OUTSIDER ART

LARA TANKE | 2018

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OUTSIDER ART IN CONTEMPORARY MUSEUMS:

THE CELEBRATION OF POLITICS OR ARTISTRY?

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ACS Master Thesis
June, 2018

ABSTRACT

Outsider Art is booming in the legitimate, contemporary art world (Tansella, 2007; Chapin, 2009). Contrary to Insider Art -objects that are created by *trained* artists on the basis of accepted, pre-existing concepts, frameworks or representations-, Outsider Art is made by *untrained* artists who create for no-one but themselves by reacting to internal, not external, prerequisites. It is their individual quirkiness and idiosyncrasy that stands out and for that reason, Outsider Art is celebrated because of the authentic autobiography of the maker. As Outsider Art is not based on a goldmine of traditions" (Tansella, 2007, p. 134) such as a predetermined vision and a stylistic framework -as it is the case with Insider Art-, gatekeepers want to make sure that audiences are aware of the difference between the oppositional categories: they deconstruct the aesthetic system by justifying the objects on the basis of the artist's biography.

The art evaluation of audience is affected by the authority that cultural institutions and the cultural elite enjoy when it comes to their legitimizing power to turn objects in to art (Becker, 1982; Bourdieu, 1984). Considering the unconventional way of curating, however, audiences might feel a tension between what art ought to be and the justification of it by the artist's biography. It is argued that they celebrate the works because of their "unusual quality […] and out of sympathy for the suffering artists" (Polling, 2015, p. 8), however, there is a gap in the literature that points out how audiences experience and reflect on the centralization of the artists' biography in their evaluation of the Outsider objects being made. Biography and context run to a certain extent always through exhibitions, yet how much biography is needed to consider objects as art? Therefore, the aim of this research is to find out how visitors experience the place and role of Outsider Art exhibitions in contemporary museums and their predominant focus on the artist's biography?

In total, 11 participants were recruited at the Outsider Art Museum in Amsterdam. The museum run an exhibition in which the biography of the artists was placed in limelight. Qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted, and the data derived from these was analyzed by using Grounded Theory (GT) in the first round and Thematic Analysis (TA) in the second round. It was found that context about the artist's biography does matter, yet not solely on the basis of how the dominant, Insider culture these interpreted: a dialogue with the artists themselves is essential to understand who the Outsider is and for what reason(s) they created what is being portrayed on the canvas. This is specifically useful for the emancipation of the artists, yet not really necessary for the appreciation of the art works: these can be presented on their own to be evaluated as 'good' art. This suggests that Outsider Art is more than just the biography of the maker.

Key words: *Outsider Art, artist's biography, justification, emancipation, dialogue.*

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PREFACE

"[He] showed me two ways that
I believe and trust in.
One is remembering – if
you remember and continue
to remember the image.
The other involves looking
at a painting more than
once and finding something
new in it each time . . .
Maybe there is a third technique,
the one I believe in the most,
perhaps,
though it's the most arbitrary, and that's
to ask yourself
if you could live inside the painting".
Siegel, 1988

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"What we forbid ourselves we pay good money to watch,
in a playhouse or a movie theater, or to read about
between the secret covers of a book.
Our libraries, our palaces of entertainment tell the truth.
The tramp, the assassin, the rebel, the thief, the mutant, the outcast, the delinquent,
the devil, the sinner, the traveler, the gangster, the runner, the mask:
if we did not recognize in them our least-fulfilled needs,
we would not invent them over and over again,
in every place, in every language, in every time."
Rushdie, 2000

To Mart and all the others who inspire by showing that

beauty does not have boundaries.

1. Introduction

Almost a year ago, my younger brother went to a Dutch music festival and while singing and dancing he was invited onto the stage to perform with the singer. It has always been a dream of his to become a musical performer himself, however, as he was born with Down Syndrome he learned from a young age that some doors are closed. After his performance, many people –including the musician himself – expressed how impressed they were by how he seized the moment, while others were more concerned with his vulnerability and how the audience would respond to that. Was inviting the boy with Down Syndrome an attempt for more inclusion or maybe a zoological impulse? Was the applause a celebration of his previous unnoticed talent or a sign of valuing diversity?

The phenomenon of creating a platform for artists who gain their recognition on the basis of their "identity and social marginality" (Chapin, 2009, p.148) is booming in the legitimate, Insider Art world (Tansella, 2007). Internationally renowned auction house Christies (NY) organized a sell-off in 2017 (www.christies.com) which was received with great enthusiasm among interested parties, and museums such as the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) presented an exhibition in which the works of these artists were showcased next to paintings of professional, contemporary artists, aiming to highlight their common grounds by the striking title 'Parallel Visions' (Tansella, 2007). The work that they make is being referred to as Outsider Art and although there are other definitions, ranging from "grassroots art and naïve art" (Chapin, 2009, p.149) to "visionary art" (Tansella, 2007, p. 133), what they all do have in common is that "the artistic activities are [..] situated outside, or in opposition to, mainstream aesthetic concerns" (Chapin, 2009, p. 148). Contrary to Insider Art objects that are created by *trained* artists on the basis of accepted, pre-existing concepts, frameworks or representations, Outsider Art is made by *untrained* artists who create for no-one but themselves by reacting to internal, not external, prerequisites (Rhodes, 2000; Tansella, 2007. It is their individual quirkiness that can arise from hallucinations, schizophrenia or psychological instability as was the case with (now famous) artists such as: Adolf Wölfli (1864 – 1930), Edvard Munch (1863 – 1944) and Vincent van Gogh (1853 – 1890) (Verheecke, 2007). Although the last two mentioned are now considered and celebrated as Insider artists, at the time where they were alive it was the opposite; their delusional mental state 'placed' them at the periphery of society; being or

becoming an Outsider depends on the perception of the dominant culture. For that reason, Outsider Art revolves around how the autobiography of the creator is perceived and without this context the objects, as argued by Bowler (1997) and Fine (2003), become meaningless. It is the artist's uncontrolled self-expression and directness that serve as proof that they are Outsiders.

Museum directors, curators and art dealers legitimate the unusual and biographical quality of the work specifically for that reason and at the same time, celebrate the artists ability to turn their *disability* into an exceptional outcome (Tansella, 2007; Polling, 2015); resulting in the symbolic boundary between art for art's sake and the centralization of the artist's disabled biography. The word disability here carefully chosen as it implies how others perceive the flaws of the artists and thus not what it factually encompasses (Davis, 1995).

This is rather unusual as normally, these global, legitimizing institutions are concerned with the creation of outstanding and beautiful art (Faulkner et al., 2008) based on what is literally portrayed on the canvas and they will not be guided or influenced by connotations that explain the reason(s) for why the artist had to make the work in the first place. Nonetheless, these gatekeepers have to maintain their authority and cannot "appear as self-contradictory or baffled as it strives to interpret and define facts and values within its cultural jurisdiction" (Wolpe, 1985, p. 410), they keep referring to these individuals as Outsiders, which emphasizes that the art works should not be evaluated according to the traditional standards that are bound to Insider Art (Bowler, 1997); the 'valid' interpretation of legitimacy is circumvented through assigning "autonomous artistic standards" (Deener, 2009, p. 171).

To make sure that audiences notice this difference between Outsider Art and Insider Art, the identity of the Outsider artist is placed in the limelight. The recently opened Outsider Art Museum located in Amsterdam has already held several exhibitions around international and national Outsider artists, but their latest exposition quite differs from foregoing exhibitions. From October 2017 to May 2018, the museum presented the exhibition 'Nieuwe Meesters' (trans: New Masters) in which the art works of the artists are accompanied with black-and-white photographs of the artists. Some are portraits, others include the full body. It is the aim of the museum to teach visitors to look at art in a different way (www.outsiderartmuseum.nl). In an introduction letter of the photographer who made the portraits, it was stated:

"if you want to get to know Outsider Art, it is almost impossible not to become curious about the people behind the art. Who is the Outsider Artist? [..] I'm like a seismograph, subconsciously registering information about my subject. [..] I was allowed to see who they are, and I tried to capture this in my photographs [..], their work is often as pure and raw as they are" (Troelstra, 2016).

By placing the artists on a pedestal, providing context about their biography, the objects are *justified* as being art (Fine, 2003). In every other exhibition that concern Insider Art, however, biography and context are always to a certain extent central threats in order to *inform* the viewer what inspired, fascinated or even challenged the movement, genre or artists in their creation (Fine, 2003). There is a gap in the literature that points out how audiences experience and reflect on the centralization of the artists' biography in their evaluation of the Outsider objects being made. It is argued that audiences appreciate the special and unconventional condition of Outsider Art (Fine, 2003; Polling, 2015) and broadly speaking, biography and context are valuable for their appreciation and evaluation (Berghman & Van Eijck, 2016), yet to what extent is this necessary to consider Outsider objects as art?

Various theories explain on what grounds audiences evaluate objects (Dewey, 1934; Freeland, 2002; Schellekens, 2006) and Becker (1982) and Bourdieu (1984) both argue that art is a social construction in which the former relies on conventions (i.e. a certain consensus about what art is and what not) and the latter on taste and social position in which education and upbringing are important key components. Audiences are in that sense not neutral when it comes to their evaluation and considering the unusual way of curating (Baumann, 2007); they might feel a tension between what art ought to be and the justification of it by the artist's biography: do they consider it as an artistic celebration or a political triumph?

Therefore, the research question that I pose is: *how do visitors experience the place and role of Outsider Art exhibitions in contemporary museums and their predominant focus on the artist's biography?* Sub questions that derive from this revolve around what it means that legitimizing institutions present Outsider Art in order to gain insight in what they consider as the role of a museum (i.e. shaping or reflection on norms and values); what the effect would be if the art work would be presented

without knowledge of the biography to find out to what extent context matters and to gain insight (although implicitly) in what makes an art work an artwork; what is the social mission of art and if there is one, to what extent is emancipation a part of it? Outsider Art and its makers have long been excluded from the art world and by placing them both on a pedestal, their visibility becomes enlarged. Posing this question provides insight in what this implies about their inclusivity -both in the art world and society at large –, if it is done in the right way and more importantly, is it sufficient enough?

This research will contribute to the discussion on the presentation of Outsider Art in the legitimate, contemporary art world (Fine, 2003; Chapin, 2009; Deener, 2009; Zolberg, 2015) by adding findings to the existing body of literature that deals with both the social construction of art and the creation of artistic status and how audiences respond to that. When it comes to Outsider Art, these discussions are most often highly theoretical and, therefore, empirical data will be added so that gatekeepers (i.e. museum directors, curators) can gain knowledge about the extent to which contextual meaning is necessary for audiences to consider Outsider Art as art. Overall, this project will contribute to a society that is becoming more inclusive, yet as inclusivity and exclusivity are complex matters, the right questions need to be posed in order to decide how acceptance manifests itself and on which grounds; is it effective and truly inclusive?

This research is a qualitative study in which data is obtained from semi-structured in-depth interviews with museum visitors who attended the Nieuwe Meesters exhibition in the Outsider Art Museum in Amsterdam. The focus was on how visitors evaluate art in general, what their opinion is on Outsider Art and how they experienced the exhibition. This exhibition was specifically chosen as the museum decided to accompany the art works with large portraits of the makers, aiming on the one hand to establish a different way of looking at art in which the viewer is invited to learn how to 'read' the art by opening themselves up to the life stories of the artists and, on the other hand, to show that everyone is worth to be seen on the basis of their own identity instead of on the image that is constructed by the dominant culture (www.outsiderartmuseum.nl). In other words, the museum intends to provide a more nuanced link between who they are and how they express themselves. As this is rather unusual in terms of curation, combined with the fact that I found no other museum that does something similar, it appeared as a useful context for researching how visitors respond to the blending of art and politics.

The structure of this thesis proceeds as follow: after the introduction, a historical overview of Outsider Art is provided in order to understand where the label is coming from, followed up by arguments why and how gatekeepers (e.g. museum directors, curators, dealers) celebrate the genre despite the fact that the objects are the opposite of what legitimate art should encompass. This section will transition in how audiences evaluate art on the basis of the *convention-theory* of Becker (1982) and the *distinction-theory* of Bourdieu (1984) with the aim to find out how what influences their perception. This section will end with the formulation of the research question and the sub questions that stand in relation to the main question.

The end of the theoretical framework leads to the method section in which the design of the research and the operationalization of concepts will be discussed. A justification for all the choices that were made throughout the process (e.g. sample, type of analysis) is provided in order to inform the reader about how the empirical results came into being.

Following from the last section mentioned is the analysis of the collected data. Six themes are identified and divided into sub themes. The analysis starts with how the interviewees look at art and what extent biography matters in the evaluation of art in general. Following is the introduction of Outsider Art and the connotations that arise by hearing the word. The following themes deal with how the interviewees experienced the exhibition and this chapter will end with suggestions on how Outsider Art -and their makers- can become more included and what needs to change to make that happen.

The last chapter of this research is devoted to a conclusion, starting with a discussion between the theories and the obtained data. Considering that this research deals with a large and complex phenomenon, limitations are in order and will be mentioned in this section as well as suggestion for future research.

2.0. Theoretical background

The aim of this theoretical framework is to build up an argument about the institutionalization of Outsider Art and how this might be perceived by museum visitors. In order to do this properly, the first sub-section guides the reader through a historical overview of Outsider Art to understand where the label is based on as well as its intention. It will be become clear that the word in itself is somewhat arbitrary; on the one hand, the works (and, therefore, the makers) must satisfy certain standards to be

considered as Outsider, yet on the other hand, these requirements are also very flexible as they are based on the perception of the dominant culture and, therefore, related to "history and geographical location" (Rhodes, 2000, p. 7).

The second sub-section revolves around the how Outsider Art is legitimized in the Insider art world. As Outsider Art is not based on "ideological guidelines and stylistic choices" (Tansella, 2007, p. 133), gatekeepers have to deconstruct the aesthetic system by presenting the genre as legitimate on the basis of the artist's identity. In order to maintain their authority, they have to make sure that boundaries are still recognizable; it is only art because it is constructed as 'being out', meaning that other standards are used compared to Insider Art.

The final sub-section of this theoretical framework addresses how audiences evaluate art objects and specifically how they are influenced in this process: the *convention*-theory of Becker (1982) and the *distinction*-theory of Bourdieu (1984) serve as the foundation. Both theories rely on negotiation processes, although in different ways; Becker focuses on the influence of cultural institutions from which conventions derive and Bourdieu stresses the importance of the taste of the cultural elite that is assumed to be legitimate. These theories are relevant for this project as they both rely on the social construction of art and are, therefore, often used when questions arise that deal with what makes an object an art work (Tröndle, 2014; Daenekindt & Roose, 2017).

2.1. Historical development of Outsider Art

2.1.1. Art Brut: unsweetened by sugar

As the son of a French wine dealer, Jean Philippe Arthur Dubuffet (1901-86) grew up in an affluent family that enjoyed the perks of their social position (De Monthoux, 2005). Already at the age of seventeen, the young man appeared to be a fish out of the water by leaving the Parisian private art school *Académie Julian* after a few months; discontent with the prevailing rules, his rebellious spirit made him decide to study art by the supervision of his own intellect (Dapena-Tretter, 2017). As time went by, he became to be known as an art avant-garde artist of his time; eschewing the pretensions of culture that determine what can be considered as acceptable in relation to the beauty norm. One could most probably find him at the patio of an old French café where he

would explain that he declined several invitations for the opera and the ballet and, instead, went to the flea market to search for hidden treasures. A metaphor for his rejection "to the air of collective approval" (Rhodes, 2000, p. 23) by celebrating the uncompromised idiosyncratic characteristics of the works – a derivative of the personality of the *creator* instead of the *market*. He sought for "the commonplace of man settled into his presence, fully accessible" (Weiss, 1991, p. 22) and established in 1948 together with like-minded people such as André Breton[1] *La Compagnie de l'Art Brut* (The *Art Brut* Society): a dedication to the works of creatures that are mentally ill, those who live on the periphery of society or those who do not resonate with the standards of high culture because of their social position and the limitations resulting from such as 'proper' education (Rhodes, 2000). He derived his fascination for these people from the conviction that they were the most pure and raw; anti-bourgeois, unaffected by the regulations of civilization and its prevailing culture (Chapin, 2009); and their unconscious contrariness that art should not solely be made to be perceived by others (Thévoz, 1976). Although the lack of (academic) proof, it is argued that the term *Art Brut* was inspired by *Champagne Brut*, considering Dubuffet's upbringing around wine merchants (Rhodes, 2000). The latter owes the name from its unsullied character as opposed to other variants that are sweetened by (cane) sugar. In this sense, *Art Brut* signified the purified and the essence of the makers state of being.

The roots of Dubuffet explain the grounds on which his aversion is based and the personality originating from that. Later on, it will become clear that fascinations with deviant cultures and their expressions, still arise from a distaste to the current, cultural zeitgeist in which (individual) authenticity is favored above a common, mainstream identity.

