

Background and Context

It is a common belief that visiting museums and galleries can have a positive impact upon one's life, however it is often the case that this belief has developed from anecdotal claims. The current research seeks to investigate the perception of art and contribute to the understanding of the impact of public art within museums and galleries.

Individual features often used in artwork have been shown to impact mood such as colour, line, and content. It is possible to examine these areas of an artwork more closely through eye-tracking methods where the areas of fixation can be recorded to show what has been attended to, how long these have been looked at for and the order in which these points were viewed (Yarbus, 1967, Buswell, 1935). The model of aesthetic appreciation by Leder et al. (2004) illustrates that there are many influences how art is perceived, one of which is the context in which the art is experienced. Attention restoration theory has been used to suggest that the museum has the potential to be a place to take a break from everyday life and be diverted and recover from mental or attentional fatigue (Kaplan et al., 1993).

References

- Buswell, G. (1935) How People Look at Pictures: A study of the psychology of the perception in art.
- Kaplan, S., Bardwell, L.V. & Slakter, D.B. (1993) The museum as a restorative environment. *Environment and Behaviour*, 25, 725-742.
- Leder, H., Belke, B., Oeberst, A. & Augustin, D. (2004) A model of aesthetic appreciation and aesthetic judgments. *British Journal of Psychology*, 95, 489-508.
- Yarbus, A.L. (1967) Vision and Eye-Movements.



Methodology

This research aims to bring together and build on the existing research within the areas of psychology, aesthetics, neuroscience and anthropology to explore how wellbeing may be impacted by viewing art on public display within a museum or art gallery. A combination of methods from these disciplines, including eye-tracking both within lab conditions and within the museum environment, are being used to explore the following questions within the larger topic of experiencing art in the museum.

Eye-tracking within the lab

Study 1 (Pilot)

Do gaze patterns differ between digital images of famous paintings and photographs of similar images?
Does monetary value influence viewer preference and judgements of artistic value?

Study 2

Does monetary value influence viewer preference and judgements of artistic value of abstract art?

Museum/gallery studies

Study 1 (pilot of data collection tools)

How do art gallery visitors report their experience?
Assessment of data collection methods

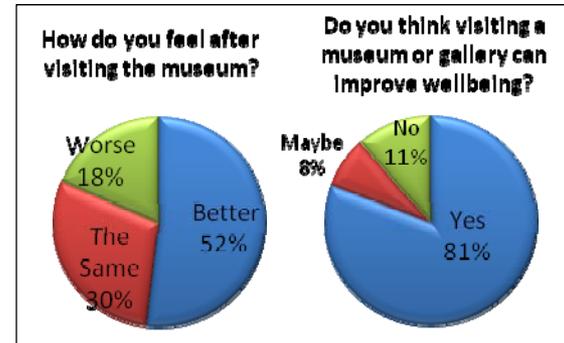
Study 2 (visitor opinion survey)

Do you feel better, the same or worse than you did before you entered the museum today?
Do you think that visiting a museum or gallery can improve wellbeing?

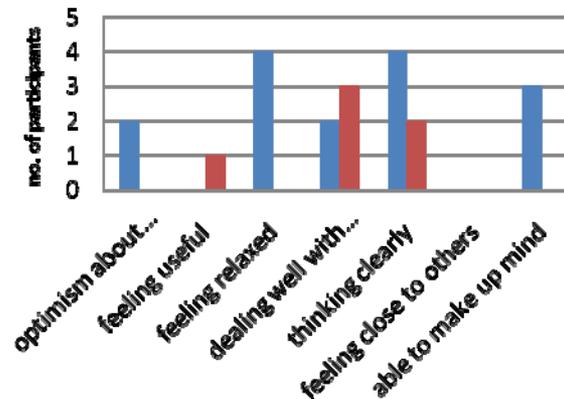
Study 3 (eye tracking in the museum)

Is there a short or long term impact of viewing art upon wellbeing?
How does expertise influence visual exploration of art within the museum?

Some preliminary results...



Reported change in wellbeing after viewing art in a museum



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