Escape at the Museum

Immersive Installation Art and the Museum Experience

Student Name: Kotryna Markevičiūtė

Student Number: 452078

Supervisor: Daniela Stocco Ferreira

Master: Arts, Culture & Society

Erasmus School of History, Culture and Communication

Erasmus University Rotterdam

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Abstract

For a few decades now, there has been a significant increase of immersive installation art at art museums. Immersive installations differ from traditional art exhibitions as they are site-specific, resemble theatrical *mise-en-scène* and provide a hyper-realistic, sensory experience to visitors by requiring to physically enter the space a work occupies. Currently, the attention to this art has been growing together with the critique. On the one hand, experiential, entertaining immersive art draws crowds of people to museums and offers extraordinary art experiences. Thus, this art has become an important field of action of museums since they strive to attract larger audiences. On the other hand, these installations are criticised for resembling entertainment venues and negatively influencing the audience's relation with art and encouraging passive consumption of "retinal art". This qualitative study is aimed at researching the immersive installation experience at the museum and questions, how does the immersive art experience differ from that of the usual? By means of ethnographic research (participant observations, semi-structured interviews) comparison of visitors' experiences and behaviour at two art settings, one traditional and one immersive type, have been presented. Both exhibitions chosen for the research: "Mad About Surrealism" and installation "Infinity Mirror Room" by Yayoi Kusama were situated at the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, in Rotterdam. Visitors analysis revealed noteworthy differences between these shows. It was found out that people at the traditional exhibit mostly engaged with the artistic content at the cognitive level, they were also significantly calm, physically passive, did not have many social interactions, yet were significantly sensitive to the social environment around them. Whereas at the installation, visitors engaged intellectually at a lesser extent, were highly social but less sensitive to the social climate, appeared more active yet less than it was expected. Finally, there was different emotional engagement level between two shows, if, at the Surrealism exhibition, people were emotionally distanced from artworks, at the installation, the relationship with art was more personal and influenced introspective, embodied experiences. This proves that the immersive art changes the established museum experience and, moreover, suggests that other approaches, for instance, more attention to emotional, experiential, social dimensions instead of cognitive perception could help to comprehend this phenomenon better.

KEYWORDS: *museum experience, immersive installation art, aesthetic perception, museum visitors;*

Contents

Introduction 1

Chapter 1 – Art museum experience 4

1.1 Definition 4

1.2 Museum experience types: contemplative, enthusing, social 5

1.3 Relation between the art museum space and the museum experience 7

1.3.1 Aesthetic and social dimensions of the art museum 8

1.3.2 Art museum ethos 10

Chapter 2 – Immersive installation art 14

2.1 Historical framework, features and sub-genres of installation art 14

2.2 Deep immersion environments 15

2.3 Problems with deep immersion and museum critique 18

Chapter 3 – Methodology 21

3.1 Research question and sub-questions 21

3.2 Methodology 22

3.2.1 Methods 22

3.2.2 Research units and sampling 23

3.2.3 Types of data and data analysis 24

3.2.4 Location and period of research 24

3.3 Set-ups of exhibitions 25

3.3.1 “Mad About Surrealism” 25

3.3.2 “Infinity Mirror Room – Phalli’s Field” 28

3.4 Expectations 31

Chapter 4 – Observation 32

4.1 Conducting observation 32

4.2 Variables and categories 34

4.3 Results 36

4.3.1 Information processing at the exhibitions 36
4.3.2 Social behaviour of visitors 40
4.3.3 Bodily situation at the exhibitions 42
Chapter 5 – Interviews 44
5.1 Conducting interviews and analysis of the interview data 44
5.2 Results 46
5.2.1 Social interaction of visitors 46
5.2.2 Intellectual, emotional and physical engagement of visitors 49
5.2.2.1 Intellectual engagement 49
5.2.2.2 Emotional engagement 52
5.2.2.3 Physical engagement 54
5.2.3 Behaviour at the museum 55
5.2.3.1 Touching art 57
5.2.3.2 Photographing at the museum 58
Chapter 6 – Conclusions 62
6.1 Final Conclusion 62
6.2 Discussion and future recommendations 66
References 68
Appendices 71
A – Fragment from the field notes 71
B – Interview Guide 74
C – Information about respondents 76

Preface

This thesis could not have been written without the help and support of my supervisor Daniela Stocco. Thank you.

Introduction

At the 55th Venice Biennial in 2013, South Korean-born artist Kimsooja presented a site-specific installation "To Breathe: Bottari". At the pavilion, the artwork was constructed from an empty space, a mirrored floor and windows covered with a semi-transparent membrane which diffracted the daylight into a rainbow colour spectrum. Using these simple elements Kimsooja created a minimalist, dreamy environment in which visitors would find themselves immersed into an endless visual and sensory experience. While visiting the pavilion, I thought that without visitors this installation would only be an empty space, that people, who moved around the room, engaged with the architecture and interacted with each other, turned it into an artwork. Because the spatial installation was purely experiential, interactive and freely designed without offering a strict path that people could follow or a discursive framework suggesting intellectual discussion, visitors used it as a free venue for socialisation, a meditative space to spend some time in solitude, and just a perfect setting for taking beautiful photographs.

Immersive installations such as the aforementioned Kimsooja's work are the main focus of this study. In contrast with traditional art settings that display tangible pictures and objects arranged in a certain order, immersive art installations resemble theatrical *mise-en-scène* and provide a hyper-realistic and sensory experience (De Oliveira et al., 2004) to visitors by requiring to physically enter the space a work occupies. It is important to notice that, in art history, immersive installation art is not a new concept. Roots of immersive installations lie in site-specific spatial artworks, designed for a concrete location in the gallery, museum or in any other setting, that artists started actively creating around the mid-20th century. Due to conservation difficulties and a large scale, most of immersive art created between 1950's and 2000's was shown to the public only temporarily. However, currently, there is a significant increase of the immersive installation art preservation in art museums. One of the examples is a spatial installation "Infinity Mirror Room - Phalli's Field" (1998) by Japanese artist Yayoi Kusama which is part of a permanent collection of the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in Rotterdam.

The main purpose of this research was to get more insight how museum visitors experience site-specific immersive art installations as opposed to more traditional museum settings. Therefore, I selected the above-mentioned installation by Kusama, together with a traditional exhibition "Mad About Surrealism", which has been temporarily displayed at the same museum from February to

May 2017, as the main locations and subjects of this research. To define the museum experience at immersive installations, in this descriptive, qualitative research, I compared visitors' experiences and their behaviour at the Infinity Room and the Surrealism exhibition. I, furthermore, formulated my research question: *how does the experience of the art museum visitor differ at exhibitions that contain deep immersion installations such as Yayoi Kusama's "Infinity Mirror Room - Phalli's Field" as opposed to traditional museum exhibitions such as "Mad about Surrealism" at the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen (Rotterdam)?* To answer this question, ethnographic research, which consisted from participant observations and semi-structured interviews, was applied.

The topic for this research was mainly inspired by the growing number of immersive installations displayed at art museums and, accordingly, by the increasing attention and critique towards this art. On the one hand, experiential, entertaining, visually stunning immersive art draws crowds of people to museums and biennials, offers spectacular photographic, "Instagramming"[1] possibilities, and extraordinary experiences. In this regard, immersive art has become an important field of action of museums as they struggle with significant reduction of budgets (Goulding, 2000), and increasing need to attract more visitors. Furthermore, as some scholars argue, the emergence of the immersive installation art at the museum changed its environment from isolating, contemplative and suppressing towards stimulating memorable experiences and socialisation among visitors (Bishop, 2005; De Oliveira et al., 2004). Yet, on the other hand, immersive installations have been criticised for resembling entertainment venues and negatively influencing the audience's relation with art. Advocates of this opinion argue that instead of stimulating cognitive contemplation, which is one of the main preconditions of the aesthetic experience, immersive art draws beholders into a passive consumption of "retinal art" (Coulter-Smith, 2006) and an introspective state of experiential sensations (De Oliveira et al., 2004). Moreover, immersive installations stimulate different behaviour among visitors, activate them emotionally, physically and socially. This behaviour, as I discuss further in this thesis, contradicts the established museum ethos.

The museum experience has been in the focus of sociological research for more than two decades now. After reading an extensive body of literature, it becomes clear that the deeper scholars go to this topic the more elements that influence the museum experience they discover. Researchers such as Falk and Dierking (2013) emphasise the importance of the visitor's agency during the museum visit by stating that the museum experience is an ever-changing relationship between the

[1] The term "Instagramming" refers to the popular photo-sharing social media platform "Instagram" designed for users to share pictures and videos publicly and privatley with their followers online.

museum and the visitor in a one given moment. Other theorists (Pekarik et al., 1999; Kirchberg & Tröndle, 2015) discern several types of the museum experience that indicate different levels of engagement with the art setting. Finally, they stress the importance of the exhibition design in tailoring the experience. The latter argument developed in the study by Kirchberg & Tröndle (2015), as well as the typology of the museum experience, have become central to the theoretical framework of this research and allowed me to get a better insight, what types of experience both exhibitions trigger the most among museum visitors.

Although there has been a significant increase in the museum research, no one has yet analysed immersive art installations regarding the museum experience. Moreover, while many scholars focus on the overall museum experience, the effect of the museum environment and the art setting on it has often been marginalised (Kesner, 2006). Therefore, this research aims to fill the gap in the literature of the museum experience as well as contemporary art regarding immersive installations at the museum. In addition, I believe, that this empirical study could contribute to a better understanding of visitors' experiences and behaviours that immersive exhibitions stimulate, it, therefore, could be of societal relevance for art institutions that particularly program immersive shows. As Kirchberg & Tröndle (2015) pointed out "though one would assume that the experiencing of a fine-art museum would be a concern of every institution, the issue is largely absent from the research in museum studies" (Ibid., p. 169).

This thesis consists of six chapters. First two chapters present the theoretical framework and are structured along several topics. The first focuses on the theory of the museum experience and explores various elements that influence it. Meanwhile, the second chapter is aimed at presenting the theoretical framework of the immersive installation and contextualising this art in a broader fine arts field. This is followed by Chapter 3, where I outline my methodological framework. Moreover, the set-ups of two exhibitions "Infinity Room" and "Mad About Surrealism" will also be presented in this section. The findings and results of the research regarding visitors' behaviour and experiences in two art settings will be treated in Chapters 5&6. Conclusions, limitations and further discussion will be formulated in the final chapter.

Chapter 1 – Art museum experience

1.1 Definition

Throughout the years, the profile of the art museum as a public institution had transformed several times. As it was briefly presented in the introduction, today, museums undergo major changes as they actively strive to broaden their audiences. This results in a more accessible and entertainment, experiences-oriented museum program. The described conflictual situation in the museum discourse raises an important question: what is the main purpose of the art museum? Is it education of communities or entertainment, or both things combined?

Since the creation of this institution, the museum was mainly perceived as a place for conservation, preservation and display of art objects. Thus, the visit to the museum was firstly perceived as an educational and intellectual activity. However, in the twenty-first century, the leisure and education became tightly intertwined (Falk & Dierking, 2013). Today, people visit art museums not only to satisfy their intellectual and aesthetical needs but also, as Falk and Dierking's study (2013) revealed, they go there to socialise (to be with or among other people), to relax as well as to gain new experiences. Therefore, at the contemporary museum, the dichotomy between entertainment and learning is not that clear anymore. Consequently, this multisided approach of the museum, where various visitors can accomplish their different goals (Ibid.) has also modified the current official definition of the museum formulated by the International Council of Museums (ICOM). According to the ICOM definition, the museum "is a non-profit, permanent institution (...) open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment" (ICOM, Museum Definition, n.d.).

As today art museums offer multiple things to different audiences, it has become a much harder task to define the museum experience. Today, it is a widely complex term, an account of many different factors that, all combined, produce the so-called museum experience. Many scholars, who have tried to contextualise and define the it, have emphasised different aspects of this phenomenon (Pekarik et al.,1999; Goulding, 2000). However, they all agree that the museum experience is a complex product of the museum (Kotler, 2000) which is also significantly influenced by different dimensions of a personal visitor's life (Pekarik et al., 1999). As Falk (2013) describes it, the museum experience is the intangible relationship between an institution and a

person in a one given day (Falk, 2013). This vague definition of the museum experience highlights the importance of the visitor's agency during the entire journey through the museum and negates an old-fashioned idea that the visitor is, basically, an "empty vessel" which can be filled with information produced by curators and artists.

Moreover, the museum experience also has different forms of a visitor's engagement with exhibited artworks. As Falk and Dierking (2013) envision, before coming to the museum, people already have established expectations for their visit thus enact various roles: "museum visitors may see themselves as explorers, facilitators, professionals/ hobbyists, experience seekers, rechargers, respectful pilgrims, and/ or affinity seekers, and these various identities color and characterize their museum experiences" (Falk & Dierking, 2013, p. 106). In other studies, this visitor experience profiling varies from physical type (seeing real artworks), cognitive (gaining understanding and grasping ideas embedded in art) to introspective (reflecting and emotionally connecting with artworks), and social (interacting with other visitors) (Pekarik et al., 1999). Kirchberg & Tröndle (2015) have formulated similar typology of the museum experience, however, the scholars discern only three types: social, contemplative and enthusing. The former typology has become central to the theoretical framework of this research.

The researchers during a five-year research "eMotion: Mapping the Museum Experience" (2015) used mixed-methodology including quantitative analysis, pre-visit and post-visit surveys, visitors' movement-tracking, and physiological maps to examine individual physiological, social, aesthetic and psychological aspects of the museum visit. This study revealed that among most important factors that influence the museum experience are: pre-visit condition of a visitor (including socio-cultural, socio-demographic conditions), and the setting of the exhibition (choice of artworks, exhibition design, curatorial strategies and spatial arrangements). However, it is important to notice that different factors were important to different types of visitors. Therefore, the assessment of the experience made by visitors, as the scholars argue, leads to a better understanding what elements of the exhibition evoke one of the three types of the museum experience.

1.2 Museum experience types: contemplative, enthusing, social

In the previous section, it has been discussed that it is possible to discern several types of experience that visitors embody at the museum. In this section, I will analyse each type in more detail. To begin, first type that Kirchberg & Tröndle (2015) discern in their research is the

contemplative experience type. This type can also be called cognitive, as it defines visitors who engage with the content of the museum on the intellectual, critical level. For this type of visitor, positive experience at the museum is mostly connected to a well-curated content, to the possibility to learn something new or to deepen the knowledge he/she already has. This type also seeks for emotional involvement, yet, in contrast with enthusing type, which will be discussed further, it is less affected by emotions. Overall, this type pays attention to the exhibition narratives and is highly individualistic, critical and reflective on what is on the display. The second type – enthusing, is a less critical type of visitor, who comes to the museum to see famous artists' works or only concentrates on works that have personal meaning for him/her. A positive experience for this type is connected to the choice of artworks and emotions that works evoke. Therefore, a strong emotional statement for instance "this artwork moved me" (Ibid., p. 181) is an important indicator of the enthusing type. Finally, the social type, according to the researchers, has the lowest engagement level with the exhibition and is also the least critical and sensitive towards the display. A positive experience to this type is linked to a convenient spatial design of the exhibition which would allow a comfortable socialisation with friends and family. Overall, as the scholars argue, each type of the museum experience can be identified by analysing visitors' post-visit assessments of their museum visit.

Another important finding of this museum experience research is that there is a clear behavioural and cognitive distinction between all above-mentioned experience types. In this respect, "the less the visitor takes into consideration the content of the artworks, the higher is his/her level of social experience" (Ibid., p. 181). Moreover, the scholars found out that these three types not only reveal in what sense the visitor is affected by the exhibition but also can be indicated from different behavioural patterns and physiological states of visitors. For instance, by tracking visitors at the museum and translating the data into maps they could see that different types can be indicated by the moving speed, physiological reactions or the level of social interaction.

Altogether, the contemplative type visitors, as they study revealed, tend to engage with art individually without sharing much about their experiences thus they are the least social. These visitors also show more attention to single artworks, meaning that the time spent in front of a single artwork is the longest from all types. Additionally, this type spends more time than others reading texts and pay attention to titles, additionally, the physiological reactions of this type are weaker than that of the enthusing. However, in is important to point out that the study lacks numerical

clarifications, what scholars consider as long or short time spent in front of one artwork. The definition of this variable remains vague.

Whereas the enthusing type can be indicated by high physical reactions towards artworks as well as the fluctuating attention to texts and art objects. Moreover, the enthusing type visitors are more likely to communicate their experiences immediately "on the spot" to their companions thus this type of visitors is also quite social. The last one, the social type, has the weakest physiological reactions towards artworks. Such visitors are less interested in reading exhibition texts, their moving speed at the exposition is the fastest from all the types, and, finally, they interact, speak with their companions more often than other visitors. Also, as the researchers suggest, the socialisation level within the exhibition is an important factor to make distinctions between the types. According to them, for both social type and the enthusing type, though to the lesser extent, the museum experience is a shared, social activity.

To sum up, it is possible to make several conclusions from the theory and previous research of the museum experience presented above. First, one must keep in mind that the real museum experience is not limited to the actual visit and that visitor's agenda and circumstances of the visit play a significant role in the overall museum experience. Second, various measures (interviews, movement tracking, participant observation) can be applied to indicate, how different types of visitors behave at the exhibition and what they assess after the visit. Finally, the overall exhibition environment and arrangements play an important role in the tailoring of museum experiences. Thus, distinct curatorial and artistic strategies might be used "appeal to specific audience types" (Ibid., p. 188). The last implication stands in the centre of my research project as I analyse, how different settings at the museum (traditional and immersive) influence the experience of visitors.