2.1.2. Favoring idiosyncrasy

Dubuffet was not the first in setting the tone for favoring idiosyncrasy; this phenomenon already sprouted up at the start of the nineteenth century (Beveridge, 2001): The Romantic movement championed the artist's inner voice that took a stand against rationality and celebrated intuition from which a strong idiosyncrasy derived (Cardinal, 2009). Their works could particularly be found in asylums, where they

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[1] André Breton is considered as the prominent leader of Surrealism (Browder, 1967)

initially were used by psychiatrists to obtain a better understanding of their patients. By analyzing what the patients presented on their paper, the therapist gained a more nuanced view of their mental health condition; a drawing showing grief, anger, hope or fear could be indicative for feelings that the patient could not express, and, in such cases, the art work became an intermediary for the therapist to understand the maker, their patient, more profoundly (Polling, 2015). From an artistic point of view, the fascination for the creations of these people stemmed from the belief that madness was the highest achievable goal to discover deep truths and, therefore, "patient-art" (Beveridge, 2001, p. 595) gained in popularity. Approximately around the 2nd century B.C., Aristotle already asked himself: "Why is it that all men who are outstanding in philosophy, poetry, or the arts are melancholic?" (Radden, 2002, p.57), indicating a relation between creativity and madness that only harvested its significance as cultural discourse in the Romantic era (Beveridge, 2001).

The switch to approach "patient-art" (Beveridge, 2001, p. 595) not solely in medical terms, but also from aesthetic conditions, should be placed and explained in the context of that time. There was a growing dissonance with the conventions of established culture and artists rebelled against the jurisdiction of the ratio (Beveridge, 2001). The rejection of the dominant culture holds either true for *Art Brut,* although for slightly different reasons; the charm of the primitive came in the limelight as a reaction to a society that was overcomplicated (Rhodes, 2000). Liberty could be found in art made outside the canon such as Tribal Art, European Folk Art and children's art as, especially with the latter, the makers approach the world with fresh eyes. For Dubuffet, the importance did not lie in portraying reality in the most correct way but to absorb it and to express the spontaneous sensations that derive from it. According to him, the works deriving from the mentally ill embodied the same principle.

With the inauguration of the collective, the founders tried to raise awareness for the blindness in which legitimate art is created (Rhodes, 2000). According to them, the world that surrounds us – reality – is portrayed to preserve the myth that beauty does have boundaries; only the sublime can be considered as correct and, therefore, the ugly becomes excluded. Just as the Surrealists, they believed that the conscious mind controls reason by outside influences in which the produced perception is accepted as the truth but in fact, is nothing more than a hard-working filter that dictates how reality manifest itself and how it should be approached (Breton, 1936). Therefore, they favored the

unconscious that generates an own visual language by releasing the current time; it sets a yearning in motion for freedom and a quest for deeper truths that "has a great deal to do with delirium" (Rhodes, 2000, p. 43). It was a call for removing the veil in order to appreciate the naked, the ugly – absolute mental liberation.

2.1.3. Defining Outsider art

It was not until 1972 that the English-speaking world came to be familiar with the *Art Brut* phenomenon, although by a different name. Roger Cardinal (1940 -) introduced the term Outsider Art and its meaning has caused confusion up to this day (Tansella, 2007; Chapin, 2009). Originally, Cardinal's intention was to broaden the *Art Brut* definition as he was of the opinion that idiosyncrasy stems not solely from creators with mental dysfunctions or who live on the margins of society, yet also people who do not take traditional canonical art conventions into account (Cardinal, 2009). He argues that making art, in the broadest sense of the word, is not only bound to legitimizing institutions that prescribe how an object ought to look like, but rather an activity that everyone in some way can resonate with. What these makers do have in common, he mentions, is that their work expresses "a sense of strangeness" (Cardinal, 2009, p. 1459) that goes beyond simply drawing lines or shapes that are meaningless and foolish.

Does that mean that everyone who does not draw or paint according to the art conventions can be considered as an Outsider? This question is problematic as it indicates an opposition between outside and inside; "what is Outsider Art outside of?" (Chapin, 2009, p. 148) and can the boundary between recognized? Dubuffet experienced this ambiguity also during the *Art Brut* establishment and concluded that there are varying degrees in how a creator is influenced by culture and can, therefore, be less 'raw' then he intended the makers of *Art Brut* to be. He invented *Neuve Invention* to categorize the works that are made by people who slightly differ from the ones who can be considered as *Art Brut* creators (Chapin, 2009). The difficultly of pinpointing *what is* and *what is not* lies thus in the fact that aesthetic criteria are missing which makes it in turn a matter of the *identity* of the creator, just as it is with Outsider Art (Tansella, 2007).

Fine (2003) proposes for that reason to change Outsider Art into Identity Art to emphasize the social position of the maker. In fact, by doing so he does not solely specify the term Outsider Art but also Self-Taught Art, as he considers the latter to be Identity

Art. He puts forth the idea that Self-Taught artists are labeled that way since they did not have had an art education, yet in practice it refers to the social position of the makers and how they are *perceived* by the legitimate art world as the result of their social position. Various indicators such as race, gender, mental condition or imprisonment can be responsible for that and because for some reason these do not conform to the standards of the art world, they are placed *outside* the legitimate art community; 'the outsider' equals the "misfits and the eccentrics" (Beveridge 2001, p. 598). In other words, Identity Art has nothing to do with the self-image of the maker but rather in what way the social position is interpreted and how this affects their image within the art community. The following statement of a gallery owner illustrates this phenomenon:

''A woman walked up to me at a show and said rather haughtily, my daughter and I are Outsider Artists, but because we're white and middle-class, nobody appreciates us, and I said you can't be an Outsider Artist and stand there and tell me you are'' (Fine, 2003, p. 163).

Various other names have been suggested to specify Outsider Art in more concrete definitions and at the same time, these exact same names are disputed since thin lines can be recognized that distinguish the labels from another. It is argued that Outsider Art and Folk Art can be used interchangeably considering that the makers of both art styles are not constrained or influenced by the rules of the art game (Tansella, 2007; Polling, 2015). However, it is mentioned that Folk Art deals with the norms and values of a specific group (Becker, 1982) whereas Outsider Art is more focused on what takes place on an individual level (Muri, 1991). This discussion can take endless forms in which new categories of similarities and differences can arise and by doing so, the difficultly that accompanies Outsider Art gets challenged: it is not solely the lack of aesthetic criteria that makes it hard to define the genre, yet also the absence of a dominant ideology that stems from tradition or history (Tansella, 2007). Because of that, the works are not evaluated on itself, yet always in relation to the maker as they do have a history -their own life - and how this forms the basis of the symbolic boundary between dominant culture and sub culture, led by how the former perceives the latter mentioned (Hebdige, 1995). Why something or someone is evaluated as eccentric or odd has to do with the fact that they do not conform to the general standard that is

accepted as 'normal'. Their idiosyncrasy is placed within the dominant framework consisting of sets of beliefs (whether true or fictitious) that function as the foundation to judge others. Their distinctiveness (in the broadest sense) is placed outside its original context and evaluated according to standards that deviate from their own native 'language' (Hebdige, 1995).

It could be argued that with the introduction of the label Outsider Art, Cardinal laid the foundation for the creation of an umbrella term that covers a diversity of art genres. What it means to be an outsider is interpreted in different ways, however, two visions are dominating and relate to the social identity of the maker and the absence of an educational art background (Muri, 1991; Beveridge 2001; Fine, 2003; Polling, 2015). The latter implies that everyone in fact can be a self-taught artist, yet this does not mean that we can all be considered as outsiders. Therefore, becoming an outsider depends on the perception of the dominant, Insider art culture; because the work is not made according to the mainstream aesthetic concerns or because the creator deviates from the societal standard, whether this is caused by the composition of chromosomes or mental health issues. Moreover, the outcome of the consideration is still arbitrary as it highly depends on "history and geographical location" (Rhodes, 2000, p. 7). In that sense, speaking of Outsider Art and its makers can arouse various connotations, however, its denotation comes down to their difference in relation to the dominant culture whereby the reasons can be arbitrary and always in flux.

2.2. Outsider Art in an Insider world

2.2.1. Symbolic boundaries

As already mentioned, the association between being an outsider, insanity and creativity did not only arise at the time that Dubuffet emphasized its relevance, on the contrary, "art of the insane" (Muri, 1991, p. 37) was already of interest during the Romantic movement that celebrated the centralization of the makers' inner voice (Beveridge, 2001). This voice did not let itself be ruled by conventional art techniques or reason but, instead, became its own inspiration for expressing "a strong sense of individuality" (Cardinal, 2009, p.1459) as a consequence of the artist's madness.

It was the form, and thus not the function (i.e. as it was the case with patient art to gain a better understanding of the maker; their art became a tool for clarification and

profound insight), of Outsider Art that made art professionals in the field decide to distribute the works and why it has been growing in popularity in recent years (Cardinal, 2009; Zolberg, 2015). As of 2013, the Venice Biennale has been devoting a platform to Outsider Artists (www.rawvision.com), auction house Christies developed an isolated sell-off for the works (www.christies.com), and across the world, Outsider Art exhibitions are sprouting up including Tate Modern (London, UK), The National Gallery of Art (Washington, US) and on top of that, The Netherlands has since 2016 its own Outsider Art Museum based in Amsterdam. What is interesting, though, is that the circulation, distribution and celebration of legitimate art normally revolves around "ideological guidelines and stylistic choices" (Tansella, 2007, p. 133), also known as Insider Art or legitimate art, while, as we have seen, Outsider Art derives from the idiosyncrasy of the maker and their social marginality; resulting in the symbolic boundary between art for art's sake and the isolation and centralization of the artist' identity (Cardinal, 2009; Chapin, 2009; Zolberg, 2015).

The principle of art for art's sake detonates the intrinsic value of an artwork and is determined to stand above all; no other purposes than the creation of outstanding and beautiful art should be the ultimate goal of the creator (Faulkner et al., 2008). Because of that, the work needs to be evaluated as an isolated entity in which other connections such as its connotation or the reason(s) for the artist to make it are not taken into account or deemed as relevant. Although Poe (1849) makes his statement regarding poems, he succeeds very well in defining what the core of art for art's sake is about:

"We have taken it into our heads that to write a poem simply for the poem's sake, and to acknowledge such to have been our design, would be to confess ourselves radically wanting in the true poetic dignity and force:- but the simple fact is that would we but permit ourselves to look into our own souls we should immediately there discover that under the sun there neither exists nor can exist any work more thoroughly dignified, more supremely noble, than this very poem, this poem per se, this poem which is a poem and nothing more, this poem written solely for the poem's sake" (Poe, 1849, p. 270).

This principle became the essence of what legitimate art characterizes (Faulkner et al., 2008) and, therefore, it is fascinating that Outsider Art is becoming more and more

popular in the legitimate art world considering "that it is the last genre one would associate with an institution that has come to represent what is now a global phenomenon of aesthetic legitimacy" (Zolberg, 2015, p. 502); Outsider Art cannot be disconnected from the maker and because of that, the work loses its possibility to be classified as autonomous. Where is this interest than coming from?

2.2.2. Process of legitimization

Just as it is arbitrary to determine whether someone can be considered as an outsider, the same negotiation process is applied for the value of an object; is it art or is it just ..an object? (Becker, 1978). Since there is no such thing as an intrinsic value of an object, the distinction between these two forms is negotiated by art professionals in a particular art world (DiMaggio, 1982); a form or genre that "is rendered valid and accepted through consensus at a collective level" (Baumann, 2007, p. 48) achieves its status as legitimate art. This unanimity is achieved through the use of arguments that go into detail of how the unconventional is in fact acceptable by paying attention to "norms, values, beliefs and procedures that are treated as matters of objective facts" (Zelditch, 2003, p. 219). These judgments, arising from dominant ideologies, are based on aesthetics (Alexander, 2011). For an object to be legitimized as aesthetic, it should conform to the expectations of "beauty" (Andrews, 2001, p.20); all the elements (e.g. visual, tactile) need to be compatible (Ingarden, 1961); and each of them should contribute to the worth of the object (Zimmerman, 1966) – validating it "interesting" (Lind, 1980, p. 132) by "evoking a unique response to such combinations" (Weitz, 1956, p. 28).

However, since Outsider Art is not concerned with the traditional expectations of aesthetics according to the ideology of the Insider Art world, it is argued that with the rising popularity of the genre an aesthetic shift is occurring (Bowler, 1997). Gatekeepers champion the unusual character of the objects that is caused by the authentic identity of the creator, composing authentic art. Their biography covers the object with "an absence of cognitive understanding, […] sincere, innocent, original, genuine, and unaffected, distinct from strategic and pragmatic self-presentation" (Fine, 2003, p.155). It is, therefore, unsurprising that associations have been made with a drawing of a child (Zolberg, 2015); unpretentious and directly related to their mental stage in live and how

they perceive the world surrounding them: "the actor [..] acts in accordance with their true character" (Frake, 2013, p. 3).

This phenomenon of the blossoming of authenticity should be explained in the context of the time that we live in as a society. Zolberg (2015) puts forth the idea that postmodernism has opened the eyes of many; questions are raised by policymakers, social influencers, organizations and institutions that deal with inclusivity versus exclusivity. This made its mark in art worlds too, as one of its main functions is to reflect the norms and values of a society (Alexander, 2011). This impact implies that question marks have been placed around the veto on white, male artists who represent a certain culture and build upon foregoing art genres to strengthen the history and tradition of art. On which grounds have people not being taken serious for what they are making, for where they stand for and, for who they are? What can *we,* privileged people who were not aware of certain power structures, be it ignored or taken for granted, learn from the past in order to let them and their expressions stand more in the limelight? What *is* art, and should it always be evaluated according to the same criteria and standards? Asking these kinds of questions that have its influence on both a theoretical and practical level indicates a society that is much more open-minded than 70 years ago and explains why a phenomenon as authenticity would have been less appreciated – or not at all.

Grazian (2003) elaborates on the point made by Zolberg by mentioning that specifically authenticity has become a desire to pursue as a reaction to the industrial society in which everything revolves around capitalism. Since the 19th century, the realization that we can make and own all the products that are considered as beneficial and valuable, has become stronger, more visible and within easy reach (whether online of offline), resulting in commodities that lost (the possibility of) a distinctive character in favor of an identity that resonates with a much broader audience. Authenticity, Grazian explains, breaks with the aura of filters that provide the product with layers of empty information while at the same time, creates an air of a feeling of integrity; the absence of complication, a removal of the garlands and frills that cover the object with anonymity.

In relation to Outsider Art, the objects do not derive their aesthetic quality on behalf of their stylistic beauty, but by their ability to put a relationship in motion between the maker and the object; an experience that is caused by biography of the former resulting in the latter (Cardinal, 2009; Chapin, 2009; Polling, 2015). This given

puts immediately a battery of questions in motion that revolve around the idea of what makes an art work an art work as the biography cannot be detached from the objects. This implies (although implicitly) that the political is more important than the artistic, however, does that also mean that Outsider Art is less appreciated when the objects are presented without context?

2.2.3. Authority and the artist's biography

It does not mean that the object itself is insignificant, yet without context they remain meaningless objects (Fine, 2003). This holds true for both Insider Art and Outsider Art; however, the difference is that the identity of the artist is used to justify what is made rather than to provide information as it is the case with Insider Art (Fine, 2003). Normally, when people are about to visit an exhibition they stumble upon an explanation of the what is being shown at the beginning of the exhibition. Visitors are informed about the vision and/or mission of the presented genre, movement, style or particular artist and for what reason it is linked to current debates, phenomena or tendencies in society. Throughout the exhibition, some additional information is provided near the objects to guide the viewer or to specify elements or aspects that stand out. It is rather unusual that the art works are all accompanied with a text or a photo of the creator to justify why the objects are deemed as art. Cultural institutions also do not have to do that, as they have the power to impose a certain truth (i.e. what is presented *is* legitimized as art; the serve as a filtering system in which the wheat is separated from the chaff) on its visitors that they, in turn, take for granted; a phenomenon that Wolpe (1985) refers to as "cultural authority" (p. 409), a concept founded by Paul Starr in 1982. It implies power of agencies that have gained trust by their audience for decades by the use of certain strategies to maintain this belief. For instance, museums gained legitimacy in what art ought to be by hiring professionals (e.g. curators) that convey this specialized knowledge and by doing so, their authority is assured. Tactics as these, strengthen the confidence of the public opinion by "constructing particular definitions of reality and judgments of meaning and value [that] will prevail as true" (Wolpe, 1985, p. 409). This does not mean, however, that their authority cannot be questioned. When their control is at risk, plans of action are developed to safeguard their credibility, as an institution "cannot appear self-contradictory or baffled as it strives to interpret and define facts and values within its

cultural jurisdiction" (Wolpe, 1985, p. 410). Explicitly presenting the object as Outsider Art helps dealers, galleries and museums in "the construction of artistic status" (Deener, 2009, p. 171) because what the makers create diverge extremely of what is deemed as legitimate art (Cardinal, 2009). Therefore, referring to them as Outsiders (whether this is because they are lunatics, mentally or physically impaired or criminals) emphasizes that the art works should not be evaluated according to the traditional standards that are bound to Insider Art (Bowler, 1997) and by doing so, the 'valid' interpretation of legitimacy is circumvented through assigning "autonomous artistic standards" (Deener, 2009, p. 171).

