship with expectations, beliefs or knowledge, with respect to artworks or the general museum situation.

The use of Weltzl-Fairchild's typologies of dissonance and consonance to categorize visitor comments into types and subtypes is a way of identifying the source of conflict or harmony in the Friendly Stranger Approach. It is believed, in the context of this evaluation strategy, that the statements categorized into types and subtypes should be considered only as the first step in the analysis of the visitor's experiences. Further analysis is required to uncover specific characteristics within the same type or subtype, which can only be uncovered by a closer scrutiny of the meaning of the visitor's verbalized discourse.

Conclusion

Art museums do take visitors, needs into consideration to some extent, but only insofar as those needs are understood. Research is now critical to learning more about them. How can museum professionals set goals and strategies that will make the art museums more accessible to a broader public, if the complex fabric of visitor experiences is not better understood? If museums are to take a leading role in providing new and meaningful learning experiences for adult visitors then studying visitor learning needs to be part of an active research program within museum's organization. Through analysing visitors research that use a variety of approaches to uncover visitor psychological functioning, museums can begin to understand what people are learning from their museum visit and create a need for visitors to repeat the experience.

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