1.3 Relation between the art museum space and the museum experience

In the previous sections, I've focused on the definition and types of the museum experience. There, I argued that to analyse this phenomenon, one has to keep in mind its complex nature, that it is influenced by the agency of the visitor as well as the exhibition setting. However, I did not discuss how the museum itself as an institution which has its own established ethos influences the museum experience. I will, therefore, treat this subject in the following subsections. I will discuss various theories from philosophy, sociology, art history and museology fields that analyse the art museum space and its influence on the museum experience. Furthermore, in this chapter, I discern

several topics which stem from the museum discourse, namely, the social dimension of the museum space, and the established museum ethos: rules and convictions of art appreciation and behaviour at the art museum.

1.3.1 Aesthetic and social dimensions of the art museum

Since the establishment of the art museum, its architecture and the concept have been gradually moving from chaotic, salon-like places or "cabinets of curiosities" in the 19th century, towards a more thoughtful neutral spatial structure (Newhouse, 1998). The structure of so-called modernist "white cube", the spatial design of the art museum which, until today, remains one the most popular types of the museum architecture. According to the definition of the white cube (O'Doherty, 1976), such museum works as a neutral place, deprived from any context, serving for the aesthetic experience. To describe this phenomenon O'Doherty uses an analogy of an ancient tomb – a sacred structure whose every element resembles to the infinity, lasting value, timeless quality and isolation. This environment, as other authors notice, puts the visitor in the mode of treating objects as "art" (Kesner, 2006, p. 13) and set the stage for the almost "sacralised" (Duncan, 1995), or "numinous" (Latham, 2007) encounter with art. Finally, a highly aestheticized museum space works as a guarantor of the aesthetic and artistic quality of objects placed inside it.

Yet, the art museum is not only scrupulously designed neutral environment for isolated art appreciation, on the contrary, as O'Doherty (1976) argued, it has always been far from neutral. For many decades, the museum has also been a public space, where social relationships intertwine with culture, power and politics. Thus, next to its aesthetic qualities, various scholars suggest seeing the art museum as "a stage" (Goffman, 1956) for "self-regulating" (Bennett, 1995), "panoptical" (Foucault, 1975) processes that unfold within a wider society.

Foucault (1975) in his famous theory on the modern disciplinary society (Discipline and Punish (1975)), uses a metaphor of a "panopticon" (an architectural structure that ensures a permanent visibility) to illustrate the power-knowledge relationships within this society where "panopticism" (Ibid.) is used as a mechanism of power and control. Constantly observed and through observing practices normalised individuals according to this theory turn into "docile" and "carefully fabricated" bodies (Ibid.) thus are easily controlled.

Although there are great and explicit differences between the prison which Foucault in his theory mainly refers to and the museum, yet some structural mechanisms, such as, for instance,

panoptical look or "clinical gaze" (Ibid.) which objectify the subject (the prisoner or the museum visitor) can also be attributed to the museum space. It could be argued that once we enter the museum we become subjects of control and discipline: various signs for "dos" and "don'ts" greet us right at the entrance, later, as we move through halls, our movement trajectory is presupposed by clearly designed paths, and security ribbons, motion detectors, venue guards; even other visitors met on the way control our behaviour and bodily situation regarding artworks. Consequently, the object-subject relationship of the visitor brings the museum space closer to the panoptical structure, where the possession of vision is turned into power.

However, according to Bennett (1995), although the museum contains features inherent to panoptical structures, it is not pure panopticon for several reasons. First, we come to museum by our free will and we leave it whenever we want. Second, inside the museum, we are not completely deprived from our abilities to observe. On the contrary, we are endowed with unlimited voyeuristic opportunities and we can also observe other people thus make them the objects of our gaze. Bennett (1995) calls this ambiguous situation of the museum a "self-monitoring" system of vision which sets the stage for a "self-regulating liberal citizenry" (Ibid., p. 63). According to this idea, the society regulates itself instead of being fully controlled by higher levels of vision (the monarchy, the government, the city), as in case of the panopticon. Hence, the scholar notices that museum is neither a pure panopticon nor an absolutely free space, this intermediary position that the institution occupies is best illustrated by a metaphor of the "Crystal Palace" (Ibid., p. 65) – a transparent architectural structure that simultaneously liberates the vision of the visitor, by providing a free space for wandering and imagination, and sets the moral tone on his/her very existence by putting the body in the centre of the civic "panoptic inspection" (Ibid., p. 48).

Finally, Bennett's ideas about self-regulating citizenry lead to the sociological notion of the museum as a "stage of social relationships" proposed by Goffman (1956). Using the theory of impression management formulated by the scholar, it is possible to define the museum as a social establishment surrounded by limitations in which actors regularly undertake the same, fixed activities. Moreover, this social establishment also contains its own ethos, rules and convictions, that must be considered by all actors. Goffman calls this activity of behaving accordingly to the social establishment's ethos a "decorum" (Ibid.). The term expresses the superficiality of the induced behaviour. Furthermore, the scholar argues that the performed social role is not only self-induced but rather caused by a place. For instance, when we are situated in a social establishment, we become aware of the inherent ethos and immediately turn on our "self-monitoring" function at

the highest level. This is so because we, consciously and subconsciously, know that our "inappropriate actions" will be noticed instantly by other actors.

Taking this further, central to the Goffman's impression management theory is an important division he makes between the front and the back regions of a social establishment. Here, the main difference separating these two conditions is that the nature of the back region is much more open and voluntary. Here, an individual is in a constant flux and can be true "self", whereas the front region has its fixed props (Ibid., p. 9). In the context of the museum experience, this back-front region division helps to see the museum visitor as a performer enacting his/her role on the museum's 'theatrical" frontstage. In other words, having entered the museum, through self-presentation and self-monitoring practices one undertakes historically, culturally and socially induced characteristics of the "museum visitor". Thus, at the museum, the true "self" is surpassed by this new social role.

1.3.2 Art museum ethos

As the history of museology suggests, since the advent of the modern museum, a lot of energy has been invested to educate people about the model of "proper behaviour" (Kesner, 2006) in art buildings. This model, which I am going to discuss in this section, consists of four main elements: "attentive seeing", "distancing", "organised walking", and "stillness". It is important to notice that these elements indicate both the "interior" and "exterior" or "decorum", as Goffman calls it, behaviour of visitors. That is to say, the model not only includes "proper" behaviour but also rules of art appreciation.

To begin with, the "exterior" behaviour of the museum visitor is conditioned by one main rule: inside the traditional museum display, objects can only be observed without experiencing them through other senses. Thus, "encouraging visitors to look and see has long been recognised as the principal task of the mainstream art museum" (McClellan, 2003, p. 36). Restrictions of the museum that prohibit touching, weighting or interacting with exhibits in other ways than seeing put visitors in an extraordinary mode and, as O'Neil & Dufrense-Tasse (1997) argue, visitors are, in a way, "handicapped". Furthermore, even the visual accessibility to displayed objects is also limited for visitors. Art objects are only visible only from certain fixed angles as well as physically enclosed from visitors with security ribbons, motion detectors that do not allow approaching artworks too

close. Therefore, the passive "gazing" from a distance becomes a central activity inside the art museum.

In his texts on the white cube, O'Doherty (1976) describes this existing "gazing" situation at the museum visitor pretty accurately. In one of his essays, he refers to, from the first glance, an ordinary photograph of the museum display. In the shot, we see an empty museum space with white walls, ceiling, floor, few artworks and no people. Yet, what this installation shot symbolises for the author, is the condition of the museum visitor.

> The space offers the thought that while eyes and minds are welcome, space-occupying bodies are not…This Cartesian paradox is reinforced one of the icons of our visual culture: the installation shot…you are there without being there (Ibid., p. 15).

The gallery deprived from people or, more precisely, from their bodies is a very powerful metaphor for the physical experience of the museum space. When we are inside the art exposition we indeed reduce our physical activity to the minimum: we walk slowly and obediently with our hands placed tight to the body and eyes fixed at the walls.

Yet, the museum "gazing" or "seeing", as various scholars argue, is a complex term that encompasses not only physical activity but also cognitive process of looking at art which contains its own laws (Kesner, 2006; Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Crary, 2001). The first rule that the scholars discern is that the gazing should be "attentive" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991). The attentiveness at the museum, according to Csikszentmihalyi (1990), is connected to the cognitive, rational mindfulness which, in the long Western rationalist philosophy tradition, has been one of the main preconditions of aesthetic appreciation. Crary (2001), in this respect, adds that attention in terms of art appreciation gained more importance during the modern era. Modernists were first to condemn inattentive seeing which could also be linked to "dreaming" or "deep immersion" as a bad way to appreciate art. Moreover, according to the scholar, this deep, unconscious immersion should be attributed not to the high art domain but to entertainment activities such as TV watching, cinema or computer games. Finally, Sandell (2008) explores the topic of attentiveness even further and argues that "extraordinary" conditions of the museum visit "result in more attentive and focused viewing" (Ibid., p. 111). The scholar draws a direct link between a controlling museum environment and visitors' agency by stating that people in the museum tend to put more efforts to make their visit

successful therefore they approach the material more purposively as opposed to other leisure activities, for instance, Sunday newspaper read or TV watching.

The second rule which determines the proper gazing at the museum is "distancing". The term referred by many scholars (Bullough, 1912; Dawson, 1961; Adorno, 1973; Grau, 2003) indicates a proper way to perceive aesthetic objects. According to Dawson (1961), the distancing process occurs, when one succeeds to detach oneself from the daily life and practical elements of the artwork and perceives it "on the level of aesthetic consciousness" (Ibid., p. 158). Moreover, the scholar discusses the definition further by noticing that the state of being psychologically distanced in front of the artwork always occurs between two extreme conditions "under-distanced" or "over-distanced". The first state indicates that the beholder becomes "emotionally involved to an extent which precludes contemplation" (Ibid., p. 158). Whereas the latter refers to the state when one pays too much attention to technical details and formal qualities of the work.

Interestingly, as Kesner (2006) notices, these laws of aesthetic perception that criticise inattentive, passive-immersive gazing retain deep roots in our culture. Thus, it is possible that today the same person would easily reach immersive state while watching a movie in cinema without considering that as an inappropriate behaviour, yet, in the museum, the same person, if he or she has enough museum visiting experience, would choose attentive, distant and critical gazing instead.

Taking with further, "gazing" is followed by the second, also very important activity – walking. In most cases the physical movement inside the museum is an organised activity and, thus, is different from any other kinds of walking performed on the daily basis. Inside museums, visitors, if they don't want to risk of missing important parts of art displays by choosing their own path, have to follow signed streamlined routes designed by curators and architects. Furthermore, visitors can only stroll in the official part of the museum, whereas the "backstage" facilities remain out of reach. What this limited accessibility reveals about the museum experience, is that walking inside the museum is not always a fully conscious action, but rather an automatized "sequential locomotion" (Bennett, 1995, p. 43) a "mode through which visitors "see" the exhibition" (Christidou & Diamantopoulou, 2016, p. 14). And since walking is predisposed by the museum, some scholars argue, the directed walking means the control of the body. This leads to the conclusion that the museum's environment does not treat the visitor as a holistic, integrated human being, but rather maintains a very explicit Cartesian body/mind split and turns him/her into, as Bennett calls it, "minds on legs" (Bennett, 1995, p. 6).

This “disembodied” moving through the museum can be explained by the widely-spread conviction, as it was mentioned above, that visitors come to museum first to learn and to be intellectually and emotionally nurtured. And bodies despite their “transporting” function of visitors’ minds do not perform any significant functions necessary for the museum experience. Regarding this, Duncan (1995) suggests seeing the art museum visiting as a secular “ritual” (Ibid.). The scholar discerns several features of the art museum that leads to this notion. First, its unique carefully planned architecture which does not only set the stage for the aestheticisation of objects but also directs and governs visitors thus fosters disembodied mindfulness. Second, a very special quality of time and space inside the art museum. It could be added that the experience of time and space inside the museum is a mixture of real time and space (the actual measurable time which marks the duration of the visit and the physical space of the art building), and so-called virtual, „heterotopic”, as Foucault (1986) calls it, space and time. The museum as “heterotopia” sheds light on the quality of the museum to become a place of time accumulation (Ibid., p. 26), where many different moments and epochs are enclosed in one present moment. The third condition is the performative element of the museum visit. Inside the art museum, visitors are active performers, yet, of the prepared museum scenario. The enactment of the museum ritual, as in, for instance, religious mass, leads to a full experience of the place and “transformation” of the performer. In this respect, the museum visitor is thought to experience the aesthetic enlightenment, “to move beyond the psychic constraints of mundane existence, step out of time, and attain new, larger perspectives” (Duncan, 1995, p. 12).

Altogether, it is evident that the traditional museum behaviour which, as stated above, manifests itself mostly through the specified ethos, rules of behaviour, ritualistic practices, and “social roles”, have been deeply embedded in our culture. All this produces a very peculiar and complex phenomenon of the museum visit. Yet, how then immersive art installations that change the firm museum structure from the inside affect the traditional museum experience? This issue will be treated in the following chapter.

Chapter 2 – Immersive installation art

2.1 Historical framework, features and sub-genres of installation art

Since the early 1990's, installation art has become one of the leading artistic disciplines in the postmodern visual arts field. Generally, it as a space situated in the museum, gallery or in any public or private place that requires to be physically passed through or, sometimes, walked around. Moreover, installation art is an interdisciplinary art genre which does not have any material or technical limitations and, furthermore, combines several artistic disciplines: painting, sculpture, video, applied arts, performance art and many others. As De Oliveira and colleagues (2004) describe it: "Installation…is not defined in terms of any traditional medium but in terms of the message, it conveys by whatever means" (De Oliveira, 2004, p. 14).

There are several opinions, how and when installation art developed into a separate discipline. Most of scholars tend to argue (Reiss, 1999; De Oliveira et al., 2004; Coulter-Smith, 2006), the beginning of it can be traced back to the art of the 1920s and, especially, the 1950s. Regarding this early stage of installation art, it is important to mention such site-specific and innovative artworks as "Total artwork" (Gesamtkunstwerk) (1923-1937) by German artist Kurt Schwitters, early ready-mades (1913) by Marcel Duchamp, "Abstract Cabinet" (1927) by Soviet Suprematist El Lissitzky and "environments" by American pioneer of performance art Alan Kaprow (1960's). Most of scholars consider these above-mentioned artistic projects as first attempts to set the stage for the further developments of installations. They also reveal the aim of modern artists to look for alternatives to traditional art forms and alter the relation of the spectator with art from a passive, "spongelike" (Staniszewski, 1998) mode, to active, embodied and, sometimes, sensorial augmented, atmospheric aesthetic encounter.

Bishop (2005) discerns three main characteristics of the installation art that help to conceptualise and contextualise it among other art practices. First, according to the scholar, installation art stimulates an active, introspective participation of the viewer rather than a detached, distanced contemplation, as many traditional artworks do (Ibid.). Installations thus create a stage for "sensory immediacy" (Ibid., p. 11) a direct and embodied immersion of the viewers in the work of art, where all their senses including touch, smell and sound are strengthened. Second, many installations are constructed in a conceptual, open manner, meaning, that artists fill their works with gaps and conceptual links that require active cognitive participation of the beholder. Bishop (2005)

calls this critical involvement of the viewer "an activated spectatorship" (Ibid., p. 11). Lastly, she refers to the installations as "expanded sculptures". The term several decades earlier formulated by Rosalind Krauss (1979) indicates an intermediary position installation art occupies between sculpture, landscape and architecture.

Moreover, scholars from the visual arts field tend to argue that the term "installation art" is actually an umbrella term encompassing various sub-genres of spatial, site-specific artworks. This division of installation art into smaller genres sheds light on the variety of experiences that different types of installations offer to their viewers. Overall, scholars (Bishop, 2005; De Oliveira et al., 2004; Coulter-Smith, 2006) discern several independent conceptual branches of installation art, namely, "immersion", "interaction", "narrativity", and "participation". It is important to note that all three mentioned studies acknowledge "immersiveness" as one of the main features of installation art and, moreover, two out of three discern installations that evoke a deep immersion as a separate sub-genre of installation art. In the following section, I will, therefore, explore this category in more detail.

2.2 Deep immersion environments

In the last sub-chapter, it has been discussed that one of the main features that distinguish installations from the rest of art is "immersion". As Bishop (2005) argues, the eliminated distance between the artwork and the viewer, the sensory immediacy, and the embodied experience of the installation lead to an active spectatorship and the immersion of the viewer. However, the conclusion made by the scholar, that due to these above-mentioned qualities all installations are immersive, has been criticised for being too exaggerated. As Coulter-Smith (2006) states, installations are not immersive per se because the ambient they are displayed in, the museum, retains its controlling quality and affects visitors in the same way as at traditional exhibitions.

Nevertheless, while the question whether all installations are immersive remains open among scholars, there is one sub-genre of installations about those immersive qualities all authors (Bishop, 2005; Coulter-Smith, 2006, De Oliveira et al., 2004) tend to agree. These installations are called "deep immersion environments" as they leave an immediate emotional, physical and sensory impact on visitors and are designed to bring visitors to a "deep immersive mode" – an escape from reality into an experiential, contemplative space of bodily sensations (De Oliveira et al., 2004).