The biography of the artists replaces the procedure that legitimate art works go through (Bowler, 1997) and without the disclosure of the private world of the artist;, the authenticity of their works cannot be justified (Chapin, 2009). Of course, many other artists outside the Outsider domain can also have very fascinating or challenging biographies, however, it is not necessary to mention it as other implications, nuances or significances cover the object with meaning whereas with Outsider Art it is the other way around (Fine, 2003). The straightforwardness and agony revolving around Outsider Art suggests that this label differs from legitimate art categories whereby the latter mentioned holds upon an unanimous belief that the art itself is of first concert, without underestimating the value of having insight in the artist's background (Fine, 2003). This construction becomes clear in a conversation between a contemporary art dealer and an interested party regarding the creator of a work: "'Is he educated? 'No.' 'Oh, good.' 'Is he black?'" (Fine, 2003, p. 163). It creates a world in which there is an "Us and a Them – the normal versus the *disabled* [emphasis added]" (Klar-Wolfond, 2006, p. 4) – the last word carefully chosen as disability and impairments are most of the time used interchangeably, yet there is a fundamental difference: impairments refer to the actual physical and mental problems/needs of a person whereas disability indicates how these 'deviations' are perceived by others (Davis,1995). Crucial to mention as Outsider Art revolves around perception and the construction of discourses created by society.

By presenting the label as different, it remains different and by doing so, they -the institutions- want to make sure that the visitor sees this difference (De Cleene & Van Goidshoven, 2013); it is only art because it is constructed as 'being out', meaning that other standards are used compared to Insider Art. The literature on the reception of Outsider Art is extensive and research that is done by Maclagan (2009) -and confirmed

by others (Bowler, 1997; Parr, 2006; Wojcik, 2008) – shows that audiences celebrate the works because of their "unusual quality [...] and out of sympathy for the suffering artists" (as cited by Polling, 2015, p. 8). Other studies suggest that the valuation of the genre is based on the idea that art can still be transcendent; inviting the viewer to a world that is rooted in imagination, fantasy or even the mystical (Klar-Wolfond, 2005; Polling, 2015). However, audiences appear not to be Tabula Rasa's[2] (Baumann, 2007) and whether they consider the object as art is influenced by negotiation processes deriving from social class and taste (Bourdieu, 1984) and conventions: general and cultural axioms that are shared by actors in the art world and the audiences as well (Becker, 1982).

2.3. Negotiation processes: perception on art

2.3.1. Conventions: the making of meaning

An art world does not arise on its own; it is made and maintained by different actors within a particular genre that agreed upon the consistent application of rules to create awareness for its users but also boundaries for differentiations between genres (Becker, 1982). This idea forms the basis for Becker's *art-worlds theory* in which he takes a closer look at how these worlds function.

According to Becker (1982), how audiences interpreted cultural objects derives from a system of general agreement; what can be considered as art depends on the context in which the object is placed. For a form to be considered as high art, it should be, among other things, presented in a legitimizing institution such as a museum or a theatre and embodied with a recognizable and accepted stylistic framework. This creates meaning and organizes the understanding of the constitution of an art world, resulting in certain unanimity of what can be considered as art and what not. When an artwork is placed outside this institutionalized context, for instance in a hospital, the meaning changes and the object can be considered as just a tool for decoration instead of legitimate art. This battery of expectations function as almost fixed codes, yet that does not mean that these conventions, as Becker calls them, cannot be negotiated.

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[2] Also known as "Blank Slate [..] before it receives impressions from experiences" (Kivunja, 2014, p. 84).

Especially among people that are more aware of these rules, what can be considered as art is open to change, although in a very minimal, albeit constant sense.

2.3.2. Taste: an internalized practice

What Becker does is trying to understand how art worlds function on a practical level and does, for that reason, not take into account that some people might have other intentions to strengthen their own position to build up status. In that sense, he differs from Bourdieu (1984) as he does stresses the importance of a hidden, social agenda when it comes to the negotiation process of what art is and what not. Bourdieu (1984) puts forth the idea that the field (the landscape in which important actors regulate and obtain power based on their position on the symbolic, 'vertical' ladder) is a symbolic economy in which status is used to earn prestige. Prestige is valuable in art worlds and in order to obtain this status, clear interests play a role. The outcome of that is that people with a high position in the field try to impose their definition of what should be legitimized as 'real' art to others as this sustains their position. However, to avoid that others become aware of this conspicuous intention, they present it by a vision that proposes art to revolve around talent. By doing so, they make sure that it is hidden from sight that it is in fact about the underlying social process already mentioned.

Art is surely a tool that dominant classes use to show their good taste and status by how they use the objects and the fact thát they use it; "taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier" (p. 6). However, this is done unconsciously – nor in the art, nor in society are these people, according to Bourdieu, up to show their taste by undermining the of others in order to emphasize their status – they *merely have* a taste that is valid by the consensus that is reached among other people in the field. He argues that this comes forth from upbringing: someone who is raised in a high social class comes in contact with art and internalizes the value of it; it becomes natural to look at art in a certain way. Someone who does not have this position will touch upon art during their education where they hear that there is a legitimate taste -that stands out from the rest and is accepted as 'the truth'-, resulting in the idea that their own taste is not worth much when it has to meet those standards. That is why he also states that it is impossible to say that some have an eye for differentiating mere objects from art. According to Bourdieu, "the eye is always a product of history" (p. 3).

In relation to this project, this could imply that audiences on the one hand feel that justification by the artist's biography is not specifically necessary as cultural institutions have legitimizing authority. However, as the aesthetic system is deconstructed, they might feel that they have to renegotiate the conventions. Those who are more familiar with these might do this more easily as (profound) knowledge of art and what it can encompass broadens perspectives. For that reason, the predominant focus on the artist's biography does not hinder them in valuing object for their artistry. On the other hand, those who are raised in high social classes might value Outsider Art and the predominant focus on the artist's biography, however, as their taste is closely connected to internalized, normative codes that favor form over function, they might have trouble with the presentation of the objects (form) as these cannot be disconnected from the identity of the maker (function, as in: revealing their internal 'message'). This means that the objects are evaluated as isolated entities and because of that, the aesthetics of the works might get lost. This does not mean that they cannot appreciate them, yet it does not conform to their expectations -taste- of what art ought to be and how it needs to be presented.

2.4. Research question, sub questions and expectations

2.4.1. Composing a research question

Outsider Art is a relatively new phenomenon in the mainstream art world, yet highly praised at the distribution side for its idiosyncrasy; the works derive their unusual character directly from the personality of the creator. It stands out from any other legitimate genre, being referred to as Insider Art, as it lacks "a goldmine of traditions" (Tansella, 2007, p. 134) such as a predetermined vision and a stylistic framework. Because of that, gatekeepers have to deconstruct the aesthetic system by justifying the exhibiting of Outsider Art on the basis of the artist's biography (Fine, 2003). The reason for doing this is because they want to make sure that audiences still distinguish between Outsider Art and Insider Art (De Cleene & Van Goidshoven, 2013): the former is only art because it is constructed as 'being out', meaning that other standards are used compared to Insider Art. Audiences are in that sense not neutral (Baumann, 2007) and affected by the authority that cultural institutions and the cultural elite enjoy when it comes to their legitimizing power to turn objects in to art (Becker,

1982; Bourdieu, 1984). Considering the rather unusual curation, however, audiences might feel a tension between what art ought to be and the justification of it by the artist's biography. On the one hand, the institutionalization of Outsider Art can suggest boundary weakening in terms of high versus low art (Deener, 2009) caused by the entrance of postmodernism in which 'grand narratives' are being questioned. On the other hand, however, the artist might lose his own agency as their marginal status is placed into the limelight in which the art work is degraded to the second place. Biography and context run as a thread to exhibitions in order to inform and to explain to the onlooker what inspired, fascinated or even challenged the movement, genre or artist in their creation. However, how much biography is needed to consider objects as art and what does this imply for the emancipation of the artists who were previously excluded from participation in the mainstream art worlds and society at large?

2.4.2. The research question

When it comes to Outsider Art, there are two sides of the coin: what makes an artist an Outsider is not based on the perception that they have of themselves, but rather how others interpret their marginal status on the basis of their own dominant position. This is reflected in the representation of their biography and made explicit by referring to them as Outsiders in order to make sense of their created art works – and to sustain the boundary between "Us versus Them" (Klar-Wolfond, 2005, p. 4).

In terms of curation this is rather unusual. However, the fact that it is presented in legitimizing institutions suggest a certain acceptance and maybe even boundary weakening in terms of what art is and should be. Despite the fact that gatekeepers have a huge share in constructing an art world, "audiences are the key to understand art, because the meanings created from art and they ways it is used depends on its *consumers* [emphasis added]" (Alexander, 2011, p.181). This means that gatekeepers can present Outsider art as legitimate by deconstructing the aesthetic system, however, if the works are also interpreted in that way depends on what audiences influences in their perception. To what extent do they evaluate the presentation of the art works in combination with the biography of the artists as legitimate and are they rightfully represented in museums? This brings me to the following research question:

How do visitors experience the place and role of Outsider Art exhibitions in contemporary museums and their predominant focus on the artist's biography?

2.4.3. Sub questions

The core of this research question is to what extent biography matters for museum visitors to consider an object as art and how the presentation of the artist's (marginal) identity is interpreted when it is placed in the limelight.

One of the questions following from this is what it means that a cultural, legitimizing institution presents Outsider Art? This question is posed to find out what museum visitors think of this given; do they perceive it as a change in the aesthetic system? Do they perceive this as boundary-weakening? Moreover, it provides insight in what they consider as the role of a museum (i.e. shaping or reflecting on norms and values).

Another question deals with the idea if museum visitors think that the art work can be presented own its own, without the presentation of the artist's biography? Posing this question helps to find an answer to what extent context matters and this also opens the question towards the foundation of what makes an art work an art work.

The third and last sub question revolves around the social mission of art and if there is one, to what extent is emancipation a part of it? Outsider Art and its makers have long been excluded from the art world and by placing them both on a pedestal, their visibility becomes enlarged. What does this imply about inclusivity – both in the art world and society at large – is it done in the right way and more importantly, is it sufficient enough?

2.4.4. Expectations

With the introduction of the label Outsider Art, Cardinal laid the foundation of an umbrella term as it encompasses a broad spectrum of various art genres ranging from "grassroots art and naïve art" (Chapin, 2009, p.149) to "visionary art" (Tansella, 2007, p. 133). Moreover, who is considered as an Outsider, highly depends on "history and geographical location" (Rhodes, 2000, p. 7); Van Gogh was during the time he lived perceived as one because of his delusional state of mind, yet in the current time he is a celebrated, Insider artist. The label is flexible and therefore arbitrary and for that reason, I foresee that museum visitors will have trouble with defining which groups (e.g.

refugees, delinquents) can be categorized as Outsiders. That being said, with the presentation of the biography of the maker context is to a certain extent given. Because of that, I expect that they will have some idea of which groups it is about.

In line with this, I foresee that the predominant focus on the artist's biography is appreciated as it informs the viewers about the content of the art works. The presence and presentation of Outsider Art is relatively 'new' in museums because a) the works that fall under this label were long neglected and ignored and b) the identities of the artists are usually not to this extent connected to the works being made (Fine, 2003). Because of the latter, I expect that the museum visitors will evaluate the objects as more than just casual doodling but rather as the expression of an internal world. That being said, I do not expect that this would also be the case when the art works were presented without context about the maker; the quality of the works is inextricably bound to them and without this knowledge, the objects become meaningless (Fine, 2003).

However, there needs to be a nuance in the last statement as the context (i.e. location, venue) in which the objects are placed, is of influence (Becker, 1982). The fact that Outsider Art is presented in a museum provides the label already with status – with or without context about the maker. I foresee that the museum visitors are aware of the authority museums have when it comes to legitimizing objects as art and because of that, the works will be evaluated differently compared to a location that does not have the authority to do this (e.g. Outsider art works that are displayed in a library or at the dentist).

In line with this argument regarding authority, I expect that the museum visitors notice that Outsider Art is different than other genres (De Cleene & Van Goidshoven, 2013) because of the stylistic characteristics and the way it is presented. Especially because of the latter, I foresee that they will be critical towards the conditions that objects need to meet in order to be classified as art, depending on how they evaluate them (i.e. based on the *conventions-theory* of Becker or the *distinction-theory* of Bourdieu). Because the predominant focus on the artist's biography and their previous excluded status, I foresee that their focus will not solely lie on the artistic value, but also on the transition from exclusion to inclusion, emancipation.

2.4.5. The ultimate goal

There is ample research about the reasons why gatekeepers celebrate Outsider Art and studies on how audiences perceive the makers and the works of the long-excluded label is becoming greater. However, these studies mainly confirm what others have said (Polling, 2015) and because of that, there is still a lack of research on how the reception side specifically deals with the combination of the artist's biography and the created objects, especially in terms of empirical results. Therefore, with this project I will add findings to the discussion to what extent context matters to consider Outsider objects as art.

It is my hope and belief that the conversation about the transition of exclusivity to inclusivity in both the legitimate art world and society at large continues. The emancipation of the Outsider artists needs constantly to be addressed in order to decide if the development is heading towards the right direction. The empirical findings will add insights to this goal and it is my aim to inspire gatekeepers in this difficult and complex process of providing Outsider Art with an appropriate platform in the legitimate art world (and society at large) that still evaluates and categorizes on the basis of their own dominant framework.

3.0. Methods and data

The following chapter revolves around the justification of the empirical data that is obtained. The reader finds out what kind of method is used to obtain the data, how this was analyzed and the operationalization of the important concepts in the research project.

3.1. Choice of method

With the chosen research question, the aim was to study the evaluation process of museum visitors towards Outsider Art and how the concept behind the label (i.e. the relation between the identity of the artist and the object that floats as a natural extension of it) is presented. As the label and its curation is relatively new in the legitimate, contemporary art world and its institutions, audiences are challenged to reflect on their own perception of what art ought to be, where this is coming from and if there is room to suggest other ways of thinking, feeling and expressing. Qualitative semi-structured in-depth interviews are suitable to research this as the focus will be placed on "how the interviewees frame and understands issues and events" (Bryman, 2012, p.

471) regarding the addressed issue. Considering that the research deals with a complex social matter, the interviewee should have the room to elaborate on thoughts, ideas or examples (or, to make associations between them) that are of-topic (Britten, 1995). The "flexibility" (Bryman, 2012, p. 471) of semi-structured in-depth interviews allows the researcher and the interviewee to diverge from the predetermined questions (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Bryman, 2012), with the aim to obtain "rich and detailed answers" (Bryman, 2012, p. 470). Moreover, the research question already identifies a clear focus towards the institutionalization of Outsider Art, meaning that "more specific issues can be addressed" (Bryman, 2012, p. 472).

The data obtained through the semi-structured in-depth interviews is analyzed by using Thematic Analysis (TA) and Grounded Theory Method (GTM). There is much (academic) debate of what GTM encompasses and when and how it should be used, however, there is a tendency to approach this type of methodology as inductive whereby the researcher plant oneself as a Tabula Rasa, diving in the topic of examination without prior knowledge (Martin & Turner, 1986). Although this would imply that GTM is not suitable for my research project as I already had a research question and knowledge about my topic before the data collection and analysis (Suddaby 2006), I question if it is even possible to start a project as a blank sheet. For that reason, I approach GTM as a methodology that is fluid, meaning that own ideas and theories can derive from the data while simultaneously keeping existing theory in mind (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). This flexibility allowed me to look for "causes, context, contingencies, consequences, covariances and conditions" (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007, p. 1374) in the data in order to make connections between these different components and interpret them by recognizing and identifying reoccurring "patterns and relationships" (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007, p. 1374). This was particularly useful as the research question indicates the aim to familiarize with the experiences of museum visitors in order to compare them among each other (Strauss & Corbin, 1994); an important aspect of GTM.

The application of Grounded Theory Method, however, was the second step in the process of analyzing the data. In order to identify relationships within patterns, the latter mentioned should first be recognized and considered for its significance (Floersch et others., 2010). This was done by Thematic Analysis as this type of analysis is convenient when the aim is to build a mind map of codes from which networks derive that are for some reason related to each other (Aronson, 1995).

3.2. Sampling and the Nieuwe Meesters exhibition

In the first weekend of March 2018, visitors of the Nieuwe Meesters exhibition in the Outsider Art Museum were asked to participate in the research project. In 2017, I did a research project in the eponymous cultural institution and, therefore, I knew to a certain extent how many people visit the museum in the weekends (i.e. around three hundred) and how this group is divided in terms of gender and age (i.e. more diverse than during working days). For that reason, it was decided to find participants during the weekends to increase the chances of having a variety in the sample and not solely retired people or students. Initially it was decided to ask every visitor to participate in the research. In order to speak most of the visitors, the ideal situation was imagined as providing a very short description of the research while simultaneously asking them to write some information about themselves down on an already prepared list with predetermined categories (i.e. their name, age, residents, with whom they visited the exhibition and lastly, their email address and phone number). The first three were chosen to select participants out of different age categories and with different nationalities in order to find out if there is a contrast among the opinions and evaluations. The fourth category was chosen as it had been argued that with whom one visits an exhibition might strongly impact the evaluation and opinion about the subject being presented (McManus, 1993). The last two were chosen to get in contact with the participants after their visit.

However, this was clearly an ideal situation (to use Becker's typology in a different context) as it was not a convenient strategy to aim for speaking every visitor. Some walked out very quickly, some were not approachable due to time constraints or children that wanted to leave, and some refused after asking them to if they might be interested to participate. For these reasons, I changed my strategy by focusing on the conversations that visitors had while they walked through the exhibition. People were selected by how they talked about the content being presented and their knowledge about Outsider Art; a technique that is often used to learn more about the experiences of museum visitors (Leinhardt et others., 2003). I did this by following them for a short while during their tour and immediately approached them after it was decided that their participation would be useful, based on both positive and negative experiences. As the exhibition was diverse in terms of curation (i.e. next to the works and the portraits, the

visitors could also watch a movie about the photographer making the portraits and see an Outsider artist working in a small, created studio) visitors could be approached at various spots, meaning that they were not all grouped together. This allowed me to have a conversation that felt spontaneous and simultaneously decreasing the possibility of having (loud) voices nearby.

The specific weekend, 299 people visited the exhibition and the second strategy was applied to thirty visitors in total. With all of them, I spoke about the project and what will be discussed during the interview while consciously avoiding mentioning the specific aim of the research as their answers can become affected. Eighteen of them agreed to participate. Concretely, eleven semi-structured interviews were conducted with visitors of the exhibition Nieuwe Meesters [trans: New Masters] in the Outsider Art Museum in Amsterdam as a saturation point was reached.

According to Bourdieu (1984), people that visit institutions such as museums share the same (or very similar) characteristics due to, among other things, their upbringing; accumulating in a similar degree of cultural capital. This makes museum visitors as the unit of analysis a homogenous group (DiMaggio, 1996), despite the fact that their preferences in art can be very flexible and contrasting (Becker, 1984; Hanquinet et al., 2014). Because audiences are categorized as homogenous and the fact that the sharing of "similar characteristics" (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007, p.112) is a prerequisite, homogenous sampling was applied which is part of purposive sampling and, therefore, a non-random sampling technique (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007).

The interviewees have an age ranging from 18 years to 70 years, every category (e.g. 30-39, 40-49) is represented. The majority lives in The Netherlands (72,72%) and three of the interviewees live in Belfast (UK), New York (US) and Paris (FR). The majority has a Dutch nationality (54,54%). The interviews that were conducted with the Dutch participants were conducted in Dutch as they preferred to do it in Dutch. The interviews with the foreign participants were translated to English. The quotes of the Dutch participants will for that reason be translated to English. The majority of the sample (63,63%) was already familiar with Outsider Art before their visit to the Outsider Art Museum while the others not even aware of its existence. An overview of the participants can be found in appendix A.

The total duration of the interview was 12 hours, 33 minutes and 40 seconds (12:33:40). The shortest interview lasted for 36 minutes and 57 seconds (36:37) and the longest interview lasted for 1 hour, 28 minutes and 25 seconds (1:28:25).

Context of how the exhibition was curated is important as a significant part of the research focused on this. At the entrance, visitors were giving an a4 on which a letter was written. In this letter, it becomes clear that photographer Sander Toelstra (who won the prestigious *Zilveren Camera* Award; a price for the best journalism in photography) made portraits of the makers of the works. Throughout the entire exhibition, each work is accompanied with a portrait of the maker. The portraits are twice the size of the art works and context about the works or the photographs is not provided.

At the back of the exhibition, a small, wooden house is created in which an Outsider artist works several times each month. Visitors cannot enter the house yet do have the possibility to look what is inside when the artist is not present (i.e. by looking through the window). The house is filled with drawings.

At the front of the exhibition, visitors can watch a movie in which it is captured how Toelstra makes the portraits of the artists. The viewers see them sitting on a chair while Toelstra is standing in front of them. This video last around four minutes.

The portraits and the works, the studio of the artists and the video are the central elements of the exhibition. The visitors are expected to make sense of the content by themselves, as the only context that is provided is the a4 of the photographer and a small text – again by the photographer – at the entrance of the exhibition. A floorplan of the exhibition can be found in appendix B.

3.3. Operationalization

Compared to quantitative analysis, qualitative research is more flexible in nature, meaning that questions formulated in the interview guide can change throughout the process when this seemed appropriate for answering the research question. This happened after a few interviews were conducted and the final version of the interview guide can be found in appendix C. It should be said, however, that this version was a template as I conducted semi-structured interviews which allowed me and the interviewee to diverge from the topic in question (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Bryman, 2012).

The interviewees were told that by agreeing to participate in the research project, three topics will be discussed. First, their perception on art in general. Secondly, their opinion on Outsider Art and, lastly, their experience with the Nieuwe Meesters exhibition in the Outsider Art Museum. This was also how the interview guide was structured and was effective in the sense that the aim of the research question could be circumvented (i.e. participants could be too much directed, which can make their answers less spontaneous). The ultimate goal of the interviews was to find out what makes an object art and how and to what extent this evaluation process is influenced by external factors such as place, biography and context.

The first part of the interview guide included some warming up questions in which the interviewee was asked to say something about themselves (i.e. age, nationality, occupation, education) and how they became familiar with art as a child. These questions were used in relation to the second part of the interview in which the *convention-theory* of Becker (1982) and the *distinction-theory* of Bourdieu (1984) are incorporated. Questions such as: 'is there a difference between art and craft' and 'where art can be found' were asked in order to obtain a better understanding of their perception of art and where this is coming from - with the possibility to relate back to the warming up questions. According to the theory of Becker, in order to make sense of objects conventions are applied by audiences. This would imply that the fact that Outsider Art is being presented in a legitimizing institution increases the perception of it being art, however, considering the rather unusual curation there might be confusion among the participants. The theory of Bourdieu does also rely on conventions, yet these are unconsciously applied as it is part of an internalized taste through upbringing and education. This means that their evaluation is based on what they have learned this is not taken into questioning.

The last question of the second part is a more experimental one in which the interviewees were asked to evaluate two paintings (*Ballet Dancers* by Degas and an Outsider Art painting by a Spanish artist called Maria) to argue which of them they appreciate most. This strategy was applied to discover if biography matters in their evaluation and makes already (although implicit) a link to the research question as the centralization of the artist's biography is one of the core aspects. Pictures of these paintings can be found in the interview guide in appendix C.

The third part of the interview guide revolved around the opinions on Outsider Art of the interviewees. Questions such as: 'where you think that Outsider Art is about' and 'what do you think of the idea that when there is an Outsider group, there should also be an Insider group', were asked in order to obtain an understanding of how boundaries come about. In the theoretical framework, it is pointed out that on the one hand, there is a certain standardization when it comes to Outsider Art, yet on the other hand, the difficulty in defining which kind of artists are included and for what reasons is somewhat arbitrary as it depends on time and context (Rhodes, 2000) It was therefore important to understand how interviewees frame Outsider Art to find out how they explain where the interest for the label from the art world is coming from.

The last part of the interview guide revolved around the interviewees experience with the Nieuwe Meesters exhibition in the Outsider Art Museum. Questions such as: 'what do you think of the phenomenon that the museum explicitly shows photographs of the makers' and 'why do you think they do that' were asked to obtain an understanding of their perception on authority and visibility of the artists. In the theoretical framework, it is pointed out that gatekeepers use the biography of the maker in order to avoid that they become self-contradictory in constructing what legitimate art is. Questions such as these were particularly useful as it provided insight in how they interpreted the predominant focus on the artist's biography.

3.4. Methods of analysis

The obtained data from the interviews was manually analyzed to obtain a profound understanding of the data (Saldaña, 2015). The interviews were first multiple times read before the coding process. Throughout the interviews, I already obtained some reoccurring themes and patterns, however, the interviews were conducted within a time span of almost a month and, therefore, it was possible that I started to misinterpreted associations.

After attribute coding was applied to categorize information about the participants, initial coding was used to obtain "impressions of the data" (Bryman, 2012, p. 569). Codes were applied to those parts of the text that seemed relevant and useful in order to see some broad guidelines (e.g. 'standardization', 'objectivity versus subjectivity'). Descriptive coding was applied after to further structure these codes and to provide them with more insight (i.e. the codes became more specific, such as:

'watching monkeys', 'change of name', 'visibility') and after that, "these codes were grouped, compared, and categorized into broader categories and concepts" (Proot et all., 2002) (e.g. 'boundary weakening', 'institutional valorization'). The last phase revolved around finding relationships between these codes, known as theoretical coding, in which the outcome of that served as the basis for creation of a theory (Proot et all., 2002) (e.g. 'change of name and 'visibility are part of 'emancipatory transition').

An overview of the codes is presented in appendix D.

3.5. Validity and reliability

In order to increase the validity of this research, the identified codes and associations between them, patterns, themes were constantly re-evaluated to make sure that they 'make sense' in the research and that they reflect the opinions of the interviewees. This method is being referred to as the "validity-as-reflexive-accounting" (Altheide & Johnson, 1994, p. 489). In order to define 'make sense' and to apply it in the same manner to every kind of code, some general guidelines were applied in which the explanations and interpretations needed to be cleared formulated and supported by quotes or excerpts to provide evidence. Moreover, this was also done the other way around in which I switched from the researcher perspective to the participant perspective. If a similar research would be done with comparable participants, it is necessary that the opinions of them are represented in the way that they meant it. For that reason, I analyzed the findings from the participants perspectives in order to make sure that their "realities are represented accurately" (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 125).

As this project deals with the opinions and experiences of *human beings*, the outcome of the interviews might differ when it was done another time, meaning that human beings are not static and thus can change (Merriam, 1995). It is argued that because of that, the reliability becomes harder to prove compared to quantitative data analysis (Appleton, 1995). However, to increase the likability that other researchers would have comparable findings, someone with a similar academic background was asked to go through the data by applying codes. The results were compared among each other and similar meanings appeared, although described in other words. It is argued that this method is useful for increasing the reliability of a research project (Mays & Pope, 1995).

4.0. Results

The first section revolves around how the museum visitors look art in general in order to make sense of where their evaluations are influenced by. This chapter opens op the questions of what art is and to what extent the biography of the artist plays a role in that. The second section goes into detail what Outsider Art is about in order to find out how margins come about. By comparing Outsider Art with Insider Art, it becomes clear that boundaries are fixed and simultaneously fluid: mobility between these categories is possible as it depends on the context. In the third section revolves around the Nieuwe Meesters exhibition in order to find out how the predominant focus on the artist's is experienced. The opinions are diverse, ranging from positive to negative, however, it is still argued that context is missing as the museum failed to explain why these artists are considered as Outsiders. The fourth section dives into the idea of presenting the works without the biography in order to find out to what extent the context is of influence for appreciation of the art. On the one hand, it is argued that the works will be evaluated less objective (i.e. childish or foolish) yet on the other hand, it would appear as much more normal, compared to how Insider Art is presented. The fifth section revolves around the intention of the museum to exhibit Outsider Art in order to find out how their inclusivity should be interpreted. Outsider Art has become a vehicle for the celebration of diversity (influenced by postmodernism) yet simultaneously according to the standards of the dominant, Insider Art culture as the difference between art that is 'in' and art that is 'out' should be maintained. The final section explores how Outsider Art should develop in the future in order to find what is necessary for them to be evaluated according to their own standards. Change of name, representing themselves and more visibility across the world were mentioned as important steps that need to be taken.

4.1. Perceptions on art

The first part of the analysis guides the reader through the process of the evaluation of art in general. The focus lies on what the interviewees consider as art and where this is coming from, supported by the *convention-theory* of Becker and the *distinction-theory* of Bourdieu. On the one hand, it becomes clear that the context in which the object is placed is important for meaning making, yet on the other hand, the boundaries between high and low art have become more fluid and thus less strict.

Subsequently, the question if the disclosure of the artist's biography is important in general in order to appreciate an artwork, will be answered. This is done by an experiment in which the interviewees had to evaluate an Insider Art and Outsider Art painting – without mentioning by whom it was made.

4.1.1. Boundary weakening: there is more to appreciate outside the canon

What we consider as art and how we value what is being portrayed depends on several aspects. Do we take objects for granted and deem them as art because the cultural elite says so or, do we make use of our understanding of how, for example, a Western artefact ought to look like by how we are taught that it should be – completely different than an Eastern object?

Ever since Duchamp placed an urinal on a pedestal, what can be considered as art has been changing (Grojs, 2003). Boundaries have become looser and even the most ordinary things -that one would normally find in their bathroom – can contain meaning. On the one hand, this can make everything meaningful as everything can be questioned for its intention and purpose, however, it can also make everything meaningless as it becomes basically all the same – homogeneity of objects that do not necessarily look the same but are valued according to the same standards. On paper, this sounds plausible in that the cause-effect relation is logical, however, in practice it is not so easy to throw everything on one pile or the other. In fact, boundary weakening is more about acknowledging that there is more outside the traditional art circuit that is worth to be valued and an interviewee explained that because of that, evaluating art is a matter of perception:

"What I maybe consider as art is not what society thinks of as art, in the sense that it is not something that you can sell as art. I think it is very personally and because the definition of art is open so much, you can think of everything as art" (Interviewee 9).

This statement implies that the worth of an object (and thus to be considered as art) depends on a price tag and that the work's purpose should be commodification by responding to a general taste. However, the interviewee refutes that by favoring the opposite so that what can be considered as art is up to the viewer themselves; when

there are no strings attached, the world is one's oyster and meaning is created according to their own standards.

Opinions as these are not formulated out of the blue; in fact, it takes much consideration and knowledge of art and its systems to end up with a conclusion as such. The fact that this interviewee has had (and is still enrolled in) several art programs makes boundaries clearer, meaning that she has taught what art ought to be and what not. Her reaction can, therefore, be explained in the context of Becker's theory by how he approaches art worlds: both look at how these worlds function and the conventions that circulate within – in which the latter becomes more visible when knowledge is obtained through education. The moment that you realize that boundaries are not so sharp as the word implies, you can look beyond them and start thinking of what you personally consider as beautiful. Another interviewee emphasized this idea by mentioning:

"I went to these museums [In Amsterdam] and there were some nice things but then when I crossed the canal: they were drenching the canal, they were doing construction on the canal and I thought: that is much more beautiful than anything I saw in the museums. Uhm, you know, and I find that often to be the case" (Interviewee 1).

Saying something like this implies that conventions are not consciously applied to understand objects and their meaning, rather the unconscious mind becomes much stronger as the process of evaluation is much more the outcome of "the eye that has to travel" (Vreeland, 2011); ambiguities or common sense are not taken for granted but perceived as possibilities to be inspired, informed, fascinated or intrigued by – something that Bourdieu (1984) meant with his *distinction-theory.* It is an internalized way of evaluating objects that is caused by the interviewee's upbringing with artists as parents, by having an art degree and being an artist himself. By saying that the canals look more beautiful than anything else he saw in museums, is not an attempt to be cynical by implying that he knows it better than the representatives of the cultural institutions, it is just how he thinks; he does not have to think about it twice.

This does not work for everyone, though. Although it was acknowledged that art can be found outside its traditional venues – galleries and museums -, there was still some common sense needed to understand the objects. Music performances, sculptures

or theatre need, in fact, to be located elsewhere as is can broaden the horizon of the perception of audiences of how expressions can manifest themselves differently. However, what is being exhibit or expressed still needs to be recognizable as a sculpture, a hip-hop performance or an orchestra that plays classical music. For example, when a sculpture is broken into different parts and placed on several corners of a street or square, it is not perceived as such because a sculpture is to them a finished product; not a game in which the viewer is invited to knot all the several elements to each other so that it can eventually become an art work in their heads. They want to see it, literally, to make sense of it by consciously using conventions that create meaning.