One of the best examples of such installations referred by all three authors is Olafur Eliasson's "The Weather Project" presented in the TATE's turbine hall in 2003, in London. This immersive spatial work invited people to wander in the empty museum's hall filled with mist and artificial bright light which created an illusion of a sultry summer day. The light came from a giant sun, high above, constructed of hundreds of mono-frequency lamps. Photographs of this famous site-specific installation show crowds of people laying, sitting on the floor, under a giant artificial sun, and walking through the museum's misty space which Eliasson turned to, as Coulter-Smith calls it, a virtual reality that one can literally walk into. Another artist whose works are also attributed to this sub-genre is Japanese artist Yayoi Kusama. The artist is well-known for her spatial installations that engulf the viewer into an imaginary world filled with mirrors, circular shapes, colours and lights. Her works include painting, sculpture, poetry, explore "the body without limits and boundaries" (De Oliveira, 2004, p. 65) and strive to bring visitor's mind and body closer to the feeling of infinity and weightlessness. "Infinity Mirror Room - Phalli's Field" at the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, which I have chosen for this research, is one of examples of her works.

De Oliveira and colleagues (2004) describe these deep immersion environments as visual and joyful "non-places"[2] (Ibid., p. 49) or cinematographic, hyper-realistic spaces "with an autonomous imaginary realm" (Ibid., p. 51). Moreover, as scholars argue (Coulter-Smith, 2006, De Oliveira et al., 2004), immersive installations entirely transform a highly cultural museum environment into a shared space that resembles more a public square or an entertainment venue rather than a traditional exhibit in an established art institution. By doing so, immersive installations also challenge the panoptical structure of the museum as well as its strictly defined ethos, rules of behaviour. Furthermore, scholars notice the connection between immersive installations and night clubs or discos (De Oliveira et al., 2004). Likewise, in these venues, they compare, the ambient in museums that display art installations have a potential to generate euphoric atmosphere in which the audience can relax and recharge. Similarly, immersive environments, the same as, for instance, cinema, theatre or a night club, are convenient places for socialisation, to meet people or just to spend some time among others, thus they allow audiences to have a shared experience. Altogether, visitors at immersive installations likewise at more entertainment-oriented venues receive quite similar

[2] The term "non-place" was coined by the French anthropologist Marc Augé in his work "Non-Places, introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity" (1992). The term refers to postmodern spaces which are not significant enough to be called "places". For Augé, such spaces as super-market or airport represent non-places. Although the scholar did not talk about artworks as non-places, Oliveira et al. (2004) discuss immersive art installations as potential "non-places" for their fluid, experiential and imagined nature.

experiences: disconnection from everyday conditions, immersion into hyperreal experience "here and now", and engagement with others through direct and indirect socialisation processes (Ibid.). Finally, it could be argued, that although the first two features can also be applied to the traditional museum exhibit; here visitor also disconnect from the real world and experience "heterotopic" space and time conditions, yet, the social aspect is significantly enhanced at immersive environments.

Taking this further, scholars stress the importance of the relationship between a visitor's body and immersive installations. As it was already discussed in the previous chapter, the usual visit to the traditional museum exhibition is rarely linked to the embodied experience, instead, it is perceived as highly intellectual, cognitive process, during which the spectator's mind suppresses the body. Yet, in deep immersion environments, the embodiment of the mind is not only possible but, in most cases, unavoidable. Immersion mode indicates "the broadening of references and attitudes towards space and its relation to the spectator's body" (Ibid., p. 51).

In this respect, Bishop (2005) calls immersive art installations phenomenological. The scholar refers to the Merleau-Ponty's "Phenomenology of Perception" (1945) in which the philosopher argues that the perception of the world is not attained only through vision but through the entire body. Which to say, people perceive the world not as something in front of them, but as something that surrounds them. "I do not see according to its exterior envelope; I live it from the inside; I am immersed in it. After all, the world is all around me, not in front of me" (Ibid., p. 50). According to Bishop (2005), this phenomenological analysis of the perception had a significant influence on the immersive installation art and inspired artists treating spaces as artworks that surround the viewer, as the world surrounds the perceiver, rather than concentrating on a single art object that only "mediates the world, and does not allow to experience first-hand" (Ibid., p. 50).

Furthermore, as the phenomenology explores the perception from the first-person perspective, central to all deep immersion environments is to provide a platform for individuals to reflect their own experiences rather than contemplate external ideas embedded in works. All scholars seem to agree with this idea by stating that the immersive installation is "a mixture of sensory and narcissistic pleasure offered to the viewer" (De Oliveira et al., 2004, p. 49) and that it is "always involved with the psychological aspect of your seeing your own gaze" (Bishop, 2005, p. 73). Thus, it can be argued, that the beholder and his/her emotional, introspective experiences stand in the centre of the immersive environments.

The channelling of the gaze back to the beholder at immersive environments, as Bishop (2005) and Coulter-Smith (2006) notice, has been strongly influenced by the psychoanalysis, especially by the famous Lacanian theory of the Mirror Stage (1949). This theory is based on the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan's assumption that every person after recognising her/himself in the mirror for the first time, undergoes the so-called apperception (Lacan, 1949, p. 94). It symbolises the interpersonal split of the self-perception to the real, embodied self, and the "externalised" (Coulter-Smith, 2006, Chapter 2, p. 3), socially constructed self which is also an object of the external gaze of others. Although after Lacan, this theory was never scientifically proven, in the aesthetic realm, it retained its relevance, especially among postmodern artists. In this light, immersive installations might be seen stimulating introspection and "escape" (De Oliveira et al., 2004) from the externalised self-perception and evoking the first stage of pre-social, integral self, in which the boundaries between a visitor's own embodied mind and the world dissolve once again.

Overall, from what has been discussed above it might be concluded that, in contrast with traditional settings, where cognitive experience plays a crucial role, immersive environments evoke more social, enthusing (emotion and spectacle-oriented) as well as embodied experiences. This, therefore, indicates an important difference between traditional and immersive art settings. Besides, immersive exhibits aim at placing the embodied mind of the beholder in the centre of the experience. This contradicts the rule of "distancing" as the main precondition of the proper aesthetic contemplation and can bring spectators to the state of, as Dawson (1961) calls it, "under- or over-distancing". Hence, due to these differences from traditional settings, deep immersion environments at the art museums has always been a double-sword topic. Does the lack of cognitive engagement at these settings relate immersive art more to the field of entertainment rather than professional art? Therefore, the following, and the last, section of this chapter will focus on these questions.

2.3 Problems with deep immersion and museum critique

It is evident that today we witness major transition of the art museum from isolating, contemplative and suppressing towards entertaining, experiences and socialisation stimulating public space. Immersive installations have become major highlights of many art events (biennials, triennials, blockbuster exhibitions at museums and galleries) worldwide. Such artworks attract crowds of people for their ability to offer exceptional sensorial experiences, different from what people usually take from the museum visit, as well as for spectacular photographic,

"Instagramming" possibilities (Bishop, 2005). Thus, the idea that this transition is being predominantly inspired by the immersive art installations might be grounded. According to Goulding (2000), for several decades now, museums have been struggling from a significant reduction of budgets, thus, they have been actively seeking to attract more visitors. In this regard, immersive art which has a major entertaining factor could be seen as an important field of action for art institutions. Furthermore, it can be argued, that the increased orientation towards visitor experience at immersive art installations that today museums actively program and, on the other hand, the growing audience interest towards this art is a natural outcome of what today we call experience based economy (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). According to this theory, today not only service market (including museums) is orientated towards creating memorable experiences but also people are actively seeking for different kind of personal experiences and are willing to pay for them (Roberts, 2001).

However, in the art world, this trend of experience-driven art has been continually criticized for patronising fast, uncritical consumption of aesthetic objects and, most importantly, turning once sacred art "temples" into loud, profane low-brow entertainment venues or, to what De Oliveira and colleagues refer to "the empire of senses" (De Oliveira et al., 2004). This is how Prior (2003) describes the current situation at museums:

> Stripped of the Enlightenment values of authenticity, progress, and judgement, the postmodern museum, instead, feeds the "inflationary era" of late capitalism and its "anything goes" market eclecticism…(museum) no longer stands for aesthetic progress but extends the culture of spectacle…The postmodern museum has become, like other spaces of entertainment, an "apparatus of capture" – a region of cultural intensity designed to control movement, order desire, and translate them into habits of consumption (Ibid., pp. 53-54).

Furthermore, another kind of critique that has been expressed towards immersive art installations, is that they not only change the museum's atmosphere but also have a negative influence on the audience's relationship towards art. As it was discussed in the previous chapter, in the professional art world, especially the art museum, passive consumption of visual information which does not provoke critical thinking, "distant" and "attentive" perception is considered unsuitable to the high art consumption thus is assigned to low-brow entertainment activities: TV, popular cinema, and computer games. In this regard, deep immersion experience that installations

stimulate have a great potential to soften cognitive engagement on behalf of the museum visitor and lead to consumption of "retinal art" (Coulter-Smith, 2006, Chapter 2, p. 1).

Coulter-Smith (2006) has analysed the above-mentioned situation and one of his conclusions is that this simplified consumption of the aesthetic experience in total immersion environments appears, when installation works do not contain a deeper conceptual narrative. Therefore, he separates "narrative" immersion from "non-narrative". Respectively, the first group of works, despite their visual form, contain a meticulously designed conceptual statement. This second layer, although hidden under the visual form, plays a crucial role in terms of the critical visitor engagement. It does not let spectators to fall into the immersive mode too deep which would otherwise cause a passive, almost lethargic consumption. Whereas the latter category of works have the same effect as for instance, popular cinema or video games. Such works do not encourage critical reflection, draw spectators into a passive mode, thus, their effectiveness, in terms of cognitive engagement, is regressive (Ibid., Chapter 2, p. 1).

So, on the one hand, it could be argued that the narrative entwined in the work's body helps to discern it from entertainment-oriented activities. On the other hand, one could oppose that the effective use of the narrative requires the same critical distancing and active reception on behalf of the viewer as at traditional art exhibitions. Having said that, the existence of narrativity does not negate the fact that the conceptual basis can be still somewhat hidden behind stunningly visual surfaces as well as immediate and introspective impact of immersive installations. Thus, as we can see, after all, in the perception of art, the visitor's agency and the curiosity play a decisive role in terms of the cognitive engagement.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

3.1 Research question and sub-questions

Regarding what has been discussed in the theory part, especially the double-edged situation of the immersive installation art and the theory of experiences at the traditional museum setting, the main research question of this thesis is: *how does the experience of the art museum visitor differ at exhibitions that contain deep immersion installations such as Yayoi Kusama's "Infinity Mirror Room - Phalli's Field" as opposed to traditional museum exhibitions such as "Mad About Surrealism" in the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen (Rotterdam)?*

To answer this question, I also formulate two sub-questions. They are related to the theoretical part of my research regarding immersive art installations and the museum experience as well as empirical data (field notes and interviews) that has been collected in the course of the ethnographic research. The questions are formulated as follows:

1. *What behaviour patterns and types of museum experience (contemplative, enthusing, social) do exhibitions "Mad About Surrealism" and "Infinity Mirror Room - Phalli's Field" evoke among museum visitors?*

   This sub-question is needed to get more insight, what kind behaviour and which types of experience (contemplative, enthusing, or social) both exhibitions evoke among museum visitors. To answer this question, I analyse field notes written during multiple observations of visitors' behaviour at the museum. After having analysed field notes, I will relate findings to the theoretical framework of the museum experience. This question will be discussed in Chapter 4.

2. *How do different art settings in "Mad About Surrealism" and "Infinity Mirror Room- Phalli's Field" influence the museum experience of visitors?*

   To answer the second sub-question, I will use the data from in-depth interviews with museum visitors to get more insight, how visitors experience and assess two different types of exhibitions. Having finished the analysis, in Chapter 5, I will, again, relate the findings to the theoretical framework about the museum experience in traditional and immersive art exhibitions.

3.2 Methodology

3.2.1 Methods

The aim of this research is to get in-depth insight of how the museum experience at exhibitions that contain immersive art elements differ from that of traditional exhibitions. It is important to emphasise that the structure of my research is based on comparison between two different exhibition settings which I will present in the following section. Throughout the research, I compared visitors' experiences in traditional and immersive exhibitions and looked at differences and similarities between them, which, at the end, allowed me to describe the immersive museum experience. Furthermore, museum visitors' experiences in both exhibitions have been studied through their behaviour and narratives. The goal and the approach used in this research suggest that the nature of my analysis is qualitative, yet, one part of my data was analysed in a quantitative way, I will come back to this issue later. Overall, to get a deeper insight about the traditional and immersive museum experiences as well as behaviour of visitors in these exhibits, I chose to conduct ethnographic research at the art museum. This type of research allowed to concentrate on detailed and accurate descriptions of the phenomenon rather than explanations (Babbie, 2011). This is important because the goal of this research is descriptive – to comprehend better the phenomenon of immersive exhibition experience at the museum. Ethnographic research allowed me to study museum visitors at their original environment "here and now". Furthermore, this research resembles an ethnomethodological approach (Garfinkel, 1971), as through interaction with people I examined their "ordinary practices" (Coulon, 1995) as museum visitors. This included not only how people engage with exhibitions, but also how they interact with other visitors at the museum.

The first part of the research consisted of participant observations at the museum. Later, during the analysis, I applied the museum experience typology formulated by Kirchberg & Tröndle (2015) and theoretical framework of museum experience and immersive art discussed in Chapters 1 & 2 in order to get better insight, what kind of behaviour two different types of exhibitions stimulate. The reason why observation was selected as a suitable method is the idea that the museum is a social "behaviour setting" (Falk & Dierking, 2013; Goulding, 2000) or a "stage" (Goffman, 1956) of social relationships, where people come not only with different "entrance narratives" and goals, but also influence each other with their behaviour. Furthermore, since in this research I concentrate on how different art settings influence the museum experience, visitors'

behaviour, their physical engagement with art and interaction with other visitors served as important indicators of the museum experience. Thus, observations allowed me to collect a valuable information which complemented visitors' narratives which I later gathered during interviews. The non-intrusive observation form was chosen to observe visitors in their original settings without interferences to their behaviour. During the research, to avoid the influence of selectivity which, though, is inescapable in observation (Goulding, 2000), multiple observations in both expositions were conducted. Moreover, first, to set the stage for fruitful observations, I performed familiarisation with the museum. After the first visit, I was able to prepare observation scheme which was used throughout the all observation period. The findings of observations will be presented in Chapter 4.

Having finished my observations, I started interviewing museum visitors. Overall, 21 semi-structured in-depth interviews with traditional and immersive exposition visitors were conducted. Interviewing method allowed to gain a better insight on how people experienced exhibitions, including personal assessment of art settings. Moreover, during the interviews, I aimed to get more information on how people engaged with exhibitions and how much they interacted with other visitors. I also applied the museum experience typology by Kirchberg & Tröndle (2015) and theoretical framework to analyse visitors' narratives. The information about their engagement with exhibition as well as the assessment helped me to compare interview data with observations and to discern, again, what kind of museum experience two set-ups evoke among museum audience the most. The findings are presented in Chapter 5. In the following paragraph, I will address my research units and the sampling of the research.

3.2.2 Research units and sampling

This research contains several research units. In the context of the first sub-question, my research units were visitors and their behaviour in the traditional and immersive settings. For the second sub-question, my research units were visitors' museum experiences. Furthermore, throughout the entire research, I used purposive sampling (Bryman, 2012). This form of sampling allowed me to reach diversity of units selected. In both parts of the research, I chose visitors according to their age and gender. My goal was to reach respondents of various age groups and maintain the equality in terms of gender. I also wanted to interview single visitors as well as visitors who came to the museum in groups. This criterion was very important because, as it was mentioned

in the theory part, social circumstances have a major influence on the museum. So, I assumed, that single visitors will have quite different museum experiences than visitors who came to the museum with their friends or family members. However, it is important to add, that during the observation I concentrated on people units, whereas during interviews I interviewed only one person at a time.

3.2.3 Types of data and data analysis

During the research, several types of data have been collected. First, visitor behaviour data at two exhibitions (Chapter 4). Second, visitors' narratives from in-depth interviews about museum experiences (Chapter 5). Regarding the first type of data – visitor behaviour, first, I created a table of variables (presented in Chapter 4) that helped me to decide what kind of information about visitors' behaviour it was important to collect. The table consists of 12 variables, each indicating different activity of visitors that I wanted to record, for instance, reading, viewing, watching, walking, physical reaction, distance, social interaction, body situation etc. Having completed the observation, I created a code book in which different categories have been assigned to each variable. I needed categories because, as stated above, for this research I used museum experience typology (Kirchberg & Tröndle, 2015). In their analysis, the researchers stressed that different types of visitors engage in above-mentioned activities differently. Therefore, categories helped me to record the level of engagement in the certain activity. Having done that, I used *SPSS* program for the quantitative data analysis. Although, as mentioned earlier, my research is primarily qualitative, yet, quantitative tools allowed me to see what kind of activities were the most common among visitors at both exhibitions. At this stage, results are presented in frequency tables of each exhibitions separately and, later, the findings compared. The last type of data, visitors' experiences, were collected during semi-structured interviews. I transcribed interviews and, later, processed them through the qualitative data analysis program *Atlas.ti*. To analyse this data, open coding was used. Moreover, I discerned three main topics that stemmed from interviews: social interaction, behaviour at the museum, and engagement (intellectual, emotional, and physical) with exhibitions. Having done that, I was able to compare the findings between the immersive and traditional exhibits.