4.1.2. Institutional valorization

Does that mean that the context in which an object or performance is placed, decreases in significance and that the same evaluation is applied to every object, whether this is in a museum or in a library? It does not. Despite the fact that the interviewees all feel that art can be found everywhere, they are aware of the power of institutional valorization. One interviewee mentioned:

"When I was studying art history, I had a course in pre-Colombian art and obviously people [the artists] didn't think that was art – for them it's just decorative or maybe religious: that they had beautiful ceramics or things – but it wasn't for them art. And I think, it's hard to think of all the art in that way" (Interviewee 9).

What is meant is that initially, these pre-Colombian artefacts were not made by the intention to create art, yet when they are placed in a legitimizing institution, the objects *become* art. Being aware of this phenomenon implies knowledge of how art worlds work, however, that does not mean that the object is appreciated because of that. The problem with this is that the creator of an artefact needs someone who deems it as art and, therefore, the process of creation is not free – it is constrained by rules. Precisely because of this, the object is not limitless for free interpretation as it is already framed according to predetermined standards. One interviewee mentioned her concerns about this phenomenon:

"Were they creative because they, you know, thought it was art. Uhm, or is it the curator and the person that uhm kind of identifies it as being artwork that is than putting a label on it. I think galleries and institutions are very much, maybe to blame for what we as society deem to be worthy or worth exhibiting" (Interviewee 7).

This implies that the intention by which an object is made might differ from how it is interpreted by others. In 1880, there were ancients' caves discovered in the Kaimūr Range (North-West Provinces) decorated with paintings of horses and research has shown that this was done to illustrate the hunt that they were about to undertake (Cockburn, 1899). It was created for the purpose of expressing their way of life and to preserve history (Cockburn, 1899). When these drawings are placed out of their context by curators or other art specialist who deem it as art, the intention changes. Suddenly, the drawings that were first appreciated for its historical insight are now evaluated according to aesthetic standards that fit in a certain framework of a specific art world. With this illustration, the point made by the interviewee becomes clearer in the sense that the value of objects is not determined by its intrinsic value but constructed by people with specialized knowledge.

However, this can also work the other way around. One interviewee explained that he was taught by his father how to look at art. He had a couple of formal courses on art in high school and spends time in museums to wander around and to get informed. This already implies that he grew up with a certain legitimate taste of which kind of objects should be considered as art and why. He visited the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam a few months ago and while he was walking around he noticed strings of light balls hanging from the ceiling from which he initially thought; what is so special about that, it is just light. However, when he heard a conversation between the curator and a group of people about the intention of the light balls (i.e. symbolizing life and dead when the lights go on and off) his opinion changed, and he thought it was something legitimately impressive and a beautiful expression. This implies not only that certain conventions play a role in de negotiation process of what can be considered as art, but also that the voice of a delegate of the institution is deemed as a guideline for art evaluation.

4.1.3. Evaluating with the heart instead of the head.

When looking at art, does it matter to know by whom it was made? Does that kind of context make significant impact on the evaluation of the art work? In the interviews, the participants were asked to look at two paintings: The Ballet Dancers made by Degas (1834 – 1917) and an Outsider Art painting made by a Spanish artist called Maria (last name unknown). These names were not provided and instead, the interviewees were asked to pick one of the two they considered as most beautiful, inspiring or fascination – the one that pleases the eyes most.

Not everyone was aware of the fact that the painting was made by a famous artist as Degas, but the ones that picked that one out did that for different reasons. On the one hand, it was mentioned that it is impossible to not choose the Degas as he is a perfect example of how institutions taught society of what can be deemed as art. The interviewee who mentioned this explained that she grew up from a low-social position and that becoming familiar with art was not part of her upbringing. Because of that, she started to buy books at a certain age because the interest in art was there. She has been trying to educate herself and complements this with regular visits to (international) museums. It is already remarkable that she explicitly mentioned that she grew up from a low social position as it is not very common to say this in these exact terms. From a Bourdieusian perspective, this awareness can be considered as an attempt to overcome their 'less valuable taste' by constantly (and consciously) imitating the legitimate taste of the cultural elite (i.e. people from a high social position). It could maybe even be argue that she answered the question by how she has thought that such a question should be replied.

On the other hand, it was mentioned that the idea of having a Degas hanging above the sofa sparked the imagination so much, that the eye was stuck to it. The painting was not specifically appreciated for its use of color, theme or technical components, but just for its status in the art world. Both interviewees rely on the approval of art specialist with authority and imitate their preferences because that is how it should be. Moreover, while the Outsider Art painting is a somewhat decodable map that ask for more than just the search for familiarities, the Degas is easier to understand for someone who stays close to art conventions as the painting is recognizable and straight to the point in terms of theme, narrative and style.

These opinions are very rational, and it was remarkable to notice that the majority of the interviewees chose for the Outsider Art painting based on their emotions

by consciously admitting that art is way too much (e)valuated by the use of the rational. One interviewee mentioned:

"[moans deeply] We are constantly busy with our head, but when it comes to art, the head should be disconnected in favor of the use of feeling and experiencing. We are not used to do that, we are solely occupied with thinking" (Interviewee 4).

This statement implies that the reason(s) why a painting arouses (positive) emotions should not derive from parameters or prefixed criteria, but from a feeling that sprouts up within. Moreover, there is a tendency to choose for the Outsider Art painting because it is more challenging to look at. An interviewee compared the painting with an experience that she has had with two black and white paintings: at first instance, she did not understand the meaning of it and this fueled her believe that abstract art is not emotional yet rational. However, when she sat in front of it for a while and noticed the other visitors who were looking at it, she felt that it was not just a depiction of two constrasting colors but to show that there are so much different colors between black-and-white. Based on the clothing of the people who stood in front of it, she decoded the intention of the paintings and because of that, the objects became much more interesting and pleasing.

The reaction of another interviewee is somewhat in line with that:

"I personally find more interesting the one on the left [the Outsider Art painting] because [.] its more intriguing, like it's obviously non-figurative – there are figures but you cannot really tell what they are. There is a lot of repetition so it's also hypnotic" (Interviewee 9).

This comment implies that the Outsider Art painting makes it possible to drown in an imaginary world, in contrast to the painting made by Degas which is very explicit. Her argumentation is pointing at the idea that art can still be "mysterious [..] and transcendent" (Fine, 2003, p. 162).

The majority of the interviewees chose for the Outsider Art painting without knowing by whom it was made. From that, the assumption can be made that the biography of the artist in general does not matter, particularly because the ones that did

choose for the Degas, did so because of the status and reputation that is associated with the artist's name. This effected their perception in terms of a positive evaluation of the artwork, however, the interviewees who choose for the Outsider Art painting were merely interested in the content and no one asked by whom it was made – it did not seem important.

4.2. Language: a system of arbitrariness

So far, we have seen that what can be considered as art, is a matter of perception and that boundaries (i.e. art versus non-art) have become more fluid. The evaluation of art should be based more on what we feel instead of what we think and because of that, knowing by whom an artwork is made is not entirely necessary for valuation.

The next section dives in what Outsider Art is about in order to find out how margins come about and if these are fixed; first by exploring what Outsider Art is by the connotations that arise by hearing the words; second, by defining the opposite category, Insider Art, to find out where the boundary is based on and on what grounds it differs from Outsider Art; third, by finding out if mobility between these two oppositional categories is possible to understand to what extent context matters.

4.2.1. Outsider Art

What we mean with the words we express depends on several factors that reveal how we interpret them; it is context based (Rhodes, 2000) and influenced by our understanding of the world. It is especially the latter mentioned that serves as the foundation for how we as humans deal with words that are arbitrary in their meaning, resulting in the continuation of this arbitrariness from which meanings
derive that can cause disagreement about the definition of the word being discussed (De Beaugrande, 2014). This works the same for the meaning of the word Outsider, a phenomenon that was quite well expressed by an interviewee at the end of the conversation. Somewhat doubtful and careful he mentioned that "[..] we have talked about Outsider Art for more than an hour and to be honest, I am not sure if we wield the same definition" (Interviewee 5). It became clear that the word opens a door to a grey area in which black-and-white definitions are most of the time not recognized, meaning that it was not so easy to say: Outsider Art is this ór that. An interviewee elaborated on that by mentioning:

"I have a sort of synthetic reference, like, a sort of pallet opens where the things that I associate that, come into my perception, sort of, taste of old factories. Uhm, [.] and so when I hear outsider art, I get a sort of, a tend to describe a sort of synthetic thing that I hear and feel uhm [..] uhm, it's sort of musty, musky and musty and uhm, its sort of dusted and grey-ish and uhm, and [..] and sort of, you know, there is a feeling of sort of rawness, sort of like - I'm making a motion with my hand right now that you don't see, like a, like a caring or digging emotion" (Interviewee 1).

It was remarkable to hear this description of this interviewee as he mentioned before that he grew up with Outsider Art starting with the fascination that he experienced for the *Art Brut* theory of Jean Dubuffet. It almost suggests certain ignorance equal to the ones that were not familiar with the genre before their visit to the Outsider Art Museum. They tend to describe the concept on the basis of what they think and feel it means, instead of the more formal, 'accepted' definition that the interviewees used who were familiar with the genre. That is not surprising as we as humans have the tendency to make sense of the unknown by using our hippocampus where memory is stored. Surprising is the fact that the concept raises both negative and positive connotations, in fact, opposite meanings:

"Uhm, […] I, outsider for me is uhm, Outsider, as I said before, is a difficult term for me, because it, it's just that somebody doesn't fit in or, or, isn't welcome I suppose [..] for me it is quite a negative thing. And I don't know, I guess that comes from uhmm […] kind of what [..] what you read in the news about [..] outsiders. Uhm immigration and […] and refugees and a kind of person that doesn't fit it. Outsider is a difficult term [..] it could be anything for me" (Interviewee 7).

Another interviewee was more positive and mentioned: "Outsider is really, Outsider [..] means inclusion rather than exclusion" (Interviewee 10). This last statement sounds almost naïve in the sense that being an Outsider to something (a family, a group of friends, society) is a vulnerable position that deals with feelings of unacceptance, ignorance and neglect. However, when it becomes a matter of intention (in terms of change) rather than trying to reveal almost the naked truth of a concept, the meaning of

words can radically alter. An example is the Disability Movement that was established in 1960 and has been vouching for equal rights among people that deviate from the standard quo ever since (Pfeiffer, 1983). It is thus not their aim to show limelight on these people in order to let 'the outside' know that they are out there, but to change something in how this group is perceived and how margins come about. This idea goes hand-in-hand with the idea behind Outsider Art according to the last interviewee mentioned as he stated:

"[..] by calling it outsider art you're saying it, you know, this is, this is something that we have been deciding to exclude. But why? Why, you know, what real reason is there for excluding? Why are these people outsiders? And it challenges the person viewing the art to say why, why is this different, why is it Outsider Art? Why is this somehow different or potentially inferior to other kinds of art? So, maybe these people shouldn't be Outsiders, maybe they have just as much of the right to sit at the table as other people" (Interviewee 10).

It becomes clear that Outsider Art revolves around perception and providing a clear definition of the concept becomes difficult as its meaning is not fixed (Rhodes, 2000). The interviewees who were familiar with Outsider Art spoke about the creators as Outsiders not because they did not have a formal art education or are physically or mentally impaired, but on the basis of how their additional needs are perceived by others that are not in the same boot, both personally and professionally: "They are Outsiders because of their impairment, their social incompetence, marginality or because of something else; there is a reason why they are a minority group" (Interviewee 8). This implies that it does not have anything to do with how the creators perceive themselves as the construction of the professional or personal impairment differs from the actual limitation and, therefore, to make sense of them, they are categorized into boxes that differentiate between the status quo and deviant behavior: The Insider versus The Outsider; the abled body and the disabled body. Their art is inextricable connected to who they are as human beings and it cannot exist without their identity; it is for that reason not surprising that none of the interviewees spoke about the characteristics of what Outsider Art encompasses (i.e. stylistic characteristics

or technical features) when they were asked what Outsider Art is about, as the art revolves around the creator.

This does not mean that their art is not important. Because of that, it is argued that when it comes to Outsider Art, language, and specifically how we use it, should be a priority. When the concept was introduced by Cardinal in 1972, he enlarged the concept by suggesting that the label encompasses more variations initially proposed by Dubuffet. What he specifically did was specifying the concept by translating *Art Brut* to Outsider Art; English words are easier to understand for a broader audience. Nevertheless, the translation became vaguer and other suggestions have been proposed. An interviewee mentioned that a fixed description of Outsider Art is impossible:

"From all over the world, various other definitions are sprouting up such as Naïve art and even Folk art. This discussion will not end soon and there will be people who say: this art expression belongs to it and this one doesn't. The result is that you constantly end up with a new or different concept" (Interviewee 3).

This statement implies that words are loose and especially the translation element causes confusion, meaning that every culture has its own connotations with certain words. It is to a certain extent impossible to avoid that and the problem with Outsider Art is that it is so bound to time and location but at the same time, it does not say anything as it is always in flux; it is meaningless and at the same time so meaningful when it is placed in the right context.

4.2.2. Insider Art

In some cases, it is much easier to describe what something or someone *is not* and for what reasons than what or who something *is* and why. For the Insider and Outsider dichotomy it works the other way around. Whereas most of the interviewees found themselves in the field of ignorance that revolves around Outsider Art as it such a broad umbrella term that can include everyone, the boundaries for describing Insider Art were much clearer.

In academics, Insider Art is described as the art that is made according to the "ideological guidelines and stylistic choices" (Tansella, 2007, p. 133) of what legitimate art ought to look like, however, all the interviewees connected the concept of the maker

to it as well. Insider Art, for them, is made by people who have had an official art education and are accepted in the mainstream. They make the traditional art works and conform to the expectations of how the object should be made: "An Insider is someone who paints a landscape because he is a painter as profession and thus sits in a meadow to paint. That would be an Insider for me" (Interviewee 10). The interviewee is clearly referring to an Old Master, Van Gogh, and this suggest the romantic notion that revolves around the artists that have passed away. This does not mean, however, that Insider artists can merely be people who are dead, yet it depends on the genre that is considered as legitimate in a certain time period and the visionaries that revolve within: "I would think of Jeff Koons" (Interviewee 1). It is not surprising that Jeff Koons was mentioned as he, among some others, is considered as "the most fashionable artist of the contemporary art boom" (Stallabrass, 1989). To suggest him as an Insider artist does not require that much knowledge of what happens in art worlds as his name appears from time to time in newspapers, documentaries or in (solo) exhibitions around the world.

Nevertheless, the translation issue that plays part with Outsider Art appears with Insider Art as well. An interviewee mentioned:

"[..] the first thing that comes into my mind, correct me if I'm wrong, but I think of people with autism. Because they do everything from inside their heads [..], their memory or photographic memory. I don't consider Insider art as the artist of this current time" (interviewee 6).

This quote sounds somewhat naïve and maybe almost ignorant in the sense that she did not use her knowledge of Outsider Art as a foundation to make the comparison, however, what is actually more important to consider is that when someone's vocabulary is not as broad as the of others, meanings can become isolated entities and can thus cause confusion.

There is clearly a symbolic boundary when it comes to the differentiation between Outsider and Insider, however, it should be said that when people are asked to name the differences between the oppositional categories, they tend to search for something that stands out from the other, whether small or big. Nevertheless, when the

interviewees reflected on their answers it became clear that it is not so strict as it may sound.

4.2.3. From Outsider to Insider

After all that has happened throughout history, have we not learned that excluding people on the basis of their gender, race or biological impairments is holding us back as an anchor? It would not be fair to say that we did not as we became more tolerant and open to other cultures. Not only are other forms of culture accepted and celebrated, but also people with mental or physical impairments appear more on the streets, work in (specialized) restaurants and even at (commercial) companies. Yet, it would be naïve to suggest that we are near the finish line as the categorization of people still maintains with Outsider Art and Insider Art as the perfect example.

As discussed earlier, an interviewee mentioned that this categorization in fact helps people to think about the reasons why they excluded people in the first place. The concept becomes a vehicle to start a reflective way of thinking in order to become more inclusive as a society. However, concerns were also expressed about the inequality that still maintains:

"I have uh such a believe that everybody should be equal. Uhm, on kind of whatever grounds; on gender, race, disability, whatever. I don't think there has to be an Outsider and defining the opposite as Insiders, uhm, I think it's kind of, I, I think it's a shame that we still have to uhm, define people into categories" (Interviewee 7).

At the same time, it was said that the boundaries have become much more fluid in the sense that specifically the Outsider category is not what it used to be. Nowadays, the Outsider is not only someone who is mentally ill and lives in an asylum, but anyone who does not conform to the standard quo – whether this is in society or in art worlds: "it is a very large group [Outsiders] in which variations exists from someone who has autism, Down syndrome or even schizophrenic – it can basically include everyone" (Interviewee 4). It is argued that the fact that we became much more knowledgeable about the other is caused by the growing influence of the media who portrays and incorporates them more often. Phones are always within reach when visiting a museum, the place of birth of an artist or at an opening of a gallery that exhibits a new upcoming artist specialized

in Colonial art; these pictures have the possibility to reach millions of people within a split second, so how unknown can you be if you are confronted with a dose of information on a daily basis? An interviewee mentioned about this: "We are surrounded by media all the time, so we are not immune for knowing what the Mona Lisa is, so no one is really an Outsider anymore" (Interviewee 8).

Does that last sentence mean that there is some kind of mobility; can one become an Insider after being an Outsider? The example of Van Gogh was a couple of times mentioned and explained by the fact that he suffered during his whole (artistic) life. No one was interested in his creations while he was living because he did not paint according to the legitimate ideology of that time. For that reason, he was considered as an Outsider because of his artistic vision and his mental status. However, Van Gogh is now one of the most respected, celebrated and famous artists of our time and because of that, he has become an Insider. It is argued that this transition has happened because the notion of what art ought to look like and what art should be has changed:

"The cubist, the Surrealist, the Dadaist, all outsiders. But as, as time has passed, those have become increasingly more Insider in a way, I suppose, because as the opposition to those groups being real art faded and as we became to say ok, you know, Van Gogh did really have a really good use of color and you know, Matisse's artwork are actually really nice, and Dali's works are actually deep and impressive. There are kind of ways [.] as these things that were unacceptable became acceptable and the boundary between Outsiders and Insiders shifted" (Interviewee 2).

This idea suggests that everyone in fact can at some point become an Insider, but does it also work the other way around? Some mentioned that it is possible but that there is a difference in what an Outsider can be in society compared to an Outsider in the legitimate art worlds. In society, you can perceive yourself as an Outsider because you do not conform to existing rules or you do not see yourself as part of a certain problem; think of the refugees, the economic crisis or sexism against women. One does not necessarily need to have a low social position, in fact, you can be very rich and healthy to consider yourself as an Outsider. Donald Trump, for instance, was mentioned by an interviewee as an example of someone who considers himself as an Outsider as he did not cause the problems America has been facing; the elite did. He was not a part of the

political establishment and thus could make changes in Washington. He was never a politician before he ran for president, so no one could blame him for any policies that were enacted by the government. However, when it comes to art, you cannot become an Outsider based on the perception that you have or your own identity. Now Outsider Art is becoming more popular, there is a tendency that artists want to brand or position themselves as Outsider artists by copying techniques (spontaneous, childlike) or certain perspectives (upside down or multiple angles), however, a real Outsider artist can only be accepted as such on the basis of the perception of others. An interviewee who considers himself as an Outsider and works as a drama teacher with Outsider artists mentioned: "[Laughing] The problem is that people now start with saying I'm an Outsider artist. Sometimes I speak with them and ask myself; what is the Outsider component that they have? I smile, and I think: never mind" (Interviewee 8). He clearly indicates that the moment you define yourself as an Outsider artist, a line is already crossed as it is not something that you actively and consciously can become; it revolves around the framing of others.

4.3. Placing the biography of the Outsider artist on a pedestal

So far, we have seen that boundaries have become more fluid regarding what art should look like, what it can encompass and how it should be evaluated. However, there is still a nuance that becomes specifically clear when comparing Outsider Art with Insider Art: these oppositional categories define the kind of art and, especially, by whom it was made. Nevertheless, who or what belongs to one of the classifications is somewhat arbitrary as it depends on context, language and perception in which the latter can be based on the perception of the self (i.e. the Outsider in society) or the image that others create (i.e. the Outsider in the art world).

The next section revolves around the Nieuwe Meesters exhibition to explore how the participants reflect on the curation in which the artist's biography is the central focus point. The museum's aim is to inspire audiences to look at art differently (www.outsiderartmuseum.nl) in order to understand what has been made. First, it will be established what the portraits add to the art works and the consequences of revealing the identity of the artists; second, as the museum aims to connect the identity to the works to show how their biography is of influence of what has appeared on the

canvas. As their biography is thus of much relevance, it will be established if this is done in the right way by finding out if the identity of the artists was clear for the audience.

4.3.1. "Them as curiosities"

The fact that the museum chose for the revealing of the identity of the artist, is interpreted in different ways. This exhibition stands for that reason out from any other exhibitions the interviewees have seen in their life because normally, some information is told about the artist, but it does not revolve around them in the sense that it does with Outsider Art; it is a new way of curation but is new always construed as positive?

For some it was; Outsider Art is a completely new phenomenon. Not in the sense that this target group suddenly sprouted up (as we have seen; Outsiders have always existed, depending on context and place) yet how their existence is placed in the limelight. To explain the positivity of that, one interviewee referred back to the previous exhibition in the Outsider Art Museum that revolved around Chinese Outsider artists. Previously, Chinese people who have additional needs were tucked away and their expressions were banned, destroyed or even burned because it was a disgrace for the family. The fact that it is now exhibited in a museum hints at more acceptance and specifically, enlarging the identities of the makers hints at more tolerance or recognition of people that are different; deviating from the status quo. An interviewee mentioned: "Normally, you only saw a [Outsider Art] painting with some information and the name of the artist, but the artists were never exposed in the way by how it is done in this exhibition. That's acceptance" (Interviewee 3). This implies a movement of inclusivity that exposes an initially abstract idea of the personality of the maker to a more concrete idea of who has made the work. An interviewee described this as follow:

"By putting the pictures of these people next to their art works, like: this is the painting that someone made, and it ties that very specific to a name and a face and a back story and the expressions on that person's face and the clothes they are wearing and that gives it [..] a sort of intimacy I suppose. You [.] you, maybe feel you even get a better perspective or both on the person who made the art and the art work, because when you see them together like that, there's a more direct link between the artists and their art in your head, I suppose" (Interviewee 2)

This intimacy caused an awareness of how society is categorized and how little in fact is known of people with additional needs. It made them more conscious of their own judgments; of how art ought to look like and what kind of people can be artists.

At the back of the exhibition, there is a little, wooden 'house' where an Outsider artist works several times each month. The idea is that visitors are involved in the process to see how an artwork is created. At the time when the interviewees visited the exhibition, the house was decorated with paper and the drawings continued on the wood. It showed how personal creative processes are and, maybe more importantly, it gave a sense of reality instead of the myth that surrounds the artist; working in an ivory tower at night, slaving on a new master piece in complete isolation from the rest of society. This was clearly summarized by an interviewee: "We tend to think of artists in a romantic way: he needs to suffer by candlelight and it should not be too commercial. With these kind of exhibitions, you are forced to place your own way of thinking in perspective" (Interviewee 4).

It was a couple of times mentioned that it would be different if this way of curation was also applied to Insider Art; the makers of Outsider Art are such a specific target group and the information truly adds something to what is made in order to deconstruct it. With Insider Art, it does not add anything, as the maker and the artwork are in fact two isolated entities. An interviewee argued that: "With a portrait of an established artist it is, irrelevantly saying, not so exciting because he had an official art education. There is no tension" (Interviewee 3), indicating that presenting the biography of the maker is solely interesting when the artists do not have the set curriculum.

However, should this be done in this way? Is exhibiting the identity of the maker the ultimate tool to strengthen a connection with these makers by aiming for more inclusivity?

It was very explicitly mentioned that this should not be done. By placing the biography of the maker on a pedestal, it was not kept in mind that these people are vulnerable. A comparison was made between an Outsider artist and the performance of Serbian artist Marina Abramovic *Silent Sitting* at the MoMA (NY) in which she invited visitors to sit in front of her to stare at each other. She exposes herself; she is vulnerable, yet she made this decision by herself. She chose her identity to be the core aspect of the work while with Outsider artists; this decision is made for them. Because of that, it feels

like you are watching monkeys in a zoo; they also did not choose to be there. An interviewee mentioned upset: "It's just not done that you exhibit someone's art work and then you have a much larger portrait of the person next to the art work. That's not done, and I think it's pretty disrespectful (Interviewee 1). It is argued that the problem is that when too much attention is placed on the biography, people start to react in a more political correct way. They appreciate the artwork because the artists are so adorable, cute or special. It was argued that this is not necessarily a good thing, as art should be evaluated for its own sake and not on the biographical level.

4.3.2. Yet, who is the Outsider?

If the goal of the museum was to provide more context of whom these Outsiders are did the interviewees feel that they learned more about them? Were the pictures clear in the sense that it was understandable why they are considered as Outsiders?

As already mentioned, the term Outsider is very broad and can encompass many kinds of people. The interviewees who were not familiar with Outsider Art before they visited the exhibition, hoped to grasp an idea of what the Outsider is, however, it was argued that throughout the exhibition, this became not very clear. With some portraits, it was obvious that the creator had additional needs, for example the photograph of an artist with Down syndrome. However, with other photographs it was not clearly visible why they are Outsiders as they appear 'normal'. Especially with the latter; when they are 'normal' are they then considered as Outsiders because they do not have access to art materials? A dialogue, instead of a monolog, between the photographer and the artists would have been better as the context would be clearer. The only thing that makes most of them Outsiders is because of the name of the museum and by choosing for the lack of context, it almost implied that visitors were all able and knowledgeable enough to understand why these artists are considered as Outsiders. It was argued that:

"I thought it was pretty interesting that they, they sort of didn't, they sort of were very shy about saying that the artists in the museum had any kind of impairments or maybe had some kind of, had Down Syndrome, they, they were like referring to these people in very oblique terms. They have giant pictures of them on the wall, so it was like, you can understand; just look at the pictures, you can infer and understand that these people are disabled people, right?" (Interviewee 1)

What is interesting, is that this interviewee chose to use the word disabled very explicit as we talked about the difference between disability and an impairment in the conservation before. Therefore, by using the word disabled he implied that these artists should be evaluated (or: looked at) on the basis of what you think of them instead of who they are. This idea relates back to where Outsider Art is about: the perception of others and by the lack of providing context, this image is maintained and further excavated.

4.4. Isolating the object

So far, we have seen that Outsider Art is a label that is hard to comprehend: by whom it is made is arbitrary and because of that, when the artists are placed in the limelight in exhibitions, it needs to be clear why they are considered as Outsiders in the first place. Moreover, it should be taken into account that these artists are vulnerable and it should not become a matter of watching monkeys: their voices should also have played a central threat throughout the exhibition. The artists should not be 'looked at' but should really 'be seen' in order to add meaning to inclusivity.

The following sub-chapter will establish to what extent context matters in relation to Outsider. First, by exploring how the art works would be evaluated when no context was provided; second, establishing what this would mean for the art works that fall under this label.

4.4.1 Less objective

There is thus a kind of danger in knowing who the art work has made. Not only in terms of valuing the work out of political correctness or out of sympathy, but also to avoid that the object becomes too much explained. A few months ago, *Salvator Mundi* a painting made by the high-Renaissance artist Leonardo Da Vinci (1452 – 1519) sold for a record price. The fact that it was made by this artist increased the price extremely as works of Old Masters are much valued. Hypothetically speaking, when it appeared that the painting was actually a fraud and, therefore, not made by Da Vinci, the price and valuation will decrease. This works the same with Outsider Art in combination with the exposure of the makers identity. The works are valued because it is known who has made it, however, when this was not the case, the creative expressions would be

considered as childish or foolish doodling. To avoid that, the question was raised by an interviewee why curators even consider exhibiting the works made. The argumentation was that you should not put these people in situations in which it becomes clear that they lack certain qualities or abilities. Their disability should be hidden, and the focus should be on their abilities. He mentioned:

"Once I made a choreography for people with a psychiatric disorder and I specifically didn't let them dance because they can't. If you do, you show people that they can't dance or at least not good enough. So, you have to come up with something in which you don't expect them to be able to dance" (Interviewee 11).

This idea implies that you should not outstrip others. The interviewee mentioned that his opinion sounds harsh, but in fact, it derives from a positive standpoint. They are more than their disabilities and 'normal' treatment causes the opposite effect; their disability becomes enlarged and prove is systematically expressed that they are in fact different.

The opposite was also argued, and interviewees mentioned that Outsider Art is just another type of abstract art. The genre is framed as different because of the identity of the maker, however, when this is not communicated the objects fall under the category earlier mentioned. This was particularly expressed by the interviewees who had not former knowledge of Outsider Art before they went to the exhibition. This can be interpreted in two ways: on the one hand, they are being politically correct by implying that everyone can make 'good' art, regardless of who you are or your credentials. On the other hand, they can be unaware of the ideology behind the abstract art and its intention and, therefore, categorize it more easily under form of expression. Both are unlikely, however, as both have a (strong) position in the arts and culture sector and expressed knowledge of art genres throughout the conversation. The option that is therefore left, is that they truly belief that Outsider Art is of the same standards as abstract art that you can find in other museums or galleries. This became even more evident when they expressed that they would like to see the paintings in combination with Insider Art paintings – without mentioning biography and reputation.

4.4.2 Normal, standard, conventional.

It is specifically the term 'normal' that is appearing throughout the interviews. The fact that the curation is done differently compared to exhibitions that you see in other museums all over the world. When it was done according to the same standards, the works would be really valued for what they are – just as how it is done with paintings of Old Masters or any other artist. Outsider Art should be celebrated because of the spontaneity and the open-mindedness that is depicted; recognition should be placed on the fact that this genre is different compared to others and why that is. The attraction is in the painting, not in the artist. An interviewee mentioned: "actually, when I went down the, uhm, the exhibition, I, I, didn't think that. I thought that, why, why do we need to know [.] that these uhm these artists have, have additional needs?" (Interviewee 7), indicating that thát is not the core element of why it should be appreciated. In the end, it is always about the painting, the portrait stands always on the second place. Meaning that in the end, the genre revolves around the creations made by the artists, because when you leave out the word Outsiders, it can be just another kind of art exhibition.

4.5. (hidden) Intentions for representing Outsider Art

In the previous sub-chapter, it is established that one the one hand, context matters as the objects would soon be evaluated as childish or foolish doodling without mentioning under what circumstances it was made. On the other hand, it appeared that the context is not of high influence for valuing the objects. The appreciation of art should be based on what is portrayed on the canvas and not affected by external aspects such as biography. The attraction is based in the painting, not in the artists – just how it either works with Insider Art.

In the following sub-chapter, the reasons for the celebration of Outsider Art by gatekeepers (i.e. the museum) will be explored in order to find out what it means that a legitimizing institution is representing the artistic label. First, it will be established where their interest is coming from and how this stands in relation to tendencies in society; second; it will be explored why the museum chose specifically for this type of curation and thirdly; why an Insider (i.e. the photographer) had such a dominant 'voice' in the exhibition as the portraits were much larger than the actual art objects made by the Outsider artists.

4.5.1 Celebrating diversity

Where is this interest in Outsider Art from the legitimate art world coming from? The child who was placed at the sideline for decades has been invited to participate in the game and is applauded for its idiosyncrasy, originality and, in a sense, its stubbornness against traditional art conventions.

Postmodernism paved the way for the celebration of different and various cultures that deviate from the dominant, Western and male culture. Not only is there more room for acceptance but also to be inspired and informed by them. The world is slowly becoming a melting pot in which styles are happily combined and nationalities are fused – a process that can be described as the transition from homogeneous to heterogeneous. An interviewee mentioned about this:

"we are living in a different time now in which we see that there is more out there besides our narrowed view. We became more interested in different cultures, countries but also religions such as Buddhism; it's not only The West and the mainstream per se. There is more curiosity" (Interviewee 4).

Question such as; why are women perceived as a minority or why are white people considered as superior compared to people of color? Norms and values are questioned, and this does have its effect on art worlds too. Throughout the interviews, it became clear that the tendencies and phenomena that arise in society take place in museums as well. Museums do not only have the function to exhibit art surrounded by a couple of walls, but also to shape the audience in their way of thinking (Alexander, 2013); a museum is an extension. An interviewee mentioned about this:

"I also think that as society has become increasingly more focused on emphasizing inclusivity and diversity, there's more willingness to hear from people who have been traditionally excluded from sectors of society such as art. Uhm, and, in many other sectors in society of course, but, certainly in the art world. There is this increased emphasis on saying to include these people because, you know, they're just as capable producing things as anybody else. And they are just as worthy to be considered and of being considered as good artists as anybody else" (Interviewee 2).

Is it fair to say that Outsider Art has become just a vehicle for museums to show their societal function? You do not do justice to both Outsider Art and the intention of museums to argue that this is their sole motivation – although it is a good one. The fascination for Outsider Art comes also out of a growing dissatisfaction with previous genres in which, for example, portraits and still lives dominate. This is not because the technical components, the craftsmanship or the emotional effort that is put into the work is less valuable, yet it has become a matter of 'we have seen it all'. An interviewee who is very enthusiastic about Outsider Art mentioned: "when you see Outsider Art you often think: how the hell did the artist come up with this? Sometimes it is completely unrecognizable" (Interviewee 3), indicating that you can still be surprised and amazed by what is being portrayed. With Outsider Art, it is sometimes so hard to relate to what is being portrayed, that it is intriguing to discover what kind of message the creator wanted to express. This makes the art works interesting for audiences who expect more than familiarities and repetition and for gatekeepers too. An interviewee mentioned about this: "what kind of images came up in the artist's head and how can I understand them? And to me, that seems like a plausible reason, even for the established art critics, to become interested in Outsider Art" (Interviewee 3).