3.2.4 Location and period of research

Observations and interviews were conducted at the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in Rotterdam. I chose this location for my research for several reasons. First, Boijmans is the leading

museum in Rotterdam which also has a valuable art collection from Medieval to Modern and Postmodern art. The museum also hosts one immersive installation “Infinity Mirror Room - Phalli's Field” (1998) by Japanese artist Yayoi Kusama which is on the permanent display. Moreover, during the period of research, the museum displayed a temporary exhibition “Mad About Surrealism” which fitted my criteria of the traditional setting. This exhibition was chosen instead of permanent collection due to practical circumstances: the permanent collection was under reconstruction from April till June. The fact that this museum hosts both types of displays, traditional and immersive, was very important, as it allowed me to compare different exhibition experiences under one roof. Also, this museum is one of the leading museums in Rotterdam and every year attracts a lot of local as well as foreign visitors. The diversity of audience in this museum was also an important criterion for the location choice. I hoped, that in this museum I will meet different types of visitors with different social and cultural backgrounds and more diversified prior museum experience. I conducted this research between February and April. Overall, I spent five days for observations, including the familiarisation with the setting. Interviewing was conducted between March and April. All in all, I did interviews and observations during weekdays as well as weekends. It was important, as during weekdays I met more local and older visitors. Whereas, on weekends, the museum audience was younger and more international.

3.3 Set-ups of exhibitions

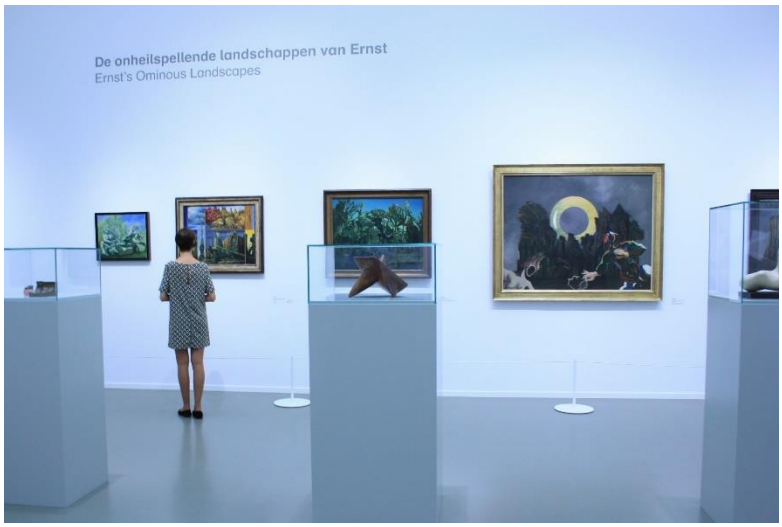
In this part, I will present the visual and spatial set-ups of both exhibitions. First, I will present the Surrealism exhibition and, later, I will move on the “Infinity Room”.

3.3.1 “Mad About Surrealism”

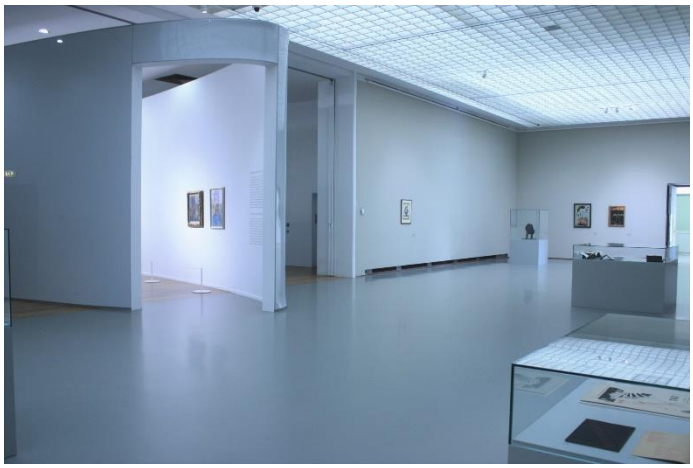
The first, traditional type, exhibition “Mad About Surrealism” was situated in the second floor of the Museum Boijmans. The overarching topic of the exhibition was the Surrealist art movement in Europe in the interwar period. The exhibition featured more than 300 artworks by Salvador Dali, Max Ernst, Rene Magritte, Jean Miro, Man Ray, Pablo Picasso and other famous Surrealist artists. The main narrative of the exhibit included not only artworks but also focused on the story of European collectors of Surrealism art. Therefore, four out of five halls in the exhibition were arranged by private collections of four key collectors: Roland Penrose, Edward James, Gabriele

Keiller, Ulla and Heiner Pietzsch. The fifth hall which was situated in the centre was dedicated to the ideology of Surrealism and divided into eight themes: Automatism, Chance, Magritte's Extraordinary Everyday Reality, The Poetry of Delvaux, Fabulous Women, Ernst's Ominous Landscapes, Dali's Paranoia, and Desirable objects. Altogether, the exhibition contained several types of exhibits: paintings, graphic arts and drawings, sculptures, furniture and objects, documentations of various Surrealists' projects and artworks, books, documents, journal covers, and photographs of original collectors' interiors.

Picture 3.1 – Surrealism exhibition, middle room



The architecture of the exhibition (Exhibition plan 3.1), except the elliptical central space, was modest and simple.



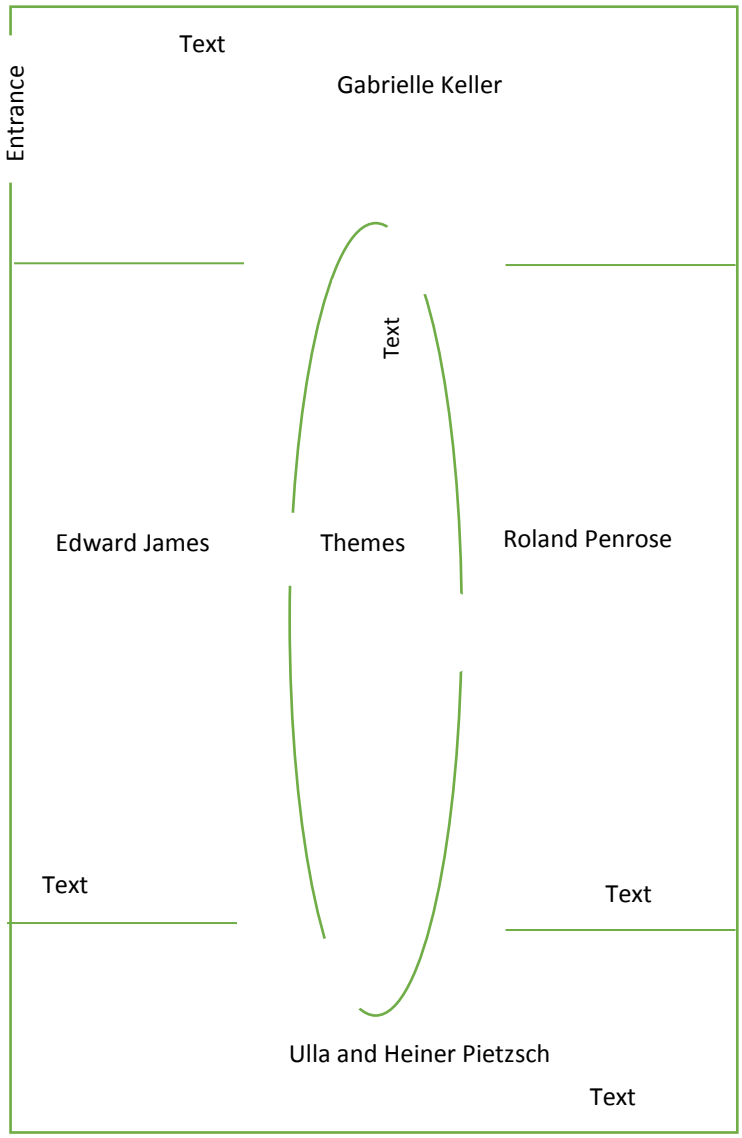
Picture 3.2 – Architecture of the Surrealism exhibition

The artworks were spatially displayed next to white and grey walls or in the middle of rooms in small showcases, so-called islands There were few art objects freely standing in the middle of rooms on small white platforms.

All works were illuminated from above. Moreover, in each room, except the elliptical, visitors could find several settees. In most of rooms, paintings were enclosed with security lanes, and sculptures placed on platforms, which did not let visitors approaching works too close.

At each room, there were short explanatory texts. In four out of five rooms these texts focused on collectors. Whereas in the elliptical hall, the text shortly addressed each of the presented theme. Additional information about each artwork, quite modest, though, was available in the exhibition's guide, which was to be found at the entrance. Every work had a number, so visitors could find more information in this guide. There was also possible to rent an audio tour.

Exhibition plan 3.1 "Mad About Surrealism



Although the oval space in the centre was the smallest space, it was the most popular and very crowded most of the time. The second most popular room, in terms of number of visitors, was the Edward James's room, which contained works by Salvador Dali, Pablo Picasso, Rene Magritte. Furthermore, the hall was also the most protected. There were several museum guards standing all the time. Most of time they stood next to the original furniture by Salvador Dali, a couch, a lamp and a chair that have been placed in the middle. In terms of number of visitors during observation days, Roland Penrose's and Ulla and Heiner Pietzsch's rooms were the least popular.

Finally, in the exhibition, there were several interactive games designed especially for the show. One of the games invited people to experience the Surrealist automatic writing technique.

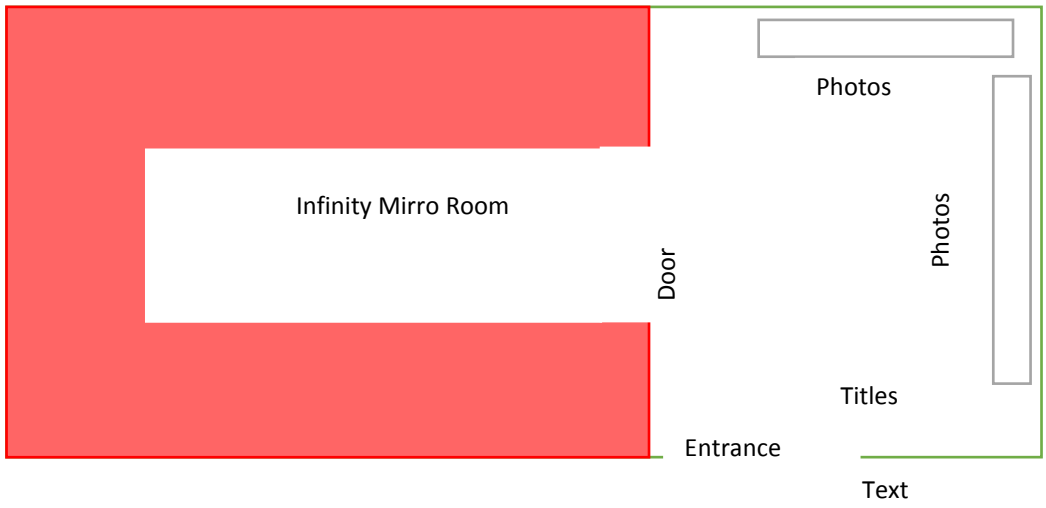
Picture 3.3 – Surrealism exhibition, Ulla and Heiner Pietzsch's room

3.3.2 "Infinity Mirror Room – Phalli's Field"

This installation is situated on the first floor of the Museum Boijmans. As it is presented in the Exhibition plan below, the installation has a shape of a square room that visitors can enter through a small hidden door directly from the museum hall.

According to the information provided by the museum, the installation is the first of a series of infinity rooms that Yayoi Kusama has been creating since 1965. Furthermore, it is titled as a total environment that "engulfs" the viewer into an alternative, distorted reality. Inside the installation, all surfaces of the room, except the floor, are covered with mirrors.

Exhibition plan 3.2 "Infinity Mirror Room – Phalli's Field"



Picture 3.4 – Infinity Room, inside the installation

Besides that, the floor is covered with hundreds of small, phallic shaped, dappled fabric objects. The mirrors that surround the viewer from all sides create an illusion of infinity as one can simultaneously see hundreds of reflections and, further, reflections of the same reflections. The "Infinity Room" also has an interactive element, it allows the visitor to control the environment in the room by moving the body.

Picture 3.5 – *Entrance to the "Infinity Room"*

Next to this immersive room, visitors can find photo documentations of various artist's works, including several performances and other installations. Above the entrance, at the hallway, there is a TV which screens a live translation of what is happening inside the installation. It is important to notice, that due to the limited space inside, observations were conducted through this screen. I will discuss this issue in more detail in Chapter 4. Furthermore, there were no full-time guards inside or outside the installation. Installation was open during the entire museum working time and visitors could enter the room freely whenever they want.

Picture 3.6 – Infinity Room, entrance, photo documentations

3.4 Expectations

In the beginning of this research, I assumed that because the art installation by Kusama contains a lot of elements inherent to immersive art, such as strong visual effect, boundaryless, hyperreal structure, inclusion of a visitor's body into the artwork, it would inspire different behaviour comparing to the Surrealism exhibition. Using the typology of museum experiences formulated by Kirchberg & Tröndle (2015), I assumed that at the installation, I would meet more visitors of social and enthusing types and that cognitive engagement with art would be secondary in this display. I also expected that the environment at the immersive installation would encourage visitors to feel freer to engage in activities that are usually limited at the traditional museum setting, for instance, they would make more photographs, be more active, maybe even touch art and interact more with other people. Furthermore, I assumed, that visitors would focus on different things in different exhibitions. For instance, at the traditional exhibition setting, the narrative, the idea behind an artwork, the choice of works, exhibition design will be among the most important factors of positive experience. This is so because the overall atmosphere of the "white cube" would make people concentrate more on the aesthetic experience. Whereas at the immersive installation, since this art, as discussed in the theoretical framework, is more oriented towards producing memorable, relaxing and inspiring experiences, people would also concentrate on visual and conceptual part of the artwork, but they would have stronger sensory, physical, and introspective experiences.

Chapter 4 – Observation

4.1 Conducting observation

To develop a better understanding about the behaviour of museum visitors at two kinds of art settings, I conducted observations. This stage of the research focuses on the first sub-question: *what behaviour patterns and types of museum experience (contemplative, enthusing, social) do exhibitions "Mad about Surrealism" and "Infinity Mirror Room - Phalli's Field" evoke among museum visitors the most?*

Overall, during four observation sessions, 60 people units were observed; 30 at the Surrealism exhibition and 30 at the "Infinity Room". There were some differences between the methods I used in these two observations. First, at the traditional exhibition, I observed each unit for 10 minutes and wrote down what the observation unit was doing in an interval of 20-30 seconds. At the end of each observation, I had around 20 moments of observation per unit. Each moment indicated what the unit was doing (reading, walking, looking, talking, sitting etc.). Moreover, I wrote down conclusions, how visitors behaved throughout the all observation. For instance, whether they were consistent in looking at works and reading labels, what was the level of attention, the level of reading exhibition texts and labels, the bodily situation, hands situation, walking pace. I also recorded reactions of visitors towards works, the distance from artworks, social (verbal, non-verbal) interaction within a unit or with other visitors. During the observation, there were also interruptions, for instance, the subject met somebody, received a call, or left the hall unexpectedly. I decided not to discard these observations. I assumed that it is necessary to record these interruptions, as they reveal the diversity of museum behaviour and, moreover, proves the statement expressed in the theory framework that each person can embody several museum experience types during one visit depending on the social and physical situation around him/her.

Meanwhile, at the "Infinity Room", it was hard to stick to the same time period per one subject, as not all people stayed inside the installation for 10 minutes. Thus, I decided to observe people throughout the all period they stayed inside. I also paid attention to their behaviour before entering the installation and after. It was necessary because I wanted to record whether they read the text about the "Infinity Room" and viewed the photographs. Overall, the duration of observations per unit at the installation fluctuated from around two minutes to more than 14 minutes. During this observation, I used the same technique as at the first exhibition and wrote down what people did in

the interval of 20-30 sec. However, during this observation, I also faced few other problems. First, due to the limited space inside the installation, it was impossible to observe people while being inside the installation. I noticed that visitors do not want to be inside the installation with strangers and they would rather wait until the room is empty than stay with other people. Therefore, I decided to observe them through the screen which is above the entrance to the installation. Moreover, this observation technique through the screen did not allow to concentrate on individuals and their facial expressions, so I concentrated on the general view instead. Nevertheless, I was able to see what people did inside the installation quite clearly. Since I could not concentrate on single subjects, I observed people units instead and, to keep the balance between both observations, I applied the same principle to the first observation. This means that if people were in a group at the Surrealism display, they were considered as one unit and then I paid attention to the group's behaviour. I did not distinguish individual subjects from units unless I noticed some explicit deviations in their behaviour that seemed important to write down. A fragment from the field notes can be found in the appendix (Appendix A).

Selective sampling was chosen for these observations. The main criteria during both observations was to cover similar age groups (20-39; 40-60; 60+) also to keep the balance between female and male subjects. Moreover, during both observations, I looked for people who came alone as well as in groups. Overall, the gender balance was successfully achieved. At the Surrealism exhibition, I observed 11 male, 12 female and seven mixed gender units. At the "Infinity Room", five male, six female and 19 mixed gender units were observed.

Table 4.1 – information about the units of observation

	No. of units observed	Age group			Number of people per unit			
		20-39	40-60	60+	Single	Two	Three	Four
Surrealism exhibition	30	15	13	2	15	14	1	0
Infinity Room	30	21	9	0	3	20	5	2

Table above contains information about the units observed in terms of age and size (number of people within one unit). Overall, visitors at the second exhibition were slightly younger than at the Surrealism exhibition. There were no people above 60 years old and visitors who belong to the first age group (20-39) make the largest group at the second exhibition. Overall, it could be argued that, during the observation days, there were more older visitors at the Surrealism exhibition than at the installation. Moreover, there are some explicit differences in terms of number of people in one unit at both exhibitions. At the "Infinity Room", more than half of visitors came in groups and at the traditional display I met more single visitors. The number of people who were alone at the installation is rather small (three). Most of visitors came in groups of two to both exhibitions, yet the number of couples at the second is the largest from all the categories. Furthermore, at both exhibitions, I met units that consisted of three people and there were two units of four at the second exhibition. Interestingly, although both settings are situated at the same museum, they attract different audiences in terms of age and size. Thus, it might be that the overall context of the second display allows people to share their experience with a larger number of companions, whereas at the Surrealism exhibition, visitors tend to split to smaller groups of two or choose to walk alone. It is also possible that people who came to the museum in larger groups separated before the first exhibition and, after that, visited together the installation. Finally, I did not observe people under 20 years old (children and teenagers). Nevertheless, in the field notes, I registered cases, when there were any kids with the unit. I will address this finding in the "Social behaviour" section.

4.2 Variables and categories

Before the observation, I created a table (Table 4.2) of variables that helped me to decide what kind of information about visitors' behaviour it was important to collect. The first part of the table (Variables 1-8) was designed according to the Kirchberg & Tröndle (2015) research on museum experience types. The second part (Variables 9-12) was created throughout the research and was mainly inspired by the theory of the museum behaviour and immersive exhibitions.

After the observation, I created a codebook in which different numbers were assigned to each category. For instance, for the variable "reading" I assigned three categories, namely, "reading all", "selective reading" and "no reading", and accordingly, "reading all" was the number 2, "selective" – 1, "no reading" – 0. These categories helped to assign each variable to the specific type of

experience. I entered all variables with numbers assigned into the SPSS program for the data analysis.

Table 4.2 – table of variables and their categories

Variable \ Category	Contemplative (cognitive)	Enthusing	Social
1. Reading	Reading all (most of) texts /labels	No consistency in reading texts / labels	No consistency or does not read texts/labels
2. Viewing	Consistent viewing	Selective viewing	Selective viewing
3. Walking	Slow walking pace	Faster walking pace	Faster walking pace
4. Visible reaction to art[3]	No visible reaction	Visible reaction	No visible reaction
5. Object orientation/attention	Clearest object orientation / longest time spent with one work	No clear object orientation, fluctuating attention and time spent depending on work	No clear object orientation, low attention, shortest time spent
6. Social interaction (verbal; non-verbal)	Low soc. interaction	Fluctuating soc. interaction from high to low	High soc. interaction
7. Distance	Small	Fluctuating from small to big	Big
8. Attention to all objects	Attention to all	No attention to all	No attention to all
9. Body situation	Stillness and passivity	Fluctuation from passive to active	Most of the time active
10. Hands situation	Hands passive	Fluctuation passive to active hands	Most of the time active
11. Touching works	Low	Higher	Low
12. Photographing	Low	High (photos of works)	High (photos of people)

Having entered all data, together with data about the visitors' age, units size, and also additional variables that were not in the table but were found important during the research, for instance, such

[3] Due to the limited research, it was impossible to track physiological reaction of visitors (blood pressure, heartbeat etc.), however, such reactions as: pointing, discussing, photographing could be traced, therefore they make up a different variable.

activities as “dancing” or “sitting”, I began the analysis. I used frequency tables to get more insight of various activities of visitors, as well as to see what categories per variable were the most and the least common at both exhibitions. In the following sub-chapter, I will present the findings of observations.

4.3 Results

Overall, findings are grouped and examined in three main topics: artistic information processing at the exhibition, social behaviour, and the bodily situation. In the following sub-chapters, I will discuss each topic and present the results from the Surrealism exhibition and the “Infinity Room” separately.

4.3.1 Information processing at the exhibitions

In this part, I present, how people engaged with the content of exhibitions. First, at the Surrealism exhibition, I discerned eight variables that fall under the topic of information processing, namely, reading, viewing, visible reaction, attention to all elements, photographing, object orientation, walking speed and distance to objects. Before presenting the findings, it is important to discuss, how the above-mentioned categories of variables were discerned.

To begin, in terms of the first variable “reading”, I counted that people could read three types of texts at the Surrealism exhibition: exhibition text, exhibition guide and labels next to artworks. Therefore, if people read one type of texts or were inconsistent in reading, I assigned reading to the category “selective reading”, if they read most of them and paid attention to all types of texts, it was assigned to “reading all”. At the “Infinity Room”, there were two types of texts outside the installation: labels next to photographs and one text about the exhibit. Thus, reading both texts counted as “reading all”, reading one of them – “selective reading”. The second variable was “viewing”. At the first exhibition, I observed, whether people were consistent in viewing artworks. Thus, here, the category “all” means that they viewed all works in a coherent manner, and “selective” means that they skipped some parts or the viewing was random. At the installation, “viewing” was applied only to photographs outside the installation. If the unit watched photographs carefully, in a coherent manner, I counted it as “all”, if the viewing process was random and quick – “selective”. Regarding the third variable “visible reaction”, there were few activities that I assumed

as a visible reaction towards art: photographing, pointing, approaching very close, making notes or sharing the experience and discussing loudly. There were only two categories: "yes" if there was a visible reaction, and "no" if I could not see any reaction. Meanwhile, at the installation, since I could not hear what people were talking, I assumed pointing, touching, photographing, waving, or stepping further into the installation as a visible reaction. Another variable was "attention to all objects". At the Surrealism display, "attention to all" meant that people paid attention not only to the main objects on the display: paintings and sculptures but also to so-called islands, showcases for various secondary objects: documents, photographs, letters, sketches. If people checked everything, it meant "all", if they skipped islands or other works it was assigned to "not all". At the Kusama exhibition, accordingly, "all" means that people checked the installation, and the photographs, and "not all" if they checked only one of them.

There were also three variables that, unfortunately, could be applied only to the first exhibition, namely, "object orientation", "walking", and "distance". Due to the spatial arrangement and the nature of the "Infinity Room", once people go inside the room, the art is around them, thus, it is hard to measure the level of attention or distance and, moreover, the speed of walking, as people inside did not walk much. Nevertheless, I applied these variables to the first exhibition, as they still helped to get more insight about the audience at the traditional art display. The level of attention was indicated according to the approximate time spent with one artwork. Yet, the study by Kirchberg & Tröndle (2015) does not provide numerical data of "long time" and "short time" thus, in this part of observation, the "long time" (high attention) means that the visitor either stayed at the same work for one or more than one observation moment (more than 20-30 seconds). Whereas if the time spent fluctuated from long to short it was assigned to the "selective" category, and if the overall level of attention was very low, time spent was less than one observation moment, it was assigned to the category "low". Regarding the distance, there were three categories, namely, "small", "fluctuating from small to big", and "big". Lastly, "walking speed" had two categories: "fast" and slow" and, likewise, "photographing" variable had categories "yes" and "no".

Using SPSS, I created tables which allowed me to see the frequency of various activities that I assigned to the first topic "information processing". As Table 3 indicates, at the first exhibition, the largest group of observed units 43.3% (13) were selective in their reading. However, the percentage of people who read all 36.7% (11) is also quite high. Finally, the lowest percentage – 20% (6) of visitors at the Surrealism exhibition did not read any texts. Therefore, it could be argued, that the overall percentage of reading is quite high at the traditional exhibit, around 80 % (24) paid attention

to texts. Yet, according to museum visitor types, the biggest group of visitors could be attributed to the enthusiastic type. This means that these people read selectively only those texts which were interesting to them. Results of the second activity "viewing" testify a similar situation. 53.3% (16) of visitors were selective, thus enthusiastic, in their viewing, and a slightly smaller group of units 43.3% (13) was consistent and viewed most of objects on the exposition, thus contemplative. Moreover, only one unit did not view anything at the exhibition, which means that throughout the all observation time the unit engaged in other activities, for instance, talking. The third section of the table indicates visible reactions of visitors. Interestingly, more than a half of visitors 63,3 % (19) did not show any visible reactions towards art. Yet 36,7 % (11) showed some reactions. Meanwhile, object orientation section shows that the attention to single objects was mostly fluctuating from high to low – 43,3 % (13). This, again, indicates the enthusiastic type of experience. Nevertheless, the gap between the latter group and the group of attentive units which makes 36.7% (11) is rather small. 20% (six) of units is attributed to the low attention category. The fifth section "attention to all" reveals that two-thirds of visitors (66,7 %) did not pay attention to all objects, which, one more time, indicates the enthusiastic or social types. The rest were consistent and attentive to all objects.

Table 4.3 (part one) – results of the information processing by visitors in Surrealism exhibit.

	Variable	Reading			Viewing			Reaction		Attention to all	
Surrealism exhibition	Category	No	Select.	All	No	Select.	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
	Number of units	6	13	11	1	16	13	19	11	20	10
	Percentage (%)	20.0%	43.3%	36.7%	3.3%	53.3%	43.3%	63.3%	36.7%	66.7%	33.3%

	Variable	Obj. orientation			Walking		Distance			Photo	
Surrealism exhibition	Category	Low	Fluct.	High	Slow	Fast	Small	Fluct.	Big	No	Yes
	Number of units	6	13	11	22	8	11	10	9	22	8
	Percentage (%)	20.0%	43.3%	36.7%	73.3%	26.7%	36.7%	33.3%	30.0%	73.3%	26.7%

Two further variables “walking” and “distance” indicate a slight domination of the cognitive category. First, the majority 73.3% (22) of units walked slowly at the exhibition and the biggest percentage, regarding distance, 36.7% (11) observed works from a small distance. Yet, in terms of this variable, as we can see, the difference between all three categories is rather small. Finally, the last section of the table shows the frequency of photographing activity among visitors. Here, the overall percentage of photographing was quite low, only 26,7% (8 units) did take photos during the observation time.

All in all, at the first exhibition, the experience type varied from contemplative (some variables indicate high cognitive behaviour) to enthusing. However, what is significant here, that the enthusing type has been expressed more among visitors than expected. This type is especially manifest in terms of “watching” and “reading” variables. Meanwhile, findings from other variables such as “walking”, “interaction”, and “reaction” resemble more the description of the contemplative experience. At last, the social type was the least common in terms of information processing.

Table 4.4 contains results about the same variables from the “Infinity Room”. Firstly, regarding “reading”, the findings are quite different comparing with the first exhibition. A significantly large number of units 76.7% (23) did not read any texts. This finding suggests a high social type domination.

Table 4.4 – results about the information processing by Infinity Room visitors

	Variable	Reading			Viewing			Reaction		Attention to all		Photo	
Infinity Room	Category	No	Select.	All	No	Select.	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
	Number of units	23	3	4	20	2	8	1	29	20	10	5	25
	Percentage (%)	76.7%	10.0%	13.3%	66.7%	6.7%	26.7%	3.3%	96.7%	67.7%	33.3%	16.7%	83.3%

Meanwhile, almost equal amounts of units 10.0% (3) and 13.3% (4) did read some or all of texts, which indicates cognitive and enthusing types. Similarly, the biggest group of 20 units (66.7%) did not view photographs outside the exhibition. Yet, eight units, which is nearly a third, viewed them. Moreover, a significantly large number 96.7 % (29), all observed units minus one, did show visible reactions towards the immersive installation. This finding is also the highest manifestation of the

enthusing type among visitors at this exhibit. Furthermore, 67.7% (20 units) did not pay attention to all objects on the display. Finally, there is a significant increase of photos taken at this exhibition comparing with the first one. Overall, 83.3% (25) did take photographs. Yet, here, the type of pictures taken was different from the Surrealism exhibit, at the immersive show, visitors took photos of themselves. I will come back to this finding in the following section.

Altogether, it can be concluded, that, at the second exhibition, the experience type varies from a highly expressed enthusing to social. Whereas, the contemplative experience is the least reflected in the behaviour of visitors. Furthermore, a high percentage of reaction towards art could indicate the enthusing type as the dominating one, however, dramatically low numbers of attention to all, viewing and reading, show the overall low level of engagement with work on the cognitive level and this finding sets the stage for the social type.

4.3.2 Social behaviour of visitors

In this section, I will address findings regarding social behaviour. It is important to notice that, during the observation, there was no distinction made between verbal and non-verbal interaction. Since I could not hear whether units talked at the installation, I focused, instead, to the overall level of interaction within units. There were also three categories discerned, namely, "high level of interaction", which means that most of the observation time people within the unit interacted, "fluctuating interaction" means that interaction occurred once in a while, and "low level of interaction" implies that people did not interact or the interaction was almost unnoticeable. Moreover, there are two more indicators of social behaviour of visitors in this section: units that came to the exhibits with kids and the level of photographing (results of photographing presented in the previous section).

First part of Table 4.5, below, contains results from both exhibitions regarding social interaction. To begin with, at the Surrealism exhibition, we see quite similar numbers in all categories. The highest percentage (43.3%) (13 units) indicates low interaction among visitors. Yet, 33,3 % (10 units) of visitors were socially active throughout the all observation and seven units (23.3 %) interacted once in a while. Overall, we can conclude that the contemplative type is the most common among first visitors, however, this is followed by the social and enthusing types. Besides, the gap between these categories is significantly small. The second part of the table represents the level of social interaction at the immersive show. Here, significantly high number –

73.3% (22 units) of all visitors was socially active during the entire observation time. And only eight units (27.0%) did not have any or some social interactions.

Table 4.5 – social interaction of visitors

	Variable	Social interaction			Units with kids	
Surrealism exhibition	Category	Low	Fluct.	High	No	Yes
	Number of units	13	7	10	30	0
	Percentage (%)	43.3%	23.3%	33.3%	100.0%	0.0%

	Category	Low	Fluct.	High	No	Yes
Infinity Room	Number of units	4	4	22	23	7
	Percentage (%)	13.3%	13.3%	73.3%	76.7%	23.3%

Furthermore, the second part of this table shows how many units came to both exhibits with kids. First, we find seven units with kids at the "Infinity Room", comparing with zero at the Surrealism exhibit. This shows that people were more likely to visit the immersive exhibit with families and to have a shared experience. Whereas at the Surrealism show, most of visitors chose to experience it alone. Second, the level of photographing at both exhibitions indicates a higher social behaviour among visitors at the "Infinity Room", as most of photos taken in this exhibition were group selfies. According to results presented in Tables 4.3 & 4.4, 83.3 % (25) units took photos at the second installation comparing with 26.7 % (8) at the first exhibit, where most of photos taken were of artworks and not of people.

All in all, at the both exhibitions, level of social interaction was quite high. However, comparing with the "Infinity Room", where most of units were highly social, at the first exhibition, we find 20 units that were social from time to time (66.7%). Moreover, at the second exhibition, people shared more actively their experiences with companions by visiting installation together and taking group photos. Thus, it is evident, that the second exhibit influences visitors in terms of social interaction markedly more than the first one. De Oliveira et al. (2003) argue that immersive art

fosters socialisation among visitors and allow them to share the experience. The findings presented in this section seem to confirm this claim. Furthermore, visitors to the immersive installation, in contrast with the first setting, were less likely to explore the exhibit individually. As it was discussed in the theoretical framework regarding the museum ethos, the appropriate art appreciation at the museum is expressed through "distancing" (Dawson, 1961), "attentive gazing" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) and contemplative reflection (Crary, 1999). In this respect, the behaviour of visitors at the "Infinity Room" represents a strong deviation from the established museum ethos.

4.3.3 Bodily situation at the exhibitions

In this section findings regarding the bodily situation will be presented. Table 4.6 contains results of six variables: body situation, hands situation, touching, sitting, dancing, and lying down. It is important to mention that touching artworks at the traditional setting was prohibited, yet at the "Infinity Room", having asked one of the museum attendants whether touching is allowed in the installation, I did not get clear answer. Overall, it seems that touching at the installation is in a "grey area". Although people are not encouraged to do that, no clear rules have been communicated directly from the museum side.

Table 4.6 – bodily situation of visitors at both exhibitions

	Variable	Body			Hands			Touch		Sit		Dance		Lie Down	
	Category	Pass.	Fluct.	Act.	Pass.	Fluct.	Act.	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Surrealism exhibition	Number of units	20	2	8	16	7	7	30	0	28	2	0	0	0	0
	Percentage (%)	66.7 %	6.7 %	26.7 %	53.3 %	23.3 %	23.3 %	100.0 %	00.0 %	93.3 %	6.7 %	00.0 %	00.0 %	00.0 %	00. 0%
Infinity Room	Number of units	14	3	13	12	5	13	21	9	24	6	26	4	28	2
	Percentage (%)	46.7 %	10.0 %	43.3 %	40.0 %	16.7 %	43.3 %	70.0 %	30.0 %	80.0 %	20.0 %	86.7 %	13.3 %	93.3 %	6.7 %

To begin with, at the first exhibition, the largest group of 20 units (66.7 %) indicates a passive body. This is followed by the active body which makes almost a third of all visitors. In terms of the

second variable “hands”, the situation is very similar: 16 units (53,3%) had passive hands, and other categories contain seven units each. Furthermore, there was no touching recorded at the first exhibition. Likewise, dancing and lying down.