4.5.2. Generating validity

One could argue that this sound like a selfless act, but criticism was expressed. The exhibition in The Outsider Art Museum is called Nieuwe Meesters [trans: New Masters] and some questioned its intention. Motivated to undo the mistake they previously made by excluding these artists on the basis of the idea that their position or identity does not generate any money, so why invest in it? They are trying to cover their shame by making a grand gesture to the Outsider Art community by implicitly suggesting that capitalism is not the solution for a better society. One interviewee mentioned:

"I think there is a vampirism of this sort of vitality that people will feel in this post industrialist capitalism, this sort of huge emptiness inside them as the world around them is unraveling and it becomes clearer that these clean, uh, facades are quite alienating" (Interviewee 1).

It is almost as if they woke up from a bad dream and started to realize that what they - and society at large – have done is such an indictment to human beings. It is a way of apologizing by implying: the past is characterized by exclusion, but we recognize your abilities and to prove that, we place you on this pedestal as Nieuwe Meesters; a future of inclusion.

Is it? Criticism was expressed, and it was mentioned that the aim of presenting the content of the exhibitions as Nieuwe Meesters was to justify their choice. The museum tries to convince the visitors of Outsider Art being real, legitimate art as it is such a new phenomenon. Not in terms of positive education, but in terms of proof that they are aware of their unconventional way of curation; generating validity. In fact, the museum does not see them as real artist as the distinction is still made between Outsider and Insider; presenting the exhibition as Outsider Art: New Masters, puts connotations in motion of both rejection and acceptance and by consciously choosing to name it as Outsider, it still stays a matter of rejection. An interviewee mentioned: "the museum wants to make a difference between Outsider art and art and by showing it like this: this is not-accepted art and we also do not have the intention to consider it as accepted" (interviewee 3).The same goes for the curation: Outsider Art is special and because of that, it deserves a special treatment that is different from Insider Art. Because it is treated as such, it will never be valued on the same standards.

4.5.3. "It's very much about taking"

A logical result floating from this criticism is that questions were raised about the ownership of the exhibition. The combination of the photographs (that are way bigger than the actual art work) with the lack of context and the fact that it was the photographers' voice, an Insider, that appeared mostly throughout the exposition, gave the impression that he was the center of attention, rather than the Outsider artists and their works. An interviewee expressed this quite clearly:

"So, the only conclusion that I'm left to draw from it, is, is that, although it was said that this is an exhibit of Outsider Art, actually was quite colonized and became an exhibit of [the photographer] Sander Toelstra, right? It's not an exhibit of these, although on paper it claims that its, you know, Outsider artists work, in fact it is an exhibit of Sander Toelstra, like taking pictures of them, right? It is very much about taking. This is how I

felt, it felt very exploitative, because of that. And the only person who was, you know, aloud to speak in the exhibit was the photographer and the curator, right? Who are not Outsider Artists" (Interviewee 1)

More interviewees were under the same impression and it caused confusion: was this type of curation a way to place the photographer in the limelight or was his name a convenient tool to attract more visitors? The latter is understandable as Outsider Art is such a new phenomenon in the eye of the museum visitors and to raise attention, sometimes it can help to connect the 'new' to something or someone that is well-known. The results of that, however, is that the works of the Outsider artists are not taking seriously to the extent that the work of the photographer is. That has to do with the fact that the accent is placed on the quality of the photographs and the art works are degraded to the side. This became clearly visible by a few words that were expressed under the portraits of the artist and an interviewee mentioned about that:

 "at the bottom of the portraits, you see the name of the photographer in a much bigger font than the name of the Outsider Artists below that name. So, you constantly have to remind yourself that that it is not Sander [the photographer] who is the artist but the photographer" (Interviewee 3).

        Nevertheless, some interviewees explained the extent to which the 'voice' of the photographer was visible as what Becker would have called "art as collective action" (Becker, 1974, p. 767). It seemed logical that the photographer also had a voice in the exhibition as he is inextricably connected to the makers because of the portraits he made of them. This would have been the same in any other exhibition where there a more actors involved as it provides the necessary context. One interviewee mentioned the example of an exhibition about materials that were recycled into flowers. It was argued that it is logical to provide some information about how the materials turned into flowers and the intention behind it. Moreover, it was mentioned that the Outsider artists were provided with room for context, although in a different way: the wooden house at the back of the exhibition was their space to tell the story behind the creations. The difference is that the photographer did it with words and a

short movie. That can be perceived as a somewhat unequal division, however, what is the point of questioning it? Outsider art and its makers were excluded for so long, why not consider it as positive that an Insider takes the time and effort to portrait them in the best possible way. It is after all about their identities and their work is an extension of it; by enlarging the photographs relative to the art works it is made clear what Outsider Art is about. Is that not the whole point?

4.6. Emancipatory transition

In the previous sub-chapter, it was established that Outsider Art is presented in museums as almost as a moral thing to do in relation to how they were previously excluded from participation in the art world and society at large. However, their inclusivity is still placed within the borders of the dominant culture in order to make sure that Outsider Art will be maintained as different compared to Insider Art. Other standards, such as the type of curation, emphasizes this given. The museum cannot appear self-contradictory in what they consider as legitimate and because of that, the presence of the photographer's voice (an Insider) was clearly visible throughout the entire exhibition, resulting in the confusion about the ownership of the exhibition; was it an Outsider or an Insider exposition? The fact that the portraits were much larger than the art objects emphasized for some that it was an Insider exhibition, however, others pointed out that art should be viewed as 'collective action' (Becker, 1974, p. 767) in which everyone of importance deserves to have a voice.

In the sixth and final sub-chapter, it will be established how the status of Outsider Art can be improved in order to find out what true inclusivity means. First, by exploring what the dominant culture can do to achieve this and what the role of the Outsider artists themselves could be and second, by establishing what the results of that would be in a larger context.

4.6.1. Having an own voice

Compared to a few decades ago, a lot has changed when it comes to the Outsider Art community. Their expressions are exhibited worldwide and the artists themselves are taken more seriously. However, to suggest that this is 'enough' for the community to continue to strive rather than survive is a mistake. It starts with the name.

As human being, we tend to place everything within categories in order to make the world understandable, resulting in a compartmentalized way of thinking (Macionis & Plummer, 2012). The problem with that is that the Outsider is always created according the perception of others. An interviewee mentioned about this: "It [the Outsider] was never something from the outside, it was always an Insider who made these people artists" (Interviewee 9). Which is kind of contradictory as Outsider Art is about the identity of the maker while, in fact, when the person in question cannot have a voice themselves, it becomes a matter of image. The word Outsider implies that by providing unnecessary information as the identity of the creator shines through their art. Therefore, it was argued that a transition would be made in which the artist is degraded to the side so that the art work itself can be placed in the limelight: "So, I would like it if it becomes just mainstream art or that the art worlds become big enough so that it doesn't matter what their background is, but just that they have something interesting to exhibit" (Interviewee, 9).

So, what if we get rid of the categories Outsider ánd Insider? Is that not more in line with the directions in which society is heading? Decades ago, people who were considered as different because of their appearance, where placed into specialized homes and were not part of the 'normal', non-disabled/impaired culture. They were perceived as sad, incompetent and vulnerable. Nowadays, these people become more integrated into mainstream culture: they appear in television programs, they work in places where the employees are a mix of non-impaired and impaired people and for a couple of years now, the Dutch government created a law to make sure that companies hire people with additional needs (www.rijksoverheid.nl). It has become more fluid: Inside and Outside are more woven into each other. It was argued that this direction should also be reflected in art worlds by getting rid of (or become looser) in the maintenance of symbolic boundaries. An interviewee mentioned about this: "I think that the time is there for people to think for inclusive. So, I can imagine that there should not only be an exposition of Outsider Art but incorporated into the bigger picture" (Interviewee 4).

The problem with that is that Outsider Art becomes in the first place a vehicle to appeal against homogeneity, however, by putting everything on the same pile this will reappear – almost if it was never gone. Therefore, the problem is not in the name but in the representation itself. Acceptance of those who are different starts with letting them

to have their own voice – if their art is really a form of self-expression than they should have the freedom to elaborate by themselves rather than the institutions do it for them. The importance of them having an own voice is emphasized by an interviewee who mentioned: "It's possible that a lot of these people make art as an outlet or means of expression. Where they feel like they have a new ability to express themselves, explain themselves and to communicate with people. They are better able to explain what it is to be in their situation and better be able to make a connection with people that they wouldn't have be able to before" (Interviewee 9).

4.6.2. The process of becoming

Floating from this idea of change of name and self-representation is the urge for more visibility worldwide. Next to the fact that is argued that more exhibitions or even having an own department in (established) museums would definitely influence the feeling of more inclusivity, yet, what is even more important is that this visibility shows upcoming generations that you can actually achieve something, irrelevant of who you are or in what way you are perceived by others. It shows that you do not necessarily have to fit in a certain box to become accepted by society. An interviewee mentioned that she saw a television program a few months ago called De Laatste Downer [trans: the last Downer], implying, according to her, that people with Down Syndrome are not allowed to exist anymore or in some way trying to avoid that. The boy with Down Syndrome also said in the program: is there no room for me on earth? This is diametrically opposed to what the interviewees are advocating for: inclusivity starts with acknowledging that boundaries are *constructed*, and because of that, you can be or become whomever you want, in spite of the fact of how your identity is perceived.

5.0. Discussion and conclusion

In the following sub-chapter, the results obtained through the interviews will be discussed in combination with the theoretical framework. Floating from this discussion, the conclusion of this project will be established by answering the sub questions and the main research question. As limitations were in order, these will be address after the conclusion and as this project serves as a foundation for asking more questions revolving around Outsider Art, future suggestions are provided at the end.

5.1. Discussion

The influences of postmodernism can be compared to a landscape that changes from winter to spring: darkness transitions into light, a sea of flowers is sprouting up and animals wake up from their hibernation. You could argue that everything that was invisible for the eye became visible and it is not questioned as it is the natural way of life. To a certain extent, this is what also happened with the visibility of people with impairments or people who for some reason are considered marginal. Their existence became more visible on the streets, in (commercial) businesses and in culture and some even wondered why they previously were excluded in the first place.

Especially culture; postmodernism has paved the way for more acceptance and tolerance towards other forms of culture and creative expressions (Zolberg, 2015) and several interviewees mentioned that ever since Duchamp (1887 – 1968) praised the *urinal*, the boundary that separates art from non-art has become blurrier. Moreover, it is not solely that the status of an object is being questioned, yet also the status of an artist. Van Gogh was a couple of times mentioned as the perfect example of someone who was not accepted as a legitimate artist -and, therefore, considered as an Outsider – yet, now he is one of the most respected, famous Insider artist of our time. This proves, again, that boundaries did not only become blurrier, but that the status of something or someone depends on context and time (Rhodes, 2000). Because of that, labels such as Outsider have become more vague as it can be applied to anyone as it revolves around the perception of the dominant, Insider culture (Fine, 2003). This can suggest that the cultural elite still enjoy the privilege of exposing a certain taste that is considered as legitimate (Bourdieu, 1984), yet the interviewees were aware that that is constructed and thus not based on intrinsic values of the object, meaning that what can be deemed as art depends on someone's opinion. This is based on following 'rules' in which symbolic boundaries determine which of these rules should be applied. However, it was argued that the evaluation of art should be more emphasized by the use of the heart (i.e. evaluating art objects on the basis of feelings that arise) instead of the dominant use of the head (i.e. making use of (specialized) knowledge of context; rules).

That does not mean that the head should be completely cut off. When Outsider Art is presented in museums, the interviewees preferred to be guided in what is meant with the label: is it art made by refugees, women, people with mental or physical impairments or someone who has not had a formal art education? This hints, again, to a

realization that what has been presented by legitimizing institutions should not be taken for granted. Without a context, it becomes hard to tell who are being referred to and especially, for what reason. The presentation of the art works in combination with the portraits of the maker were for some a step in the right direction, however, it was not always (made) visible on the photographs to what extent the artists are 'different'; it is the name of the label that already implies it in which some of the interviewees were consciously looking for these signs that reveal the (physical, mental) deviations. However, the fact that these artists are placed into the limelight is, for several reasons, celebrated. Some interviewees felt a deeper connection with the art work being made as context is essential for their understanding. Moreover, the fact that the museum reveals their identity opens up questions that revolve around the binary opposition inclusion versus exclusion; why have these people been excluded from participation in the arts and in a broader sense, what does it actually mean to be an artist and is it necessary to have standards for becoming (and to be perceived) as one? Questions that some linked to the inevitable influence of postmodernism (in which the museum is a reflection of that) yet, some were more critical and associated with shame and the realization of the dystopia that capitalism is.

Nevertheless, this way of curation is also questioned. Comparisons with other exhibitions were made that causes their interpretation of the Nieuwe Meesters exposition to be unconventional. The reasons for that differentiated, ranging from exploiting their vulnerability (leading to zoological impulses) to incomprehension (i.e. what does knowledge about their additional needs add for the appreciation of the art works being made?). Although context about the makers is important for them, it is argued that art should revolve around the object and context should be used to inform the viewer instead for justification. It was the photographer's voice, an Insider, that dominated throughout the exhibition and it was felt that the artists themselves were not able to speak from their point of view. The explanation of that is in line with Wolpe's (1985) argumentation about authority in which the museum presents the work and the makers within their own framework; it is a one-way-traffic as the museum cannot appear self-contradictory in what they deem as art (Wolpe, 1985; Bowler, 1997).

Despite the fact that context and biography is always important when it comes to the evaluation of art (Berghman & Van Eijck, 2016), the appreciation for Outsider Art does not necessarily depend on it. Gatekeepers need the biography of the maker to

appreciate the unconventional condition of the work, however, the majority of the interviewees felt that the objects can be presented without exposing the identity. The genre would become more standardized which is in line with Becker's (1982) theory about how audiences make sense of art. By using another type of curation, it remains different and if the point of incorporating Outsider Art in to the mainstream is to aim for more inclusivity, why treat it on the basis of different standards? If inclusivity is really the aim of Outsider Art, the name should be changed so that its definition is not based on the perception of others yet on how the artists want to represent themselves.

5.2. Conclusion

This research project revolved around the question how museum visitors experience the role and place of Outsider Art in contemporary museums and their predominant focus on the artist's biography. It became clear that inclusivity of Outsider Art in legitimizing institutions is championed because the works are appreciated, and it hints at a cultural environment that questions where their exclusion was based on. Nevertheless, the curatorial decision to present the works in combination with portraits of the makers and how it was structured by Insiders was, generally speaking, not the best one as inclusivity means, among other things, that voices are heard of the ones that were/are neglected, ignored or deemed as irrelevant. By saying 'we accept you and your creative expressions' it remains a monolog in which 'we' is still interpreted as Us versus Them. A dialogue is essential to understand who the Outsider is and for what reason(s) they created what is being portrayed on the canvas; essential for letting go of former, dominant assumptions that guide the onlooker in their perception and basically confirms what has being argued previously about them.

That does not mean that the dialogue is necessary to appreciate the works. The dialogue is specifically useful for the emancipation of the artists, while the art works can be presented on their own to be evaluated as 'good' art. Is that not already proof that Outsider Art is more than just the biography of the maker that needs to be explicitly mentioned? This implies a boundary weakening of what art ought to be and a more conscious transition in which the appreciation for an object is not solely based on explanation and justification, yet, more importantly, on the use of the heart too. Emotions are signals, they tell a person to take notice as something that you experience is for some reason important. The brain becomes extra activated to process the message

and by doing so, it is stocked more effectively in the hippocampus where memory is stored. In that sense, the feelings that arise by seeing an art object can be far more powerful and impressive than knowing by whom it was made and for what reason. This does not mean that with Insider art (or other forms of culture) the rational is predominantly used, yet, since Outsider Art ís in essence different, the way art is 'normally' evaluated should also be reconsidered or adjusted.

This rationalization brings me to the point that biography and context do matter (Baumann, 2007; Berghman & Van Eijck, 2016), even more when it comes to Outsider Art as the genre encompasses more than just the objects – a fundamental difference with Insider Art as normally (or: in general) the appreciation for the art does not revolve around whether the artist had a painful youth or suffered from having multiple personalities. However, it is now to a certain extent used to provide extra information, yet not as a mean to raise questions about how margins come about and why these are maintained for so long. Despite the fact that the museum takes the effort to bring awareness of the label – which is valued!- , the roles should be reversed whereby the artists themselves have the possibility to express their own voice by using the limelight in which they are placed. Outsider Art should become a genre that is based on dialogue, aiming to strive for recognition and to thrive by acceptance.