Meanwhile, at the second exhibition, we find slightly different numbers. First, the categories passive and active body make up almost equal amounts of units, first with 14 units, second with 13 units. Similarly, only one unit separates active and passive hands groups. Interestingly, there was some percentage of touching recorded. Overall, nine units (30.0%) had physical contact with exhibition, most of them touched decorations on the floor. This number, comparing with zero at the first exhibition, is quite significant. However, it is smaller than expected. Finally, results of such activities as sitting (20%), dancing (13.3%) or lying down (6.7%) also indicate a higher level of activity among visitors inside the immersive exhibit.

Altogether, important findings have been made in this section. First, people at the “Infinity Room” were slightly more dynamic than at the Surrealism exhibition. Moreover, here, there were more ways to be active, for instance, people were sitting, lying down on the floor and, some of them were dancing. Yet, the number of active visitors at the second exhibit is smaller than expected. It is especially the case in the “body” and “touching” sections. There was no deviation in terms of “body passivity” (O’Doherty, 1976; Bennett, 1995) comparing with the traditional setting. This finding shows that visitors at both settings tend to follow the strict behaviour ruleset of the museum and that physical docility, which is encouraged at traditional exhibitions, exists at the installations. This confirms the Bennett’s idea that visitors go through “self-monitoring” and “self-surveillance” processes while being at the museum. Moreover, in case of this research, self-monitoring happened among visitors regardless the type of art setting.

Chapter 5 – Interviews

5.1 Conducting interviews and analysis of the interview data

To develop deeper insight on museum experience of visitors at both exhibitions, I conducted interviews. This part of the research addresses the second sub-question: *how do different art settings in "Mad About Surrealism" and "Infinity Mirror Room- Phalli's Field" influence the museum experience of visitors?*

I conducted 21 interviews, 10 at the Surrealism exhibition and 11 at the "Infinity Room". One interview from the second exhibit is unfinished (only six minutes), however, as it contains valuable information, I've decided to include this interview to the findings. Overall, I conducted more than 6.5 hours of interviews. The full interviews vary from 12 minutes to 32 minutes and the average length is 20 minutes. I chose a semi-structured in-depth interviewing method which means that I used the prepared interview guide (Appendix B) but I also asked questions that were not included into the guide, yet, related to the research topic. By doing so, I was able to direct the conversation in the way I wanted and also get deeper into experiences of visitors. Interviews encompassed several topics: what visitors remember, liked/disliked at the exhibitions, how they felt and engaged with art and information provided, how they engaged with companions and other visitors in the museum, how they and other people around them behaved, and the last topic focused on such practices as taking pictures at the museum and sharing them on social media. Overall, questions asked in both exhibitions were almost the same.

I, again, chose selective sampling for the interviews. I also used the same criteria to cover age groups (20-39; 40-60; 60+) and the balance between female and male subjects. Yet, in contrast with observations, I strived to interview single visitors instead of units of people. However, in most cases, visitors were with companions. Therefore, I decided to let them to participate in the conversation, nevertheless, I concentrated more on one person instead of both. Naturally, one person was answering more than the other, so, I focused on him/her more. I did the same if I wanted to interview only the male or the female respondent. As the table below shows, I interviewed more people with companions at the Surrealism exhibition. I did not approach large groups of people (more than four) as well as people with kids. Altogether, the third section of Table 5.1 indicates the number of companions during the conversation. The fourth section shows how many companions respondents had during the visit. Overall, the highest number at both exhibitions is respondents with

one companion, yet there were two respondents at each exhibition, who came with three companions. Furthermore, the gender balance was successfully reached, however, there is an explicit difference in terms of age groups interviewed at both exhibitions. The first difference is that I did not meet people over 60 years old at the "Infinity Room". Here, I also interviewed more young people. Altogether, it is evident, that the audience at the Kusama installation was younger and, at the Surrealism exhibition, it was slightly older during all interviewing days. This correlates with the observation results; at the second exhibition, units were also slightly younger. More information about the respondents can be found in Appendix (C).

Table 5.1 – information about respondents

		Age Group			Gender		With companions during the interview		With companions during the visit			
	Total	20-39	40-60	60+	Female	Male	alone	+1	Alone	+1	+2	+3
Surrealism exhibition	10	4	3	3	4	6	3	7	1	7	0	2
Infinity Room	11	8	3	0	7	4	6	5	2	6	1	2

I coded interview transcriptions in the qualitative data analysis program *Atlas.ti*. During the analysis, I created codes that indicated different subjects and, later, I assigned the codes to the main categories. Overall, throughout the analysis, I discerned three main categories: behaviour at the museum, social interaction, and engagement (intellectual, emotional and physical) with the exhibition. I will discuss each category in the following sections of this chapter and, moreover, compare the findings from both exhibitions. Furthermore, for the interview analysis, as in the observation, I applied the typology of the museum experience by Kirchberg & Tröndle (2015).

5.2 Results

5.2.1 Social interaction of visitors

In this section, I will present findings about the social interaction of visitors at both exhibitions. This category includes such codes as: “going alone”, “going with other people”, “discussing works”, “looking at other people”, “talking about other topics”.

Surrealism exhibition

From ten interviewed visitors at the Surrealism exhibition, only one visitor came alone and the rest visited exhibition with one or more companions. However, five out of nine mentioned that they walked alone thus did not have many interactions with their companions during the visit. Visitors, who walked alone, addressed difficulties of exploring the exhibition with others. Two of these individuals, moreover, mentioned that they like to discuss what they see but, normally, they do it after the exhibition. A high number of solo visitors among respondents correlates with the observation findings, where a half of observed units were alone. Nevertheless, the rest (four respondents) spent most of time together with companions thus had more social interactions.

There were few topics visitors discussed at the Surrealism exhibition. The first can be called “meaning”. Few respondents mentioned that during the visit they talked about themes reflected in artworks and helped each other out to “understand better” (resp. 6) what they see. The second topic which stems from respondents’ conversations is “background information”. For instance, one visitor said that he likes to discuss works with his companion because he can learn something new from their conversations: “Yeah, some things we discussed. Because she studied art history, she has a master in art history, so she knows more about techniques and also the background of the pieces of art or the artist” (resp. 3). Finally, the third topic can be called “sharing opinion”. There were two respondents who mentioned that they had short conversations about works, yet, they pointed out more what they like or dislike and did not tend to go further into interpretation: “we made to sort of discussions. One is this sort of, like, oh look that's so interesting! And the other one is, like, what a fuck? So, this is sort of discussion we had” (resp. 5).

Furthermore, there were also few interviewees who mentioned that they talked about things not related to the exhibition. For instance, this respondent mentioned that they talked about other people in the room:

> But, you should be speaking about things you see…Or sometimes about the other public (laughs)…If you see somebody you know from television or you know in real life, something like that (resp. 3).

In this answer, we can notice a contradiction between the behaviour of the respondent and her opinion on what are "proper" topics at the museum. It seems that this respondent felt obligated to talk only about art in the museum and felt guilty by having this kind of conversations that do not fit the established art museum ethos. Moreover, this finding illustrates greatly the self-monitoring act which, according to Bennett (1995) and Goffman (1956), museum visitors perform in order to enact a socially constructed role of an attentive and focused museum visitor.

Moreover, this conversation about other visitors relates to a broader subject of the museum as a social scene. As it was mentioned in the theory, going to museums is not only related to recreational and educational purposes but also with the willingness of visitors to spend some time with and among people. In this respect, two respondents mentioned that during the visit they practised "people watching" which can also be attributed as an indirect social interaction when one becomes the observer and the object of observations for other visitors. For instance, one respondent shared that the most satisfying experience during his visit was evoked not by artworks but, actually, by other people. This visitor recalled looking at other visitors, how they engaged with the exhibition and noticed that seeing laughing and pointing at art kids aroused positive emotions in him (resp. 10). Moreover, another visitor, who is also a professional photographer, shared that he likes to photograph people and their behaviour at the museum:

> I do it for many years, I make photographs and I call them "the art of human behaviour". Most art is the art world but also the art, how people behave by art. And you can see some very special things (resp. 2)

From this quotation, we can assume that the respondent considers people behaviour at the museum as a special phenomenon, different to how people behave, for instance, at home or on the street. He

also notices and captures moments when other visitors photograph artworks and engage with art. Thus, in a way, he himself becomes a field ethnographer who looks for interesting behaviour patterns among museum visitors and conducts his small individual research.

Infinity Mirror Room

Among 11 respondents at the "Infinity Room", only four did not have any conversations with other visitors. The rest, seven visitors, mentioned that they had shorter or longer verbal interactions with their companions. Overall, visitors engaged in several types of conversations. First topic that respondents touched upon was "physical and psychological feeling". Regarding this, one respondent talked to her friend that she could not stay long inside the room because the sensations were too "weird" (resp. 1). Yet, another visitor expressed to a friend her desire to touch decorations, meanwhile, her friend shared that he feels like in a maze (resp. 4). The second topic of conversations was "design of the installation". Here, accordingly, people shared their thoughts with others about details and construction of the installation. Also, about how the artist used mirrors to create the effect of infinity. These were more technical part-related conversations. Furthermore, one couple discussed that they saw another "Infinity Room" in Almere, several years ago (resp. 6). Few other respondents mentioned that they had short conversations about making photographs: "I only remember that we talked, let's wait until others leave and then we can take a photo"[4] (Infinity Room, resp. 9). Finally, no interactions with strangers were mentioned. However, this can be explained by a limited space inside the work which automatically decreases the possibility to socialise.

All in all, at both exhibitions, respondents had some verbal and non-verbal interactions with other visitors. It is evident that at the installation respondents were more talkative and shared actively their own experiences with other companions "on the spot". Whereas at the Surrealism display, less people had verbal interactions and nearly two-thirds of visitors explored the exhibition alone. So, the main finding in this section would be that "social" and "enthusing" types (Kirchberg & Tröndle, 2015) were most common among visitors at the "Infinity Room" and "contemplative", "enthusing" among visitors at the Surrealism exhibit. Furthermore, findings show that, at both exhibits, topics of conversations were more or less similar and related to the art on the display.

[4] Ką mes kalbėjom, kažkaip neatsimenu, atsimenu gal vienam kalbėjom, kad davai palaukia, kada kiti išeis, nusifotkinsim (Infinity Room, resp. 9).

Finally, it is noteworthy, that social environment played an important role in the overall museum experience for visitors at the traditional exhibit. Here, visitors seemed to be more aware of what are appropriate topics for discussion, and what should be avoided. Whereas a more private environment at the installation, where visitors did not meet other people, resulted in a more relaxed socialisation.

5.2.2 Intellectual, emotional and physical engagement of visitors

In this section, I will present the findings about the engagement of visitors at both exhibitions. I distinguished three layers of engagement with two art settings: "intellectual", "emotional" and "physical". First, I will address "intellectual" involvement. This includes critical reflection and interpretation of art, engagement with curatorial side of the exhibitions, text reading and thinking about the context of art. Second, I will address emotions visitors experienced during their visit. Finally, regarding physical engagement, I will explore what kind of embodied experiences, of art and of exhibition space, including touching artworks, visitors addressed in their narratives. The findings from two exhibits, again, will be compared.

5.2.2.1 Intellectual engagement

Surrealism exhibition

Six out of ten respondents referred to the curatorial decisions of the exhibition. As the exhibition was planned according to personal collections, four respondents mentioned that they were pleasantly surprised by the arrangement of the exhibition and glad to learn something new about collectors of the Surrealist art. Yet, two respondents shared that they did not enjoy the arrangement and lacked information about works and would have liked to see different layout of the exhibition. Respectively, these two respondents mentioned that they preferred more the middle (elliptical) room in the exhibition because there they learnt more about the movement and connections of various artists and different topics of the Surrealist work.

Half of respondents assessed their visit positively mostly because they had learned something new. For example, four respondents shared having discovered new artists they did not know before. Moreover, two of them noticed that they saw a connection of new works with their favourite artists and this discovery enhanced their experience.

> I've never heard of before Yves Tanguy and I liked his work. And there was also a connection between him and Dali, which is one of my absolute favourite because of the landscapes with these shapeless forms. Dali uses the same sort of thing and then you can recognise the forms as human beings or animals. I did not know anything about him; that was a discovery. (Surrealism, resp. 8)

Others noticed that they were happy to learn more about the background of the Surrealist movement (resp. 5), it's relation to political issues such as Spanish civil war in Dali's art and the state of the inter-war period in the artworks by Max Ernst, Picasso, Magritte and others (resp. 6). Also, the intellectual engagement with the content of the exhibition was expressed in the form of interpretation of artworks. Yet, only few people shared their interpretations. One respondent expressed her concerns about the frequency of the use of the naked female body in Surrealists' paintings (resp. 5). Another visitor mentioned that he discovered a lot of different layers and meanings in Dali's works (resp. 7).

The following aspect that helped to indicate the level of cognitive engagement with art was reading of texts provided at the exhibition. In general, nine respondents confirmed that they did read them. However, the majority did not read all texts available or read only when they wanted to learn more about the work (from the booklet). Overall, as we can see, exhibition visitors found it important to get an extra information from texts provided at the exhibition. This correlates to the finding that most of visitors considered knowing the context as an important part for perceiving the exhibition. Most of visitors tried to contextualise the Surrealist art within a wider political, social, historical or aesthetic field. Altogether, seven respondents confirmed that they found the context important and the remaining three declared that they did not think that knowing the context is necessary as, first of all, they want to find artworks that "speak to them" without any extra information provided by curators. Nevertheless, the finding that most of respondents expressed their intellectual engagement with the art on the display leads to the domination of the "contemplative" type among the traditional exhibition audience.

Infinity Room

In terms of the intellectual engagement among visitors at the "Infinity Room", three respondents during their interviews referred to the intrinsic ideas of the installation. For instance, two shared that during their visit they were thinking about the context of the artist. They saw the work as an opportunity "to step into the dot mind of the artist…to experience that's she's thinking and feeling (resp. 3). Another respondent referred to the installation as an "escape", primarily, for the artist herself. Whereas, one more visitor mentioned that he felt that this kind of art "triggers and tenses the mind" (resp. 4).

Yet, the rest (8 visitors) did not share any further interpretations. One visitor mentioned that she forgot to think about the meaning of work by stating that: "the experience sort of fills everything up, and then you forget to get to that deeper layer. Why did she do it, what kind of creator she was, what did she else made? "(resp.6). Similarly, two more visitors after they were asked about the context said that this exhibition "speaks for itself" (resp. 9) and that they paid more attention to emotions they felt rather than to the context and intrinsic idea of the work (resp. 10). Finally, one visitor made a comparison between her experience at other exhibitions and this installation and concluded that her gaze inside the installation was "much more open" (resp. 1) and less analytical.

Furthermore, visitors at the installation were also asked, whether they read the text about the work before or after the visit. Overall, four mentioned that they paid attention to the text or at least scanned it. The rest forgot or did not notice it. As one respondent described her relation to reading at this kind of exhibitions: "When there are all pictures on the wall, I sort of need an extra challenge and then I start to read. And this is…I want to experience and I forget to read (resp. 6).

Coulter-Smith (2006) and Bishop (2005) notice that deep immersion experience can soften cognitive engagement on behalf of the museum visitor. Findings in this section prove that this fear might be grounded. Although we can find some signs of intellectual involvement during the visit at the "Infinity Room", it seems that it is not the most important way to engage with the installation. It, moreover, seems that, here, emotional engagement plays a more important role.

5.2.2.2 Emotional engagement

Surrealism exhibition

At the Surrealism exhibition, most of respondents expressed emotional involvement with the art they saw. It is possible to discern several types of emotions visitors addressed. First, there were visitors who mentioned that they experienced special impact of the image or the artwork aroused "some kind of emotion", however, they found it difficult to elaborate on it. Another group of emotions can be related to the feeling of beauty. In this respect, few respondents described vaguely that they found some artworks "nice" and "beautiful". The third group consists of emotions that refer to the experience of formal qualities of works such as "rough", "vivid", and "beautiful colours". Also, some respondents addressed the theme or the content of works describing them as "creepy", "nifty", and "funny".

Furthermore, another kind of emotional involvement with art mentioned by five respondents is linked to seeing real artworks. For instance, few respondents (resp. 3; 4 & 8) recalled a very big painting of the desert by Salvador Dali and mentioned that they were impressed how giant and impressive it was. They, moreover, recalled the special experience of seeing the original.

Finally, one more interesting finding in terms of emotional involvement, which was mentioned by one respondent, was a desire to own the artworks. "I see the pictures and I think, would I like to have them with me at home and then I think, yes, how long? I see the pictures, ok, I like them, but not to have them" (resp. 9). I found this gentlemen's answer quite intriguing as, even though it is connected to physical experience of work, it also has an emotional dimension of identifying oneself with the artwork through possession.

Infinity Room

At the "Infinity Room", two out of 11 respondents mentioned that they did not have or cannot recall any emotions from their visit. One respondent said that he looked at the exhibition more from the technical side, how it was constructed (resp. 8). Another visitor mostly addressed the physical experience of the work to which I will come back in the following section. Nevertheless, nine remaining visitors shared quite a wide range of emotions they had experienced during the visit. Among all, feelings of "empowerment", "loneliness", "amazement", and "happiness" were

mentioned the most frequently. In this respect, five respondents entitled their visit to the installation as “empowering”. As one respondent described it:

> I feel like these exhibitions give us more room to co-create…the main thing about these exhibitions is that it gives a sense that we're part of the artwork. And, of course, I think, any art piece is part of the co-creational process, because without a spectator art is just alone, it's just there (resp. 4).

The quote above indicates that the visit to the “Infinity Room” for this respondent helped to actively reflect on her part as a spectator and co-creator of the artwork. Bishop (2005) acknowledges interaction and activation of the spectator as the main qualities of the installation art. Moreover, according to the scholar, installations not only channel the gaze back to the beholder but also put one right in the centre of the aesthetic experience. The sensation of “empowerment” which was most frequently mentioned by visitors verifies this theory.

Furthermore, the emotion of “surprise” was referred several times. Four visitors recalled being amazed and surprised by the atmosphere inside the room and the effect of infinity that it produces. Moreover, the feeling of “loneliness” was also quite common. Again, four respondents referred to the whole ambient of the exhibition as isolating. One respondent elaborated that probably “seeing lots of yourselves” (resp. 5) leads to the direct confrontation with oneself and increases a feeling if one was alone in the whole world. Yet, another visitor referred to this feeling of loneliness as “escape” (resp. 3), however, here, the escape can be interpreted as both “escape from yourself” and “escape from the world”. Moreover, the feeling of happiness was also mentioned several times. One respondent, who now is in his mid-fifties, expressed that he felt happy because the exhibition freed a “small boy” (resp. 5) in him. Other emotions such as “wonder”, the feeling of “beauty” were mentioned once. Finally, one respondent shared that for her it was emotionally difficult to stay long time inside the installation (resp. 1). This was so far, the only negative emotion shared among interviewees.

All in all, comparing the emotional involvement with art at both exhibitions we find explicit differences. First, at the immersive exhibit, visitors experienced a wider emotional spectrum, moreover, it seems that they also spoke about their emotions easier. If visitors from the traditional setting addressed emotions in a vague and modest way, here, people shared their experiences without reservation. Furthermore, emotions visitors shared at the Surrealism exhibition were more

connected to the distanced (Dawson, 1961), aesthetic appreciation of artworks thus were more contemplative experience-related, yet at the Infinity Room, they were more personal, introspective thus related more to the enthusing type. Interestingly, the most important emotion among visitors to the immersive exhibit was the feeling of empowerment which relates to the notion of "activated spectatorship" (Bishop, 2005). Other emotions "loneliness", "isolation", "happiness" stem from the phenomenological, first-person perspective, which De Oliveira et al. (2004) describes as "narcissistic" and "introspective".

5.2.2.3 Physical engagement

Surrealism exhibition

At the Surrealism exhibition, visitors referred to physical experiences under several circumstances. Firstly, they reflected that the exhibition was very crowded which limited their movement and access to works and texts. Another physical experience was more connected to the architecture of the exhibition. Three respondents (resp. 3, 6 & 8) mentioned that the oval room in the middle was too narrow, thus difficult to pass. Finally, one respondent (resp. 2) mentioned that he had difficulties reading information plaques because of the glare on the glass at the islands. It negatively affected his experience. Altogether, it is evident that, at the traditional setting, the physical experience emerged only then it was directly connected to the question of accessibility. Hence, the finding relates to the ideas that the traditional museum setting maintains a very explicit Cartesian body/mind split and encourages disembodied intellectual activities (Bennett, 1995; O'Doherty, 1976, Christidou & Diamantopoulou, 2016).

Infinity Room

The physical experiences of visitors at the "Infinity Room", in contrast with that at the Surrealism, differed in few ways. Firstly, as in the previous section about emotional involvement, people spent more time for describing their physical engagement and, moreover, their narratives were more descriptive, detailed and direct. Overall, seven respondents referred to this subject. Secondly, physical experiences of visitors were more related to their own bodily sensations than to the architecture or accessibility. For instance, visitors mentioned that they lost the balance because

of the infinity effect (resp. 9), felt like falling (resp. 4) or compared sensation to the vertigo effect (resp. 7). One respondent shared that, at the installation, she became more aware of her body (resp. 1) and that the effect of multiplied reflections inspired her to move more. Another woman shared that at first, she was inside the installation with other people, but once she was left alone, started really moving around and this increased her overall experience: "when they left and it was, like, you open your arms and you make your silly dance, you just feel very, like, you in a different space and in a different place" (resp. 3). Similarly, another respondent revealed that she spent a great deal of time concentrating on her movements and exploring how her body was reflected by the environment (resp. 2).

These findings correlate to the idea expressed in the theory that immersive installations are based on phenomenological perception model (Bishop, 2005, De Oliveira et al., 2004), according to which, the beholder perceives the world as part of it and not by gazing at it from a distance. Having said that it could be argued that the dissolving of the physical distance between the beholder and art object increases the level of the embodied experience and alters the so-called body-mind split that remains strong at the traditional setting.

5.2.3 Behaviour at the museum

In this section, I will address results on behaviour of visitors at the museum. First, I will discuss the answers of respondents at both exhibitions about what is the proper museum behaviour. This is followed by the limitations they felt during the visit. The first two sub-topics will be discussed together as both groups of visitors have been asked the same questions and shared their opinion about appropriate and inappropriate museum behaviour. This topic encompasses such codes as "behaviour", "being afraid", "restrictions", "inappropriate behaviour". Later, I will address findings regarding such topics as "touching art" and "taking" and "sharing photographs" at the museum.

Respondents at both exhibitions

Regarding appropriate museum behaviour, among visitors at both exhibits, not making too much noise, leaving space for each other and respect were mentioned the most. For many visitors, a serene atmosphere is a number one precondition for the aesthetic experience they seek at the

museum. As one respondent summed it up: “It's really about enjoying and concentrating about the art pieces. So, I get distracted, when people are really talking loud, I find it annoying” (Infinity Room, resp. 6). Regarding the second rule, one respondent mentioned that the lack of space in front of artworks has a direct influence on her museum experience: “Then it's crowded and people choose to be very near to the painting… I tend to take a step back, but then my feeling about the painting is also more distanced. That's not nice” (Surrealism, resp. 4). Likewise, two other respondents mentioned that leaving space is also a sign of respect and politeness towards other visitors.

Furthermore, few respondents at the “Infinity Room” mentioned that at the museum they usually feel pressure to adapt to the behaviour of other people at the same room and that the overall atmosphere, more or less, predetermines their own behaviour: “when you see it, when you go inside, you say ok, these people are interested in this thing. And that makes you feel more intense” (Infinity Room, resp. 8). Furthermore, another respondent noticed that a visit to the museum is a “common experience” (Infinity Room, resp. 2) which means that one has to be aware of the social environment and adjust the behaviour to it.

However, although it is evident that most of visitors are very aware of rules, follow them and apply to other visitors, several interviewees, at both exhibitions, pointed out that they would like to see the atmosphere at art museums livelier that it is now. These respondents, moreover, shared that they enjoy momentary breaches of the museum’s “serene” climate caused by children (Surrealism, resp. 10), enthusiastically minded visitors (Infinity Room, resp. 3) or workshops that take place at the museum (Infinity Room, resp. 10). Moreover, one respondent commented more on this topic by saying that these minor breaches into the usual museum atmosphere does not only make the exhibition space livelier but also positively counteracts the established art museum ethos:

> It's usually almost serene surroundings when you are in the museum. And then sometimes, I think that it's nice to have like a child walking around to say like "hey, that is ugly" something like that, like to break that serene atmosphere, because, sometimes, in the museum, you have that feeling that, you know, like, everybody behaves like, I don't know, a very distinguished art lover. Well, it's rubbish, you like it or you don’t. It's nothing special about liking art. (Surrealism, resp. 8)

Altogether, as the findings indicate, most of visitors have a clear understanding of how people should behave at art museums. Moreover, it seems that the behaviour of visitors is less

predetermined by the architecture of the museum space and more by the intimidating social climate inside the exhibition. Notwithstanding this, some visitors enjoy interruptions of the serene museum environment. It might be that they want to see more enthusing and social types at the museum. Yet, it seems that they enjoy seeing others breaking the rules more than actually doing it themselves.

5.2.3.1 Touching art

Surrealism exhibition

From ten respondents at the Surrealism exhibition, seven mentioned that during their visit to the exhibition they did not think about touching any artworks. However, interestingly, three of them mentioned installation (carpet on the wall) which was not part of the exhibition, yet, was placed right at the entrance. Two of them shared that they touched the installation, even though they were not sure if it is allowed (resp. 1 & 5). One man was disciplined by the guard (resp.1). The second respondent shared that he really wanted to feel the material and noticed that, in these occasions, museums should offer small samples that people could try out (Surrealism, resp. 2). The rest of interviewees affirmed that they did not have any urge to touch art. Yet, one respondent recalled that she saw another visitor touching an artwork: "I saw one, one lady, who touched the painting (laughs). So, I was uh, but it was more, like, oh she really did it (laughs)! But it's happening. I don't know, there were no guards in the space". So, except these few short occasions mentioned above, there were no embodied experience manifestations among visitors. This finding, however, slightly contradicts that from observation, where no touching of artworks among visitors was detected.

Infinity Room

At Infinity Room, one respondent recalled that she touched decorations inside the installation:

> I did...Don't tell the Boijmans! (laughs)…I just touched it with my hand like really discreetly, because they have a camera in there as well. I didn't really want to damage it, I just really wanted to have a sensation of touching it (Infinity Room, resp. 4).

Here, as we can see, although the respondent did it, she also felt the same hesitation as visitors from the traditional exhibition. Moreover, the interviewee mentioned the security camera in the installation. It could be argued, that even though, as described in Chapter 2, immersive exhibitions try to deconstruct the panoptic structure of the museum, this installation, especially because of the camera inside it, does not entirely achieve this. Finally, a low level of touching art at the "Infinity Room" correlates with observation findings that indicate that only 30 % (9 out of 30) of visitors at the installation did it. Furthermore, this finding confirms the statement made above that museum visitors apply the same ruleset of behaviour at the immersive exhibition as at the traditional setting. So, no-touching policy from the traditional setting is being employed to the immersive exhibition experience. However, on the other hand, it could be argued, that the difference, quite small though, exists between interviewed and observed visitors. Thus, it is possible that some people did not mention that they touched the art during the interview. The reason for that might be the fear to be caught acting against the rules. Yet, this implication cannot be proven as units of analysis differed during the observation and interviews. In this respect, the more accurate conclusion could have been achieved by gathering more data about the same visitors and, possibly, using visitors' tracking technique.

5.2.3.2 Photographing at the museum

In the last section, findings regarding photographing and sharing photos at the museum will be presented. As it was discussed in Chapter 2, the opportunity to make impressive photographs has become one of the qualities of immersive art settings. Therefore, to understand better if it is also the case at the "Infinity Room", respondents at both settings were asked if they take any photos and, accordingly, what were their intentions towards sharing them on social media or with friends.

Taking photos at both exhibitions

Visitors at the Boijmans museum are allowed to take pictures. All respondents minus one confirmed that they took some photographs at exhibitions. This finding does not entirely correlate with observation that showed that only one-third of visitors at the Surrealism exhibition took photos. However, the difference was expected as the observation period per one unit was limited to 10 minutes thus did not cover the entire journey through the museum. Taking this further, there

were some differences between what has been photographed at the exhibitions. At the Surrealism display, most people took photos of artworks they liked or the titles with information about works, one visitor took photos of the museum environment, and one of other visitors. At the "Infinity Room", though also because of the specific setting, all people took photos of their reflections.

In terms of photographing at the museum, few respondents, from both displays, expressed that they usually feel discomfort to take photos at the museum and that this activity, in their opinion, does not fit the ethos of the institution. For instance, one respondent shared that although she sometimes takes photos at art exhibitions, she feels the pressure from other people in the room: "because people see, what kind of picture I am taking, and this, maybe, kind of scares me that it should define me in a way, like, I wouldn't take a picture of a very popular artwork" (Infinity Room, resp. 2). Another respondent expressed similar thoughts and added that "then I see all the art loving people it would be a little bit stupid to act like it" (Surrealism, resp. 7). Regarding this respondent, there was also a noteworthy contradiction in his interview. After he was asked whether he had ever visited the "Infinity Room", he replied that he had not, however, he joked that after seeing pictures all over the internet he (and his companion) will go there today to "make a profile picture out of it" (Surrealism, resp. 7). This shows that the opportunity to produce a beautiful picture has become one of the reasons to visit immersive installation.

All in all, as we can see, the finding that people feel social pressure from other visitors during photographing activities confirms Bennett's (1995) idea that visitors hold a controlling power towards each other. Yet, findings regarding how many people from both exhibitions shared or going to share photos they took during the visit indicate a bigger separation which I will discuss accordingly to the exhibition type.

Sharing photos - Surrealism exhibition

Sharing photos on social media was not very popular activity among visitors at the Surrealism exhibition. Overall, from 10 respondents, eight said that they were not going to share photos with anyone and that it is strictly for the personal use. One respondent confirmed that he is going to share few photos on *Facebook* so his family and friends could see what he has been doing during his trip to Europe. Finally, one person said he was not sure whether he was going to share the photos anywhere. Hence, it is evident that sharing photos of artworks was not in line with the visit at the Surrealism exhibition.

Sharing photos - Infinity Room

Meanwhile, among visitors at the "Infinity Room", we find a quite different attitude towards sharing photos. From 11 respondents, three confirmed that they already did share the photo from the installation on social media. Interestingly, one respondent mentioned that she did not want to share the photo, however, her mother with a friend insisted of doing that:

> I was with my mum and her friend and they insisted to take selfie and post it on *Facebook* so I did it…I didn't post while being there, but we were taking selfies with my mum (laughs) and it was, first of all, I don't like doing that, secondly, my MOM asked me this and it has never happened before. But she really liked the thing, and her friend was 'oh my god we have to make a selfie!'. So, we did it. (Infinity Room, resp. 2).

Another four respondents said that they won't probably share photos on a "big" social media such as *Facebook* or *Instagram*, yet, they will show photos to friends and family or send pictures via *WhatsApp*[5] directly to their closest people. For instance, one respondent said that even though she usually does not use social media, she still feels like sharing the photo "on a more intimate level" (Infinity Room, resp. 4). Similarly, another visitor confirmed that she does not use social media, however, is planning to show photos to someone (Infinity Room, resp. 1). The rest mentioned that they might share the photos on social media. One visitor added that she would like to mention the museum next to the photo and in this way to help institution to promote the exhibition (Infinity Room, resp. 3). Two respondents mentioned that even though they never share anything on social media they might post the picture from the "Infinity Room". Finally, one visitor said that she would like to share the photo because she likes that this photo contains her reflection:

> Sharing? Yeah, maybe. That one. Because it's like also you can't avoid yourself in a picture, cause it's all mirrors, so you will be in a picture, so it's sort of nice to share it. You make your own little art piece (Infinity Room, resp.6).

[5] *Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp* are social media, and social networking platforms.

So, it seems that, at the immersive setting, most of visitors did not feel social pressure which was the main concern among visitors at the traditional setting and this encouraged photographing. Moreover, it might be that the increased willingness to share photos has much to do, again, with an empowering nature of the installation. The exhibition works as a platform for self-expression and offers an opportunity to produce, your own unique work of art. Therefore, the fun and interactive element of the immersive setting seems to slightly alter the museum visitors' understanding of what is an inappropriate behaviour at the museum.

Chapter 6 – Conclusions

6.1 Final Conclusion

This thesis aimed at researching the immersive installation experience at the art museum. Based on the past research and literature regarding museum experience and the immersive art, in this paper, I intended to compare museum visitors' experiences at the traditional, so-called "white cube" type exhibition and the immersive installation in order to better comprehend the immersive art phenomenon. To do so, I chose ethnomethodological approach through conducting participant observations and in-depth interviews at two exhibitions at the Museum Boijmans: temporary group exhibition "Mad About Surrealism", curated by the museum, and a permanent immersive site-specific installation by Yayoi Kusama "Infinity Mirror Room - Phalli's Field". The chosen method allowed me to study museum visitors in their natural environment which was necessary since the thesis focused on their experiences. Regarding the complexity of the definition of the museum experience that many scholars notice, the chosen methodology allowed me to address the topic and the research subject from multiple sides. Which to say, in this paper, the museum experience was addressed as an aesthetic, psychological, social and physical experience which, moreover, is never fixed, changes according to the circumstances around visitors and is greatly dependent on the visitors' agency and his/her social situation (Falk & Dierking, 2014). Furthermore, central to this thesis was the implication that the way the exhibition is arranged plays an important role in tailoring experiences (Kirchberg & Tröndle, 2015). Finally, to get better insight, what kind of museum experience two different art settings evoke among visitors the most, I applied the museum experience typology formulated by Kirchberg & Tröndle (2015) in which the scholars discern three museum experience types, namely, contemplative, enthusing, and social.