5.3. Limitations

As this project is humanistic and revolves around complex, social issues, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) would may have been a more effective method to use as it is argued that this is often used to comprehend social relations that go hand-in-hand with systems of power and dominance (Wodak, 1995). However, it is also mentioned that with CDA the researcher not only analyses the language that is used within the text, yet also how these discourses relate to society at large (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). The problem that can arise from this, argued by Widdowson (1995), is that the researcher can become biased as they search for problems or tendencies that resonate with their view or standpoint. It was my aim to avoid this from the beginning of this project in order to stay objective (Wooffitt, 2005) by letting the outcome of the project be solely based on the input of the participants.

Moreover, this research solely focuses on an exhibition that is held in Amsterdam. Although it is hard to generalize findings when a qualitative research method is applied,

it would have been an asset when the evaluations of visitors of several exhibitions of Outsider Art were compared in order to see similarities and differences in a broader sense, instead of evaluating an 'isolated phenomenon'.

As the focus of this research is also on why gatekeepers present Outsider Art in the way they do, it would have been a valuable addition to interview museum directors and curators to obtain a deeper insight in their intention. This would not have affected how museum visitors experienced the exhibition, however, their [the gatekeepers] intention could be placed more in the limelight to find out if the interviewees interpreted it the same way. This would have been valuable as the research would be based on a dialogue (more perspectives) instead of being one-dimensional.

5.4. Suggestion for future research

Outsider Art is blossoming and enjoys attention from both national and international cultural institutions, important actors in art worlds ánd it received plenty of media attention. At the time that the Outsider Art Museum opened the exhibition Nieuwe Meesters in May 2017, several reviews have been written ranging from local newspapers ('t Parool) and national newspaper (NRC, Volkskrant) to 'independent' writers for their own blog. Newspapers especially have a wide reach and how their opinion is presented, might influence the audience in how they experience exhibitions (and more specific: the Nieuwe Meesters exposition). It is for that reason relevant to examine to what extent they are influenced by mediatized framing and how this affects their evaluation. Media articles could be examined by the use of content analysis in order to find how Outsider Art and exhibitions are framed, followed up by interviews with museums visitors to see whether and to what extent, their opinions are colored.

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Appendix A. Overview of the participants

Identification	Gender, age, occupation, nationality, residence	Date of the meeting, place
Interviewee 1	M, 30, artist, American, New York City	March 18, via Skype
Interviewee 2	M, 18, student, American, Paris (FR)	March 15, via Skype
Interviewee 3	M, 57, ICT-employer, Dutch, The Netherlands	April 4, at a café in Rotterdam
Interviewee 4	F, 62, philosopher, Dutch, The Netherlands	March 30, at her home
Interviewee 5	M, 64, retired, Dutch, The Netherlands	March 28, via Skype
Interviewee 6	F, 70, painter, Dutch, The Netherlands	April 6, at her home
Interviewee 7	F, 30, manager of an orchestra, British, United Kingdom	March 14, via Skype
Interviewee 8	M, 67, theatre player and choreographer, Belgian, The Netherlands	March 20, at the public library in Amsterdam
Interviewee 9	F, 30, student, Chilean, The Netherlands	March 20, at the public library in Amsterdam
Interviewee 10	F, 26, employee at a technical company, Dutch, The Netherlands	April 13, via Skype
Interviewee 11	M, 63, dance choreographer, Dutch, The Netherlands	March 19, at a café in Amsterdam

Appendix B. Floorplan

Legend

Window	
Door	
Painting & portrait	
Wall	
TV-screen	
Studio artist	
Couch	

Source: L. Tanke, 2018

Entrance
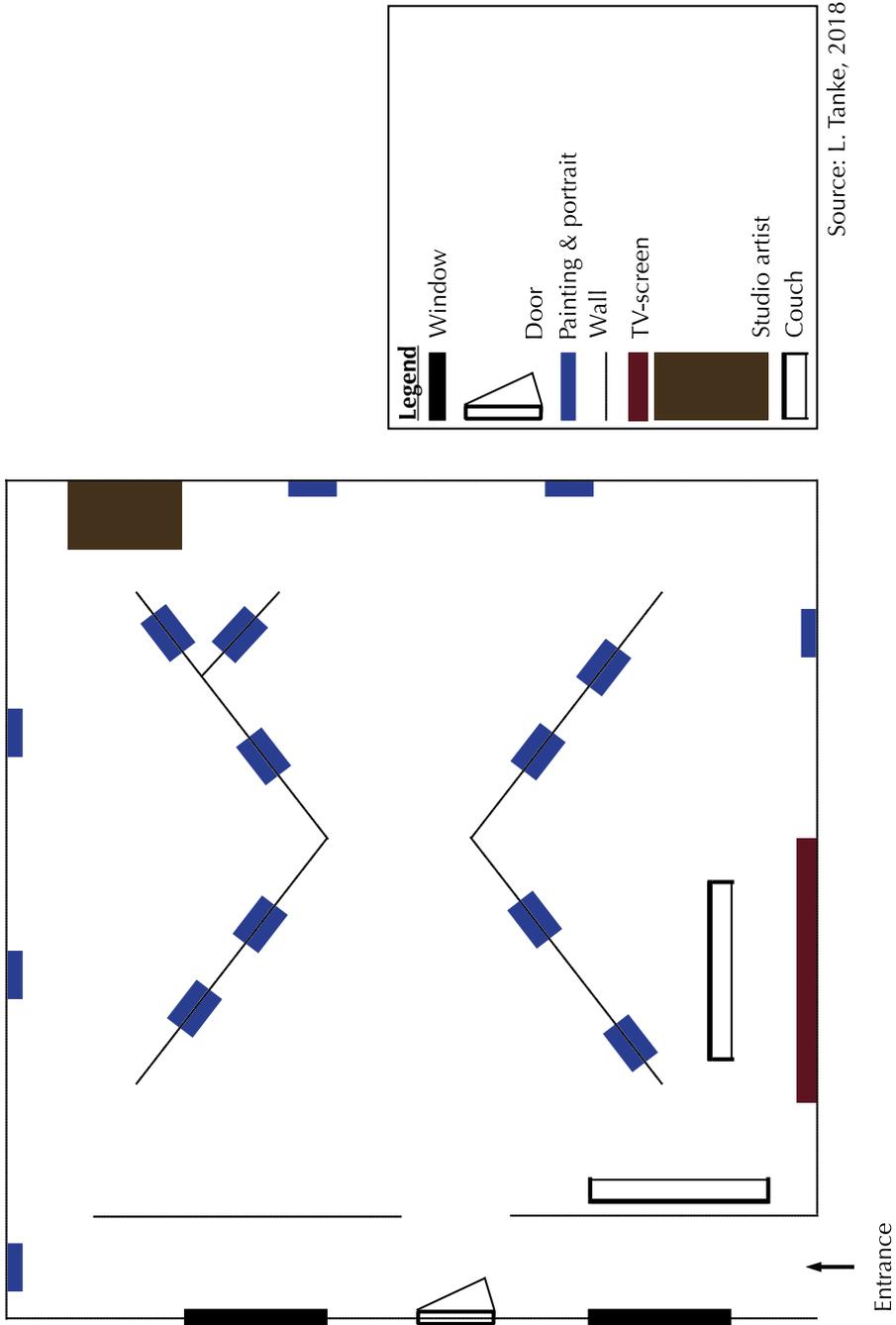
Appendix C. Interview guide

Introduction

Welcome and thank you for helping me with my project, I really appreciate it. We already spoke about the topics that will be discussed during the interview, namely your experience about the Nieuwe Meesters exhibition in the Outsider Art Museum, how you look at art in general and your opinion on Outsider Art. I also informed you about the consent form; you just read it and signed it with your signature, is that right?
Next to that, I also want to ask you if you agree with me recording the conservation so that I can analyze our conversation later in the process. Oke, do you have any questions before we start?
We will start with a few introduction questions to warm up and you can answer them (very) briefly if you want to.

Warming up questions

Q1: Could you tell me something about yourself? Where are you from and what is your nationality, what is your age, what did you study, what is your occupation?

Q2: Could you describe how you became familiar with art as a child?

Topic 1: Perception on art in general

Q1: Could you describe your favorite art work/genre for me?
    SQ1a: Could you explain to me why this work/genre is your favorite?
    SQ1b: Could you explain to me which art work/genre you don't like?
        SQ1b1: Could you explain to me why you don't like it?

Q2: Could you tell me if you make a difference between art and craft and if so, what is this difference?
    SQ2a: Can you give me an example of what you consider as craft?
    SQ2b: Can you give me an example of what you consider as art?

Q3: Could you explain to what you think of the following: some people thinks that art is only for entertainment. Could you explain to me what you think art is for?
    SQ3a: what do you think that influences your opinion?

Q4: Others say that art can be found everywhere; on the streets, in a café or in a library. Where do you think that art can be found?
    Q4a: why do you think that?
    Q4b: if art can only be found at some places, how would you describe everything else?

SO, I already send you two documents via the skype chat and I would like to ask you to open doc 1.

Q5: Could you explain to me which of the two pictures is aesthetically more appealing to you? **[show pictures)**
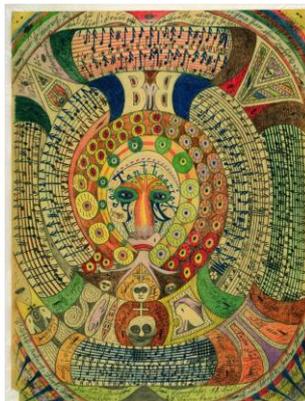
SQ5a: could you explain to me where you think of with the word aesthetically?
SQ5b: Could you explain to me what could be of influence on your opinion?

Topic 2: Outsider Art

Q1: How did you become familiar with Outsider Art?

Q2: What is the first thing that comes in your mind when you think about Outsider Art?
SQ1a: Where is that idea coming from?
SQ2b: How do you think about the idea that when there is an Outsider group, there should also be an Insider group?
SQ1b1: Could you explain to me what you consider as Insider Art?

Q3: Where do you think Outsider Art is about?
SQ3a: could you explain to me what you think the effect would be if it was not mentioned by whom the artwork was made?

Q4: Person 1 says that 60 years ago, Outsider Art could only be found on flea markets, yet now it hangs on the walls in museums. He considers that as a development of the genre. Why do you think person 1 feels this way?
SQ4a: This person goes on by saying that development goes always hand in hand with consequences. Could you give an example of a consequence of Outsider Art being presented in museums?
SQ4a1: do you think that there are also consequences for the artists? In what way?
SQ5: How do you feel about the idea that in 50 years, Outsider artists have gained the same reputation as Picasso or Van Gogh?

Q6: Since recent years, Outsider Art is being sold more often at auctions, appears in magazines and fairs and, of course, has its own exhibitions. Where do you think this interest in Outsider Art is coming from?
SQ6a: what does that say about how art is evaluated?

Q7: Why do you think that Outsider Art is called this way?
SQ7a: who is benefiting from that?

Topic 3: The exhibition Nieuwe Meesters → authority

Q1: What is the first things that comes into your mind when you think about this exhibition?

Q2: What did you like about the exhibition?
SQ2a: What did you not like?

Q1: Could you explain to me how you look at the works when they are presented by the name Outsider Art?
SQ1a: Could you explain to me if that differs from how you look at works that are perceived as Insider art? Could you give me an example?

Q3: Could you explain to me if the exhibition changed your perception on what Outsider Art is?
SQ3a: Could you explain if it changed your perception of the artists and in what way?
SQ3b: Could you explain if it changed your perception of the art works made and in what way?

Q4: What do you think of the idea that museums have a huge influence on how museum visitors evaluate objects?

I would like to ask you to open doc 2 and take a look at it.

SQ4a: **[show pictures exhibition]**

Q2: What do you think of the phenomenon that the museum explicitly shows photographs of the makers of the works?
        SQ2a: Why do you think they did that?

Q5: There is a little corner in the exhibition in which an Outsider artist works a few times each month. What do you think is the purpose of that?
        SQ5a: Moreover, there is also a video in which is shown how the photographer makes the pictures of the makers. What do you think is the purpose of that?

Q7: The title of the exhibition is New Masters (Nieuwe Meesters) – could you explain to me how you think that should be interpreted?
        SQ7a: Why do you think so?

Q5: Would you like to see more similar exhibitions? Why?
        SQ3a: Can you think of someone who wouldn't want that and why is that? (or someone who wants that)
        SQ3b: Can you imagine that museums would be interested in exhibiting Outsider Art more often?
                SQ3b1: Why do you think so?
                SQ3b2: How do you feel about the idea that a different message is send by museums when the focus becomes more on Outsider Art instead of on, let's say, Romanticism or Baroque?

We are almost at the end of the interview! I have still a few questions left and then we're done☺..

Closing questions

Q1: What would you like to see happening with Outsider Art in 10 years?

Q2: Do you have anything that you would like to share?

Appendix D. Overview codes

1.Initial coding

Some codes that were used during this coding process combined with some quotes that illustrate where these derived from:

-Standardization

- "I think it would, I think it would be, be [..] you know, like, much more [.] much more normal. Like much more, like, actually, we actually valued your work and we value what you've made in the same way that we value other, you know, the Old Masters"
- "Without the portraits, it would be just real good abstract art"

-objectivity vs. subjectivity

- {Translated} "It's already in the name – you can't be objective when you hear the word Outsider. You look at the artworks by your idea of the artists."
- [Translated] "I think that it also happens with paintings of Rembrandt and that suddenly he as the painter of the painting is being questioned. De valuation of the painting suddenly decreases -also the valuation of the people that are looking at it- because it is perceived as less valuable. This is the result of what you know about the painting and because of that, your evaluation changes. That's not totally honest in relation to the painting, but it happens. And that also happens with Outsider Art."

-Inclusivity vs. exclusivity

- "And we should give them, you know, attention, you know, and praise for what they do in much what, in the same way that we give other artist the traditional people, the insiders in a sense. The way that we give them praise, you know, because these people are, are different does that not mean that they cannot produce things that are impressive or beautiful."
- "I certainly think there's [..] a long running interest in, in the art world. Uhm, at least in the past century more at looking at people who have been traditionally been left out in kind of the same way, like, groups like the impressionist and surrealist and abstract artists became increasingly more of interest to the art community. I think you can certainly draw a parallel there. I also think that as a society has become increasingly more focused on emphasizing inclusivity and diversity, there's, there's more willingness to hear from people who have been traditionally excluded from sectors of society such as art. Uhm, and, in many other sectors in society of course, but, certainly in the art world it, these kind of people of not really than [.] paid attention to before and I think that as society looks more at [.] inclusivity. There is this increased emphasis on saying to include these people because, you know, there just as capable producing things as anybody else. And they are just as worthy to be considered and of being considered as good artists, as anybody else."

-Pushing boundaries

- [Translated] "Outsider Art has to do with a certain fascination – no let me rephrase that. In traditional art, you just see landscapes and themes that everyone can understand or relate to; a portrait, a still life; it's very relatable. However, with Outsider Art you often see things like: how did the artist come up with this? This seems so to me, even for the professionals in the art circuit, to challenge what art should look like".

- "I'm a big fan of trying to break down the bangs especially you know, working at an orchestra, where we supposed to sit on stage uhm and perform, and as an audience you sit and watch at wherever it is performed, uhm, I think it's really important that we do think outside that environment."

2.Descriptive coding

Some codes that were used during this coding process combined with some quotes that illustrate where these derived from:

-Watching monkeys

- "I think that these things are, these things about truths and authenticity and like access to the real raw thing, like [.] its deeply fucked up"

- [Translated] "Why is it that we need to see how their impulsive character affects their working? You also don't get to see that with 'normal' artists'. It's weird and unnecessary."

-Change of name

- "Well, I certainly think that, again, going back idea that maybe the point of outsider art is, you know, is saying it shouldn't be called outsiders. These people need to be taken seriously. If it's just something that was only on flea markets and it went to museums walls, in art museums, then, that means there is something going on."

- [Translated] "You could ask yourself, why does it even has this name [Outsider Art]? Why don't call it art?"

-Visibility

- "Uhm, it would be really interesting uh if there were more museums showing it. Certainly because, again, thus far was the first time I've really encountered it in a museum. It would be really great to see this in more museum across the world, to see it included and, you know, more universally"

- [Translated] "Patrick Visser is his name, he has autism. He hold me that in the past, he never went to parties because he would stand there alone in a corner. However, now he visits parties and

people are approaching him so in that sense, exhibiting his art has had a positive influence on him. He is more open and communicative."

-Lack of context

- "I think that its, it's pretty uhm, its very irregular in terms of curation what they did. And, I don't feel that the [.] I don't feel that that choice was justified or explained in the exhibit in any way."
- [Translated] "The whole exhibition felt arbitrary. An accompanying text would be more sufficient.

3.Theoretical coding

-Language is a fog

-Boundary weakening

-"Them as exhibits"

-Autonomous entity

-Institutional valorization

-Emancipatory transition