In Chapters 4 & 5, the main findings from participant observations and interviews were outlined. In the first part of the research, quantitative tools were used to analyse data about the museum visitors' behaviour collected during observations. This method allowed to analyse data in more detail and compare visitors' behaviour at two settings. As Kirchberg & Tröndle (2015) argued, the behaviour of visitors is an important indicator of the overall museum experience. Observations focused on several topics: social behaviour of visitors, information processing and bodily situation. This data complemented greatly interviews, where I strived to get better insight about visitors' first-hand experiences at two exhibitions. During interview analysis, I discerned

visitors' experiences into three topics: social interaction, engagement (intellectual, emotional, and physical), and behaviour at the museum. In the following paragraphs, I will formulate my final conclusions which will answer the main research question of this paper: *how does the experience of the art museum visitor differs at exhibitions that contain deep immersion installations such as Yayoi Kusama's "Infinity Mirror Room - Phalli's Field" as opposed to traditional museum exhibitions such as "Mad about Surrealism" at the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen (Rotterdam)?*

In the theory of the established museum ethos, scholars argue that in the Western rationalist tradition, a proper aesthetic appreciation is manifested through "attentive" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991), "distanced" (Dawson, 1961), and "disembodied" (O'Doherty, 1976) conditions. It might be argued that a usual museum experience should contain these elements. The analysis of observation findings showed that visitors' behaviour at the first, traditional type exhibition verifies this theory. Here, most of visitors were calm, walked slowly, did not have many social interactions, most of them read texts provided at the exhibition and watched attentively art on the display without showing many visible reactions. Therefore, I assigned them to contemplative and enthusing types. Dawson (1961) argues that the act of aesthetic "distancing" refuses emotional and personalised art appropriation and sets the stage for the critical appreciation, during which, the spectator perceives the artwork only in the aesthetic framework. The interview analysis confirmed that, at the Surrealism exhibition, visitors mostly engaged with the exhibition content at the cognitive level, through interpretations of works, critical reflection on the curatorial choices and willingness to learn something new during the visit. Similarly, emotions they shared were also mostly abstract, did not contain personal references and mainly linked to formal qualities and content of artworks.

Meanwhile, the analysis of the data from the "Infinity Room" revealed slightly different experiences. First, the most common types among visitors were enthusing and social. Here, people did show significantly more visible reactions towards art than observation units at the first exhibit. They were also less attentive to texts, additional material provided on the display, and the overall level of the cognitive engagement in terms of interpretation and attempts to contextualise the art within the broader aesthetical realm was rather low. This confirms the fear expressed by Coulter-Smith (2006) and Bishop (2005) that deep immersion experience could soften cognitive engagement on behalf of the museum visitor and lead him/her to a passive, spectacle and experience-oriented art consumption (Coulter-Smith, 2006, Chapter 2, p. 1). It also verifies the presumption expressed before the research, that the contextual narrative embedded in the work of art can be easily disregarded by various types of visitors.

Taking this further, the findings also revealed that, at the installation, critical engagements were strongly overshadowed by introspective perception (De Oliveira et al., 2004, Bishop, 2005). Emotions that the immersive art aroused among visitors indeed contained more personal references, reflected on one's own psychological state. For instance, the most common emotions were empowerment, happiness, loneliness, isolation from the world. This finding allows to connect the experience at the immersive setting to conditions of "under" and "over" distancing (Dawson, 1961) and confirms the idea that the immersive art fosters "narcissistic" (De Oliveira et al., 2004) approach and puts the beholder right in the centre of the aesthetic experience. Moreover, such emotions, especially the feeling of empowerment, shed light on the interactive (Bishop, 2005) quality of the immersive art, as some visitors could feel taking part in the co-creational process of the artwork.

Furthermore, findings regarding the social interaction of visitors revealed important differences between the traditional museum experience and that of the immersive. To begin with, among the first exhibition audience, social type was the least popular. Most of them, regardless of whether they were alone or with companions, thought that social interaction should not interrupt their art appreciation and avoided topics unconnected to the artistic content. However, at the same exhibition, social climate proved to have a major influence on visitors' experiences and the conduct, as many respondents shared that they intentionally try to adapt to the social atmosphere around them. Overall, it is evident that due to social climate, visitors felt obligated to switch to the contemplative (cognitive) mode, since it is the most acceptable way to appreciate art. Furthermore, for some visitors, this exhibition became a place for practising indirect social interaction, "people watching". This finding confirms strongly the Goffman's theory (1956) of "social stage", according to which, people at the social establishment, such as the art museum, embody socially constructed roles. It, moreover, illustrates the situation of the "self-regulation" of the museum visitors through gazing practices envisioned by Bennett (1995).

There was no such thing at the immersive installation. Here, the socialisation unfolded at a more personal level; between companions. Visitors were more likely to share their experiences "on the spot" with friends and family. Furthermore, they seemed to care less about acting in accordance with the social climate. This statement is best illustrated by the photographing activity, which, at the installation, was significantly more frequent than at the traditional setting. An interactive quality of the installation increased the willingness to share pictures on social media or with friends and most of visitors used the installation as a platform for the artistic self-expression. Meanwhile, at the

traditional exhibit, taking too much photos was considered, to some extent, indiscreet. De Oliveira et al. (2004) envisioned immersive art fostering socialisation among museum visitors similarly as entertainment venues, for instance, night clubs. They argued that like these spaces for relaxation, immersive environments stimulate social and euphoric experiences. It could be concluded, that the "Infinity Room" resembles this definition as it significantly increased social behaviour among visitors. However, since the installation was quite small thus did not provide opportunity for visitors to share the space with strangers, a future research at a bigger scale immersive environments could help to better illuminate this aspect.

The final conclusion is connected to the behaviour of visitors. Some scholars argue (Bishop, 2005; Coulter-Smith, 2006; De Oliveira et al., 2004) that immersive exhibitions activate embodied experiences among visitors and, moreover, transform the "panoptical" (Foucault, 1975) structure of the museum into a less disciplined public space. Therefore, it was expected that visitors would engage more physically with the immersive setting than with the traditional, for instance, through touching practices. As observations and interviews revealed, the difference of the physical activity between two settings was not as big as expected. Although the installation visitors appeared to be active in more ways, yet half of them remained somewhat calm and passive, thus resembled visitors at the traditional setting. This shows that visitors at both settings tend to follow a strict behaviour ruleset of the museum ethos and that physical docility, which is encouraged at traditional exhibitions, exists at the installations.

Interestingly, the difference in terms physical engagement was more reflected in the narratives of visitors. Here, the separation between embodied, phenomenological perception of art experience (Bishop, 2005; Merleau-Ponty, 1945) at the "Infinity Room" and that of disembodied, distanced at the traditional exhibit was more explicit. For instance, the only physical engagement with art among first show visitors was connected to the accessibility and the layout of the exposition. Whereas at the installation, most of visitors mentioned experiencing physical sensations or recalled having paid more attention to their movements and reflections of the body. However, it is important to add here that, in case of the bodily passivity, the controlling effect of the social environment was evident at the traditional exhibit. People were more likely to follow the museum rules because they felt being watched by other visitors. Whereas, at the installation, since there were less social confrontations, it came from a more abstract source. Thus, it could be argued that situation at the installation resembles Foucauldian model of the "panoptical" (1975) surveillance, where individuals are objectified through "clinical gaze" (Foucault, 1975) by the higher level of

vision, in this case, the institution through security cameras. Hence, this conclusion contradicts the idea that immersive environments transform the panoptical structure of the museum from inside and shows that the "empowerment" of visitors takes place more at the psychological rather than physical level.

6.2 Discussion and future recommendations

In this research, the comparison of two different types of exhibitions illuminated that the overall exhibition environment and arrangements play an important role in tailoring (Kirchberg & Tröndle, 2015) of visitors' museum experiences. It, moreover, demonstrated that the typology of museum visitors that has been used in this paper, is never fixed and that all types can be embodied by visitors with various visit agendas (Falk & Dierking, 2013) regardless their prior knowledge and museum visiting experience. However, it must be added that one of the limitations of this study was that different visitors were observed and interviewed at the exhibitions. Using the same subjects of research at both exhibits would have provided more detailed data about differences of visitors' experiences. Therefore, it could be one of the recommendations for the future research. Another limitation of this study could be that a larger number of observation units and interviewees could have provided more detailed data about the museum experience. Yet, this study did not intend to present generalisations but rather to develop a better understanding about the immersive art experience.

Furthermore, although the aforementioned typology proved to be very useful and helped to get more detailed data about museum visitors' experiences, it also raised some questions. One the one hand, it might be argued that in their classification Kirchberg and Tröndle (2015) discern the level of cognition, together with that of socialisation, as the main indicators of the museum experience. On the other hand, this taxonomy suggests somewhat hierarchical approach which considers cognition and socialisation as opposing factors. Similar situation can be found in the literature regarding the museum experience, where the cognitive engagement with art is considered the most suitable one thus the "appropriate" one. Therefore, the question is, whether the cognition is the best departure point to analyse the immersive experience? As this research has demonstrated, the lack of it at the immersive installations can be easily mistaken for the low-brow entertainment. However, it might be the case that at immersive settings, contemplative element is purposely replaced by other dimensions of experience. And yet, this does not necessarily mean that the lack of

critical stimulus leads to the devaluation of the aesthetic experience. This approach, moreover, can lead to undiscovered areas of artistic experience that before have been condemned as unsuitable to the high art. Since in this research, the immersiveness was studied in the context of the art museum, which, as I argued, has a very powerful ethos, the comparison in the light of cognition appeared a suitable approach. However, it could be suggested, that studies concentrating on the immersive experience should also look for other ways to approach the subject. For instance, more attention to emotional, experiential dimensions could contribute to the further research. After all, today, we witness important changes in the museum field. With such artistic experiences as immersive installation museums enter a new experiential realm which, unfortunately, remains somewhat omitted from the research.

Finally, when the immersive installation had been of a larger scale, more data probably could have been collected about the social interaction between visitors. As this research mostly focused on the interaction between companions, future studies could shed some light on that between a more diverse public, for instance between strangers. It would be interesting to get better insight, whether the immersion contains a stronger relational potential.

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Appendices

A – Fragment from the field notes

Observation 1 17/02/2017 / Surrealism

Beginning: 12:30 End 17:00

Location: Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, exhibition Mad About Surrealism (11 February – 28 May 2017)

During the first observation, the exhibition hall was quite packed. Approximately 100 people were at the exhibition. The age and gender varied from 20 to 80 years old, there were no children or teenagers. It also seemed that most visitors were white middle-aged men. There were also a considerable number of young people. A lot of people were in groups of 2 or more people. Many people (ever fifth approximately) had an audio guide. Many people (ever third) had exhibition guide and used it. Overall the atmosphere was calm, and quiet, although there was a lot of people. People were walking slowly, ones who were speaking did not speak loud (with several exceptions). In the second part of my observation, a large group of 10 to 12 people with a guide came in, the guide was speaking loud (Dutch). The loudest moment so far. During this observation, I observed 10 UNITS.

1. Man, 50+. 1. Reading exhibition text 2. Walking towards artworks 3. Reading label, watching. 4. Watching 5. Reading exhibition guide 6. Reading exhibition guide 7. Walking towards the centre of the hall (islands) 8. Watching photographs 9. Reading guide. 10. Watching 11 walking 12. Watching 13 Reading exhibit. guide 14 watching 15 watching 16 walking 17 reading exhibit. guide 18 walking 19 reading label, watching 20 walking Consistent, attentive watching, reading every label + consistent exhibit. guide reading. Slow walking pace, weak physical reactions, did not speak and interact to anyone, was always very concentrated towards artworks, sometimes went quite close to artworks, passive body and hands close to the body on the sides, calm face, no photo. Had and read a lot the exhibition guide. Paid attention to islands. Did not skip anything.
2. Woman 50 +. 1. Walking 2. Speaking 3. Walking 4. Watching an artwork 5. Looking around 6. Speaking 7. Standing but not watching artworks 8. Looking through, briefly reading exhibition guide 9. Speaking 10. Touching friend's shoulder, talking 11. Reading label 12. Walking 13. Standing and looking around 14. Watching 15. Watching 16.

Watching 17. Watching 18. Watching 19. Standing looking around 20 Standing looking around.

Inconsistent, selective and inattentive watching, high verbal and non-verbal communication, random selection of works, reading only few labels. Slow walking pace, no physical reactions towards art, physical reactions towards the friend, high level of socialisation, no object orientation, big distance, weak orientation in the hall, weak interest in art. Body active, hands moving, active face, no touching, no photos. Had the exhibition guide but did not read it, only looked through. Spoke Dutch. It seems that she was not interested in exhibition and her friend was more into it. She spent a lot of time just standing next to her friend but did not pay attention to works.

Observation 3 04/03/2017 / Infinity Room

Beginning 12:10 end 16:30

1. 3 p. 1 man 35-40, 1 woman 35-40, 1 kid (5+) (around 8 min)

   No reading, viewing before, entering, photo, waving, kid – touching decorations, kid – lying on the floor, mother – pulls the kid back to the middle, photo (father), photo (mother), photo (both), lie (kid), father turning around – filming, kid is jumping around and waving (together with mother), dancing (kid and mother), filming around (father), dark – walk out, no photos viewing or text reading

   Kid seemed very happy being inside the installation. The father spent most of his time filming and making photos, mostly of the kid. The mother spent half of the time posing, another half – looking after the kid.

2. Woman 30-35 and two small children. (around 7 min)

   Mother comes in with a stroller.

   No text before, Photo, photo, posing (bigger daughter), posing (daughter), photo (mother), posing (both) with their hands spread, dancing around, non- verbal interaction, mother holds the daughter, photo, talking, posing, standing, leave, no text no photos after.

   No text before, Photo, photo, posing (bigger daughter), posing (daughter), photo (mother), posing (both) with their hands spread, dancing around, non- verbal interaction, mother holds the daughter, photo, talking, posing, standing, leave, no text no photos after.

   1. 3 p. 20-25 (2 w/1m) (around 8 min)

No text before, standing still, standing still, standing photo, still posing, hands spread, photo, hands spread photo, posing (one leg lifted, hands spread), watching photos on the phone, photo standing still, posing hands spread, watching photos again, talking standing, leave, no text, no photos after.

B – Interview Guide

1. General information – pre-visit narratives

1. Age, occupation, education level, connection with arts and culture field
2. Did you come alone or with other people?
3. Is this your first visit to this museum?
4. How often do you visit art museums? (If often: what museums/exhibitions do you usually visit?: (old art, modern, contemporary?) if not often: what other leisure activities do you usually choose instead of museum?)
5. What kind of experiences do you look for at the museum? (What is usually the purpose of the visit?)
6. What was your last most memorable visit to the art museum?
7. What did you like/dislike about that visit?
8. How much time do you usually spend at the art museum? (up to 1 hour, more than 1 hour, more than 2 hours)
9. Do you prefer going to museum alone or with other people?

2. Post-visit narrative

1. How do you feel about the duration of this visit? Was it too long, or OK, not too long?
2. What was the purpose of this visit?
3. What did you expect from this visit?
4. What did you like/dislike the most during this visit? (Why?)
5. What do you remember best from this visit?
6. Did you learn something new during this visit?
7. Which part of museum did you enjoy the most? (Why?)
8. Which part of museum did you enjoy the least? (Why?)
9. Do you remember, where the most satisfying experience has taken place during this visit?
10. Do you remember, where did you pause the longest during your visit?
11. Did you use additional material (audio-guide, exhibition guide) during this visit?
12. What do you think about the extra information given in exhibitions? Did you find it interesting/ helpful?
13. Did you read exhibition texts/work titles during this visit?
14. Do you usually read them in other exhibitions?
15. Is it important for you to know the context, when the artwork was made and who made it?
16. Were there any famous artists you liked?

17. Did you discuss artworks with someone else during this visit?
18. Did you make any photos during this visit? (If yes: are you going to share these photos on social media?)

3. Atmosphere in the museum

1. How do you think people should behave in the museum?
2. What do you think people shouldn't do in the museum?
3. What do you think of people who speak loud in the museum?
4. Did you like the overall museum atmosphere?
5. Do you feel free to make photos in the museum?
6. Have you ever felt afraid to do something wrong in the museum?
7. Have you ever tried to touch artworks? Or at least considered touching them?
8. Did you notice museum guards during your visit?

4. Post-visit narrative (Infinity Room)

1. Do you remember how you felt while being inside Kusama's "Infinity Room"?
2. What did you think about while being there?
3. What did you like/dislike most about the installation? Why?
4. Do you see any differences between this installation and other exhibitions at the museum?
5. Did you try to touch decorations?
6. Were you alone or with other people inside the installation?
7. Did you speak with someone else inside the installation? What did you speak about?
8. Did you make any photos there? (If yes: are you going to share these photos on social media?)
9. Did you read the text about the work?
10. Do you think the additional information (about the context, artist, idea) is necessary to understand this work?

C – Information about respondents

	Respondents Surrealism					**Respondents „Infinity Room“**				
No.	Age	Gender	Occupation	Nationality	Companions during interviews	Age	Gender	Occupation	Nationality	Companions during interviews
1	55	Male	Environmentalist	Dutch		56	Female	Psychoanalyst	Lithuanian	
2	72	Male	Photographer	Dutch	+1	27	Female	Student	Lithuanian	
3	55	Female	Art historian, translator	Dutch	+1	33	Female	Freelancer	Dutch	
4	45	Female	Art Therapist	Dutch		26	Female	Student	Brasilian	
5	26	Female	Student	Indonesian	+1	54	Male	Unemployed	Dutch	
6	26	Female	Spanish Teacher	Belgian	+1	40	Female	Designer	Dutch	+1
7	27	Male	Student	Dutch	+1	20	Male	Student	Dutch	
8	61	Male	Retired, former social worker	Dutch	+1	29	Male	Student	Turkish	
9	63	Male	Banker	Dutch		26	Female	Art Historian	Lithuanian	
10	34	Male	Restaurant chef	American		26	Male	Designer	Dutch	+1
11						26	Female	Student	Dutch	+1